SUCCESSION PLANNING: FACILITATING LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION IN RESPONSE TO THE RETIREMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

A thesis presented

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Abstract
The retirement of an academic president has a profound effect, because presidential leadership plays a fundamental role in the health and continuity of higher education organizations (Barton, 2017). Higher education institutions (HEIs) are facing the challenge of being underprepared to replace retiring presidential leadership as baby boomers (individuals born between 1946-1964) retire from the U.S. workforce. As a result, organizations are experiencing the implications of this diminishing of workforce leadership capital (Bennett, 2015; Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2017). In light of this, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The retirement of baby boomers from the workforce is a phenomenon being experienced by most industries in the United States. Higher education organizations are as a result susceptible to the implications of this diminishing of workforce leadership capital (Bennett, 2015; BLS, 2017). The retirement of an academic president has a profound effect on an institution because presidential leadership plays a pivotal role in the stability and continuity of higher education organizations (Barton, 2017). In light of this, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university.

This chapter will commence with a review of senior leadership’s departure from the workforce due to retirement, which will provide the context and background information for the phenomenon being studied. The significance of the study will subsequently be discussed, demonstrating the potential benefits of succession planning in response to pending presidential retirement at higher education institutions. This section of this chapter will define the research problem, purpose statement, and research questions. The final section of this chapter will introduce and interpret the theoretical lens that will frame this study, the succession planning and management conceptual framework.

Context and Background

Across the country, leaders of higher education institutions (HEIs) are facing the impending challenge of being underprepared to replace retiring leadership. Now that baby boomers have become eligible for retirement, the transition rate among higher education leadership has increased since 2011 (American Council on Education [ACE], 2017; BLS, 2017). As shown in Figure 1, higher education leadership data indicates a notable shift as baby boomers
exit the workforce: 58% of presidents in higher education were over 60 years old as of 2017, and 47% of those presidents were between the ages of 60-70 years of age, while 11% were over the age of 70 (ACE, 2017; Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017). This aging of leadership is not unique to higher education. Most organizations are also experiencing this change as baby boomers, individuals born between 1946-1964, become qualified for retirement (American Council on Education, 2017; BLS, 2017).

![U.S. College Presidents by Age](image)

**Figure 1.** U.S. college presidents by age (ACE, 2017).

The American retirement eligibility age is 66 years and 2 months (BLS, 2017), and the average United States college president is 63 years old (ACE, 2017). In 2018, over 50% of higher education presidents were slated to be eligible for retirement (Gagliardi et al., 2017).

The baby boomer generation consists of 77 million individuals, while Generation X (individuals born 1965-1980) consists of 65 million people (BLS, 2017). Organizations will be challenged by the rate of imminent retirements because the number of vacant positions will surpass the number of qualified candidates available to fill them (Cavanaugh, 2017; Smith, 2016). Figure 2 depicts the disparity in population between the two generations (BLS, 2017).
The retirement of workers from higher education leadership indicates that colleges and universities will inevitably continue to experience periods of transition as incumbents retire; this trend is projected to continue through 2026 (BLS, 2017; Cavanaugh, 2017). This transition in leadership has been described as a projected battle among institutions that will be competing for qualified candidates from Generation X to fill senior positions vacated by retiring baby boomers (Cavanaugh, 2017). The shortage of suitable leaders will ignite competition for the most qualified candidates as postsecondary institutions become more complex to operate and calls for enhanced accountability, transparency, and accessibility increase (Landles-Cobb, Kirk, & Smith Milway, 2015).

The presidential position is one of the most important roles at an HEI, and the importance of hiring qualified future leaders is highlighted when a senior leadership position becomes vacant (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges [AGB], 2017). As the chief executive officer of an academic institution (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 1966) a higher education president embodies the values and goals of that institution (Poston, 1997).

Figure 2. U.S population size of baby boomers versus Generation X (BLS, 2017).
Presidents are responsible for the oversight of administrative and operational divisions and for ensuring that the institution is in compliance with the policies and procedures set forth by its board and external agencies. Higher education presidents are also responsible for innovation and the attainment of institutional goals (AAUP, 1966). They are also responsible for the preservation of institutional values, management of existing resources, and the development of new assets (AAUP, 1966). The job of the higher education president has become increasingly challenging due to technological advances that have led to major changes in higher education as nations become more interconnected and global competition increases (Basham, 2012). In addition to operating an institution that has been shaped by history, policy, law, and funding, a sitting president has the challenge of developing relationships that are structured by competition and cooperation in an environment categorized by irregularly changing patterns (Basham, 2012). Therefore, the stability and continuity of an organization depends on having a leader who can manage a complex, bounded, and evolving world (Basham, 2012).

When their presidents retire, HEIs traditionally conduct national searches to find an appropriate successor (Seltzer, 2016; Wilde & Finkelstein, 2017). A national search can take up to one year to complete. This method for replacing presidential leadership is not only time-consuming but costly to conduct; the average search costs over $80,000 (Seltzer, 2016). In addition, the projected shortage of qualified candidates may make it difficult for search firms to find appropriate successors to fill vacant presidential posts (Harris & Ellis, 2017).

The need to find qualified candidates will only intensify as HEI presidents continue to retire and as HEIs face the challenges of a rapidly growing globalized economy (Landles-Cobb et al., 2015). The effect of hiring unqualified presidential leadership has had an unwelcome consequence for the higher education industry: involuntary presidential turnover has increased in
recent years (Harris & Ellis, 2017). Since 1988, 42% of all involuntary presidential turnovers (i.e., unsuccessful higher education presidencies ending in involuntary departure) took place in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, and 2015 (Harris & Ellis, 2017). Some reasons cited for unsuccessful presidential tenures were financial controversy, poor fit, poor judgment, and loss of system confidence (Harris & Ellis, 2017).

Exacerbating the situation, the tenure of college presidents has shortened from eight and a half years in 2006 (Gagliardi et al. 2017) to seven years in 2011, and was last reported to be six and a half years as of 2017 (ACE, 2017; Gagliardi et al. 2017; Seltzer, 2017a). Therefore, not only are presidents retiring (ACE, 2017; Gagliardi et al., 2017), but their successors are also spending less time in the positions, as shown in Figure 3 (ACE, 2017; Seltzer, 2017a).

Figure 3. Higher education presidential tenure (ACE, 2017).

The loss of knowledge through presidential retirement is one of the biggest threats to HEIs (Muniz, 2013; Laal, 2011. The knowledge attrition that occurs during a presidential retirement is attributed to the lack of formal systems within HEIs to retrieve knowledge from presidential retirees prior to departure, and to store this captured knowledge for future use by successors (Laal, 2011; Power, 2014). This lack of knowledge management systems to retain pertinent
institutional information from presidential retirees prior to departure poses a threat to institutions (Muniz, 2013). The continued loss of knowledge through presidential retirement poses a significant threat to HEIs mostly because it is difficult to access this knowledge once the retiree leaves the organization (Muniz, 2013). Knowledge is an organization’s greatest asset, and institutions are losing over 40% of *tacit knowledge*, information learned but not necessarily documented (Muniz, 2013; Rothwell & Poduch, 2004), as individuals leave. The nature of institutional knowledge being lost through presidential retirements is particularly important (Muniz, 2013), as this information is not documented but only exists in the heads of retirees (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). This tacit knowledge is gained through personal experiences; therefore, it is difficult to capture unless purposefully extracted from the individuals who possess it (Muniz, 2013).

In summary, the context for retiring leadership includes an impending drought of competent successors to fill vacant presidential positions (ACE, 2017; BLS, 2017), a decrease in the duration of presidential tenures (Gagliardi et al., 2017), and continued attrition of institutional knowledge as retirees leave their positions. Higher education presidential successors are not prepared for their roles due to inadequate knowledge about some aspects of the job (Harris & Ellis, 2017), a lack of clear expectations of what the job entails, and failure to possess the competencies and skills necessary to be successful in the role (Hammond, 2013; Harris & Ellis, 2017).

With this in mind, it is important to anticipate the shortage and take proactive steps to increase the number of qualified presidential candidates. Leadership development programs can be developed to prepare potential candidates for presidential leadership roles (Bennett, 2015;
Jackson, 2017). In addition, HEIs need knowledge management systems so pertinent institutional knowledge can be passed from incumbent to successor (Power, 2014).

Succession planning has been recommended as an antidote to address these implications of presidential retirements in higher education (Jackson, 2017). Unfortunately, this kind of strategic plan is rarely used in HEIs and there is limited literature on the topic related to academic presidential leadership (Jackson, 2017). Although scholars have recommended succession planning as a strategic method to combat the implications of retiring presidential leadership (Bornstein, 2010; Klein & Salk, 2013), HEIs have been slow to develop formal systems for long-term leadership continuity (Jackson, 2017).

If presidents personify the mission and values of HEIs (AGB, 2017), then the continuity of academic institutions may be at risk (AGB, 2017) from the retirements of their presidents (AGB, 2017). Succession planning is a strategy HEIs can use to create leadership programs to develop internal candidates with leadership potential (Bornstein, 2010), increase the number of qualified candidates (Klein & Salk, 2013), and create knowledge management systems to pass on pertinent institutional knowledge from presidential predecessors (Power, 2014).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university. The next section of this chapter will discuss the significance of succession planning by providing the potential benefits of implementing this strategic plan in higher education.

**Significance of Problem**
A succession plan is an ongoing process to identify individuals who have leadership potential within an organization and develop them for future use (Rothwell, 2015). It provides an opportunity for HEIs to prepare for the retirement of leadership by grooming individuals with leadership potential for vacant presidential posts (Rothwell, 2015). Essentially, succession planning would equip successors with the competencies needed to be successful in a presidential position through formal professional development and mentorship (Jackson, 2017). It would direct organizations to create leadership development programs to groom internal employees in an effort to produce a pipeline of qualified candidates within the organization in anticipation of the retirement of academic presidents (Crassweller, 2015).

The development of leadership candidates through succession planning can produce candidates who have intimate knowledge about the organization and ensure the transfer of institutional and job-specific knowledge from senior to junior counterparts prior to retirement (Rothwell, 2015). As a result, successors would understand the historical, cultural, social, and political environment of the institution they intend to lead (Barton, 2017). Familiarity with the organization may result in less time needed before the candidate can transition into the new role (Crassweller, 2015), and decrease or eliminate the leadership vacuum that often occurs during a leadership transition (Crassweller, 2015). In addition, it would ensure the transfer of institutional and job specific knowledge from retiring presidents to their successors (Rothwell, 2015). A succession plan would allow for a transition period between presidential retirees and incoming replacements (Bornstein, 2010; Rothwell, 2015).

Leadership development programs are not new to higher education, but few institutions have adopted formal plans for the long-term development of employees for presidential appointments (Lovett, 2017). Given the imminent departure of higher education presidents from
the workforce due to retirement, presidential succession planning provides an opportunity for HEIs to develop a pipeline of qualified individuals in anticipation of those retirements. This can give an HEI a chance to take stock of its leadership and allow it to build programs that instill and sustain the deep-seated values and knowledge it would like its leaders to reflect (Jackson, 2017). Presidential succession candidates would have an opportunity to develop their skills in preparation for presidential leadership, attain institutional knowledge from their predecessors, and make a smooth transition into their presidential roles. In addition, it would produce intangible benefits such as networking, mentorship, camaraderie, recognition, employee satisfaction, improved work habits, and increased production output for successors (Crassweller, 2015).

**Research Problem and Research Question**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university.

Given the pending transition in presidential leadership and its possible implications for HEIs, the need for institutions to develop formal plans to combat ramifications of the leadership departure has increased (Jackson, 2017). Furthermore, there are limited data on presidential succession planning in higher education, and also lack of knowledge about the groups that coordinate the process (McDonagh, Prybil, & Totten, 2013).

In light of this situation, the researcher will take a reflective look at two presidential succession events, a response to retirement, to gain insight into the process that took place. Therefore the central research question for this study will be the following: What succession
planning processes were used during two presidential succession events at a private religious university?

**Definitions of Key Terminology**


*Competency:* An important skill that is needed to perform a job (Rothwell, 2015).

*Explicit Knowledge:* Knowledge that can be translated into words, numbers, and symbols and stored in books, computers, etc. (Muniz, 2013).

*Succession Planning:* a continuous, deliberate, and systematic process through which organizations develop a pipeline of individuals with the knowledge, competencies, skills, and experience to fill specific critical positions upon vacancy or retirement (Rothwell, 2015)

*Succession Candidate:* An employee with leadership potential who is selected to receive professional development and mentorship in anticipation of a vacant leadership position within the organization (Rothwell, 2015).

*Tacit Knowledge:* Knowledge gained from being taught, through books, or from personal experience. This knowledge is often not documented and often resides in the minds of the individuals who possess it (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004).

*United States Retirement Age:* The age at which an individual who lives in the United States can retire from work, traditionally 66.2 years of age (BLS, 2017).

**Theoretical Framework**

**Succession Planning and Management Conceptual Framework**

The succession planning and management (SPM) conceptual framework will frame this study, which investigates planning for leadership succession through succession planning in
response to two retirements of presidential leadership at one private higher education institution. Rothwell’s (2015) conceptual framework includes a seven-step process for succession planning and management and will provide a guide for investigating the process of leadership succession through succession planning at one higher education institution.

Rothwell (2015) examined leadership succession and how anticipation of the roles of future leaders contributes to that process. His research is fundamental to the literature on leadership continuity through succession planning, which is the focus of this study. Rothwell’s framework for SPM goes beyond finding replacements for key positions. It emphasizes identifying internal positions that are vital to the stability and effectiveness of an organization and focuses on intentionally developing skills in employees who have leadership potential so they take over those critical roles in an event of retirement or an unanticipated vacancy (Rothwell, 2015). Rothwell uses the terms *key roles* and *critical positions* interchangeably, describing them as positions that are important to the survival and continuity of an organization. In other words, these individuals not only play a leadership role within their organizations, but they also have competencies or specialized skills that are crucial to the effectiveness and success of their institutions.

Rothwell has several approaches to SPM. The *rifle approach* to SPM focuses on one specific identifiable problem, such as hiring into key positions within an institution that are open due to retirement or high turnover (Rothwell, 2015). This targeted approach can allow organizations to identify and analyze key positions that are important to the viability of an organization and create succession plans that address the continuity of those positions (Rothwell, 2015). This attention to leadership continuity in critical roles in anticipation of departing leadership is relevant to this study because it provides insight into how succession plans are
designed in preparation for the retirement of an individual such as a chief executive officer (Rothwell, 2015). Rothwell’s SPM framework is a continuous, deliberate, and systematic process through which organizations develop candidates with the knowledge, competencies, skills, and experience to fill specific critical positions upon vacancy or retirement (Rothwell, 2015).

Furthermore, Rothwell’s framework also focuses on retaining institutional knowledge from predecessors prior to their departure and transferring that knowledge to their successors. In the case of pending retirement, Rothwell’s model for SPM constructs a transition period between the predecessor and successor, thereby creating an overlap, or a “relay-race” effect, between incoming and outgoing leadership. He stresses the importance of linking succession planning to the organization’s strategic plans and goals (Rothwell, 2015). Therefore, organizational strategic plans should incorporate succession plans that include specific strategies and activities for developing future leaders in anticipation of retirements from critical positions within the organization (Rothwell, 2015).

Rothwell’s (2015) model for succession planning is designed to assure the continuous performance of an organization, division, or workgroup by facilitating the development, replacement, or strategic application of essential people. Rothwell’s framework is designed to match current organizational talent with future organizational needs and, unlike other succession models, it pairs succession planning with succession management. This prompts daily efforts to build talent within the organization by providing mentoring and coaching to individuals in accordance with the succession plan. This perpetual step in Rothwell’s process sets this conceptual framework apart, as it promotes long-term leadership development in response to future needs of the organization.
This framework is therefore appropriate because it provides support for long-term efforts to build and sustain leadership over an extended period of time: baby boomer departure from the workforce is projected to continue through 2026 (ACE, 2017; BLS, 2017). SPM addresses the implications of the departure of retiring leadership (Rothwell, 2015), it addresses institutional knowledge attrition due to retirement of leadership (Power, 2014), and it reduces the overall cost of recruiting new presidential leaders (Seltzer, 2016). Although succession planning has been proven to be successful across industries, critics of the model have demonstrated shortfalls in the strategy, drawn from multidisciplinary approaches that have been implemented across industries (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). The following section of this chapter will address critics of succession planning.

**Succession Planning Theory Critics**

Succession planning first emerged in the field of research in the 1950s (Kesner & Serbora, 1994), but it was not until the 1960s that work on succession planning emerged as a scientific field of study. Oscar Grusky (1964) identified central variables in the succession planning formula to create a research model and establish a systematic investigation protocol for inquiry (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). Along with Carlson (1961), Grusky (1964) is also described as one of the first researchers to examine the consequences of succession planning for organizational performance, investigating the implications of recruiting internal employees through succession planning rather than hiring outside candidates (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). Although Carlson (1961) and Grusky (1964) were both pioneers in the field of succession planning, they sometimes differed on research findings and philosophical assumptions. While Grusky (1964) found that the promotion of internal employees into leadership positions was associated with improved team and organizational performance, Carlson (1961) professed
otherwise. Unlike Grusky, Carlson (1961) concluded that internal employees who were promoted into leadership positions were paid less and achieved less than external candidates (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). The debate over internal versus external candidates took shape as the definition of successor origin was challenged by the concept of contextual or industry familiarity in the 1970s (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). Customarily, succession planning candidates were limited to internal employees who would be promoted from within. Birnbaum (1971) sought to expand the qualifying criteria for successors by observing that succession candidates who were trained in industries similar to their recruiting agencies experienced less conflict in their new role and possessed greater ability to steer organizational continuity due to industry familiarity. This discovery (Birnbaum, 1971) built upon the works of Grusky (1964) and Carlson (1961) and altered the framework for successor origin from only internal succession, the promotion of employees within the recruiting firm, to include external succession, the recruitment of outside successors with industry familiarity or mirroring backgrounds (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). This broadening of the scope for succession planning led to further studies on successor origin and paved the way for further research into the practice. This research investigated the link between successor origin and postsuccession organization results, the effects of external succession on an organization’s performance, and how the nature of a predecessor’s departure (e.g., retirement, death, or firing) affects the process and outcome of the succession (Kesner & Sebora, 1994).

Although the strategy has been proven to work across industries, critics of succession planning would argue that while succession planning has been utilized across a diverse set of scientific disciplines, no formal systemized model has yet been developed. Instead, each succession model is uniquely developed from the standpoint of the respective organization. Additionally, successful succession planning has a different meaning for each organization.
While filling a vacant position at one organization and mitigating organizational disruption may be considered success at one institution, other organizations may view success based on the market reaction to their new organizational leadership (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). As a result, there is no single clear picture of succession planning as a whole.

Although the narrative around multiple disciplinary approaches has been a point of contention, even critics agree that the diversity in perspectives and scientific approaches has contributed to the evolution of the succession planning field because it has been proven to produce varied industry results (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). Therefore, the researcher will discuss the rationale for utilizing Rothwell’s framework to investigate planning for leadership succession through succession planning in response to the retirement of presidential leadership at one private higher education institution.

**Rationale**

The need to extend succession planning into higher education is increasingly important as leadership retires, organizations evolve, decision-making becomes increasingly decentralized, proprietary knowledge is accumulated, and relationships essential to work are passed on to successors. Rothwell’s (2015) SPM conceptual framework represents a shift in the traditional roots of succession planning. The framework encompasses considerations that will affect the workplace of the future because it specifically supports the stabilization of the tenured personnel within an organization (Rothwell, 2015). SPM is a deliberate and systematic action by an organization to achieve leadership continuity, encourage leadership advancement, and retain and develop intellectual and knowledgeable capital for the future (Rothwell, 2015). Rothwell’s SPM
programs have been utilized to examine leadership development and knowledge transfer across all industries (Rothwell, 2015), including higher education (Richards, 2016).

Although presidential leadership turnover is an impetus for succession planning (Lovett, 2017), Rothwell’s (2015) framework directly aligns with and supports the issues HEIs are facing regarding leadership departure (González, 2010). Common themes cited as complexities in higher education presidential leadership departure could be addressed using Rothwell’s framework, considering that SPM is designed to address critical turnover of key personnel in anticipation of retirement or unexpected vacancy (Rothwell, 2015). This framework addresses (a) filling key positions when employees are leaving organizations at a faster than normal rate and (b) providing a pipeline for recruitment when open high-ranking positions attract too few suitable candidates with the competency to perform the required duties of the job (Rothwell, 2015).

Like other succession planning theories, Rothwell’s (2015) SPM framework, shown in Figure 4, offers a systematic strategy for organizations to develop leadership across industries. Moreover, his framework provides a perennial aspect to the process, as organizations continuously manage succession programs in an effort to build talent in real time. This particular stage is pertinent because Rothwell’s framework enables an effort to sustain leadership over an extended period of time, considering that baby boomer departure from the workforce is projected through 2026 (BLS, 2017; Rothwell, 2015).

With this in mind, now is the time to examine the possible benefits of utilizing this strategy in an academic environment. Doing so can uncover proactive approaches to addressing the consequences of presidential leadership from HEIs (Lovett, 2017). The next section will discuss the application of Rothwell’s conceptual framework to examine leadership succession
through succession planning in response to the retirement of presidential leadership at one private higher education institution.

Application

Figure 4: Rothwell’s conceptual framework for succession planning and management (Rothwell, 2015)

Rothwell’s (2015) SPM will be used to frame this study. It will help the researcher generalize about the topic (Stake, 1995) and provide insight into the process of leadership succession through succession planning (Rothwell, 2015). The model includes a seven-step framework to guide the researcher through the study of succession planning in higher education.

Step 1, making a commitment to succession planning by assigning time and effort to the process, is the foremost step for succession planning and management at any institution. This portion of Rothwell’s framework will help the researcher examine deliberate actions taken by leadership to demonstrate commitment to leadership continuity through succession planning in response to the retirement of presidential leadership at one higher education institution. The most critical parts of creating an effective plan are to design it with measurable program goals,
determine the roles of various groups involved, and establish the level of accountability of those individuals (Rothwell, 2015). During this first step, the orchestrators of leadership succession (e.g., the board of trustees, faculty, and senior leadership and other university stakeholders) are chosen. The means by which each group is chosen, the roles they play in the process, and the manner in which they affect the succession planning process, will be examined.

Steps 2 and 3 are evaluating the organization’s people, work and performance, and the organizations potential for long-term stability (Rothwell, 2015). This involves identifying organizational needs for continuity and evaluating employees for performance. This step in the framework will help the researcher examine institutional strategic plans to address leadership and organizational continuity through succession planning.

Step 4, analyzing current work and people for future needs, will help the researcher examine and collect data regarding how orchestrators of succession planning at a higher education organization appraised the individual performance of employees within the organization. This will help identify candidates who possess leadership potential and matching those current skills with future organizational needs. Step 4 will help the researcher investigate how one higher education institution identified appropriate succession planning candidates to replace future retiring presidential leadership.

Step 5, evaluating performance, will assist in exploring and collecting data on the manner in which orchestrators of succession planning at one HEI planned around forthcoming requirements for organizational continuity and determined tools for assessing and measuring employee performance for advancement.

Step 6, developing people, will help examine how orchestrators of succession planning at one HEI created succession plan programs to address skills gaps in potential succession
candidates, and developed succession programs to address those organizational needs to create qualified internal candidates for future vacancies.

Step 7, *evaluating programs*, is a pivotal step that sets Rothwell’s conceptual framework apart from other theorists. In Rothwell’s model, succession planning is wedded to succession management to create a cycle of assessing succession programs for efficacy. The researcher will use this step to investigate how one higher education institution implemented ongoing efforts to promote leadership continuity through succession planning and conducted necessary improvements to maintain its commitment to succession planning programs (Rothwell, 2015).

**Conclusion**

Given the notable increase in baby boomers leaving the workforce and the projected outcome of the shift, the time has come for HEIs to direct their attention to the implications of retiring presidential leadership. Even if succession planning has been recommended as a possible remedy to the implications of retiring presidential leadership (Jackson, 2017), such strategic plans are rarely used in HEIs and there is limited literature on the topic related to academic institutions (Lovett, 2017). Therefore, The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university.

Furthermore, HEIs lack formal plans to address leadership turnover. Succession planning is a strategic tool for addressing the implications of leadership departure and closing the knowledge gap (Lovett, 2017). The benefit of transitioning new leadership through succession planning is that the candidate has already received years of mentoring, coaching, and assessing activities in preparation for the role (Jackson, 2017). There would be minimal to no leadership
vacuum, and knowledge transfer from principal to successor would be facilitated (Power, 2014). Lack of knowledge transfer and poorly executed leadership transitions are the key reasons that successors fail (Power, 2014).

Although succession planning is not standard practice in higher education, formal and informal succession planning practices are taking place at HEIs (Lovett, 2017). Formal succession planning with a clear path to the presidency has taken place through institutional in-house training programs, which serve as pathways to presidential leadership succession through mentorship, professional development, and training (Jackson, 2017). The pathway to leadership through formal and informal succession planning has provided these institutions with an opportunity to prepare successors for the role while also ensuring leadership continuity (Jackson, 2017). It has allowed institutions to secure pertinent institutional knowledge for the future while ensuring organizational stability (Power, 2014).
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university. This literature review will be composed of information on the exit of the baby boomer generation from the United States workforce in general, as well as information on baby boomer departure from higher education presidential leadership. The shift in the labor pool bodes a significant change in personnel (ACE, 2017; BLS, 2017) as the number of open senior positions outpaces the number of available qualified candidates (ACE, 2017). It is important to identify the severity of this turnover, as research indicates there will be increasing competition for viable candidates (Gluckman, 2017) and an increase in the hiring of less-qualified candidates (Smith, 2016) and candidates from nontraditional backgrounds to fill open senior positions (Seltzer, 2017b).

This literature review will contain analysis of the shared governance of higher education, whose members are responsible for decision making within HEIs (AGB 2017) and are also responsible for orchestrating the search for presidential leadership (Pitre Davis, 2015). Shared governance is a concept unique to higher education, in which power is shared among members and consequently all members are positioned to influence the succession planning process in some manner (AGB 2017). Therefore, this literature review will examine the roles of the individuals who participate in shared governance in higher education, and the manner in which they operate within it.

As the need for leadership continuity in academia becomes more relevant due to an aging workforce, globalization, budget cuts, and calls for accountability from government entities, succession planning is taking center stage (Bennett, 2015). Increasingly, researchers are recommending succession planning as a tool for remedying the ramifications of leadership
turnover at HEIs (Jackson, 2017; Smith, 2016) as baby boomers continue to leave the workforce and the implications of their departure from senior leadership positions are being realized (Pitre Davis, 2015). Despite the limited amount of empirical data on succession planning in HEIs (Jackson, 2017), labor statistics have revealed that there is a need for such planning (BLS, 2017). Therefore, this literature will review succession planning using information from the academic sector as well as from the corporate sector, which is where this strategy is traditionally practiced and used to fill key positions in the face of turnover (Lin, 2012; Rothwell, 2015).

The final section of this literature review will examine literature on obstacles to the development and implementation of succession planning in HEIs (Golden, 2014). Institutional, historical, and cultural barriers to succession planning in higher education institutions will be reviewed to highlight the roadblocks to successful implementation.

**Exit of the Baby Boomer Generation from the Workforce**

Conceptualizing the urgency of succession planning in academia requires an examination of the effect of baby boomer retirement on the American workforce. That will demonstrate the significance of this turnover and how it will affect the future labor pool. The rate of baby boomers retiring from the workforce will affect all industries (BLS, 2017), including higher education (ACE, 2017). Therefore this review will analyze the rate of retirement from the overall workforce, and then show how this affects the rate of retirement of leaders in higher education.

**Exit of Baby Boomer Generation from the U.S. Labor Force**

About 10,000 baby boomers are reaching retirement age each day in the US (Fisher, 2015). In 2011, almost half of the workforce was composed of individuals 45 years old and older (BLS, 2017). By 2016, that number shrank as individuals 55 years old and older comprised over
40% of the overall United States workforce (BLS, 2017). By 2026, the number of individuals 55 years old and older is projected to decline to 38% participation in the U.S. workforce (BLS, 2017). The aging of baby boomers is affecting the labor participation rate as employees leave their jobs. This trend is expected to continue through 2026 (BLS, 2017).

Consequently, there will be a shift in the workforce and an imminent shortage of workers (Barton, 2017) due to variation in population size between the boomer generation and Generation X (BLS, 2017). Given that shift, it would be wise for organizations across industry sectors to consider the effects this change will have on them. Because the next generation has fewer individuals than the previous one (BLS, 2017), the number of vacant positions will exceed the number of individuals available to fill them (Fisher, 2015).

The Exit of Baby Boomers from Higher Education Leadership

There are approximately 7,000 accredited HEIs in the United States (Klein & Salk, 2013; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017) and, as of 2017, 58% of college presidents were over 60 years of age (ACE, 2017). That number has increased from 49% in 2006 (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Similarly, the number of presidents over 70 years of age increased to 11%, from 5% in 2006 (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Consequently, 58% of higher education presidents are slated to retire from their positions within the next five years (Gagliardi et al., 2017). As shown in Figure 5, the majority of higher education presidents are aging out of their jobs (Gagliardi et al., 2017).
University and college presidential retirements in 2017 included Eastern Wyoming College, Castleton University, Memphis College of Art, Monmouth University, University of North Florida, Charleston Southern University, College of William and Mary, Henry Ford College, Quinnipiac University, SUNY Oneonta, Linfield College, St. Michael’s College, Bluffton University, Thomas Edison State, Bethune-Cookman University, Wiley College, California State University-Bakersfield, Idaho State University, Lewis-Clark State College, Lock Haven University, Loyola University New Orleans, Mansfield University, Mississippi College, Otterbein University, Norfolk State University, University of Oklahoma, University of Jamestown, University of Northern Colorado, Westminster College, Albany State, Limestone College, University of Central Florida, Pittsburgh at Bradford College, Boise State University, Imperial Valley College, Pacific Northwest University, Broward College, Southwestern Illinois College, and the University of Charleston (Higher Ed Direct, 2017).

Due to the rate of retirement, institutions will inevitably go through periods of transition from predecessor to successor (Pitre Davis, 2015). It can take up to a year to fill a presidential post (Seltzer, 2016); therefore, some of these institutions may experience a leadership vacuum in the interim (Bidwell, 2011). Because most institutions do not have plans in place to deal with
retiring leadership (Pitre Davis, 2015), the transition process may have unwanted and unexpected implications (Pitre Davis, 2015).

**The Role of a Higher Education President**

The role of the HEI president has evolved over time (Selingo, Cheung, & Cole, 2017). During the 1800s, presidents were mostly clergymen who split their time between running their institution and teaching (Poston, 1997). From 1900-1944, presidents took on more administrative roles, as HEIs started to seek individuals with a business background and the ability to manage increasingly complex institutions (Selingo et al., 2017). After World War II (1945-1975), student enrollments increased, partially due to the implementation of the GI Bill. As a result, the president’s role required individuals who could build and operate larger institutions; they needed to be able to increase programming to accommodate student needs (Selingo et al., 2017). The influx of federal dollars allowed presidents to obtain new resources for expansion, but this increased funding also changed the job of presidents into fiscal agents for their institutions. Starting in 1976, the presidents’ role expanded to include the skills of raising funds through donations and endowments, developing partnerships, and creating new revenue streams (Selingo et al., 2017). More recently, the role of HEI president has become a multifaceted, complex, and challenging position. Figure 6 provides an overview of the duties higher education presidents carried out in 2017 (Selingo et al., 2017).
A continued decrease in government funding and an increase in state and federal regulations have required HEIs to compete for leaders who can raise funds and find creative and innovative avenues to supplement lost capital in an uncertain economy (Basham, 2012). In addition, navigating federal academic regulations as policymakers engage in augmented dimensions of higher education, fundraising, and capital campaigns has continued to be of central importance; indeed, increasingly, colleges and universities turn to their presidents to take an active role in resource development (Bennett, 2015).

In short, the role of the president has evolved to encompass increasing challenges as leaders face more complex modern-day policy issues, such as academic freedom, guns on campus, and campus sexual assault (Selingo et al., 2017). The role of the provost has been the pathway to the presidency, but that has changed (Selingo et al., 2017). As indicated in Figure 7, recent trends demonstrate that only 64% of presidents held the position of provost prior to becoming president, while 30% went from deans to presidents (Selingo et al., 2017).
Figure 7. Higher education pathways to presidency (ACE, 2017)

Therefore, not only are presidents aging out of their jobs (Gagliardi et al., 2017), but the duties of the position have also become more complex, and presidential successors are spending less time in the positions (Seltzer, 2017).

Transition Process for Retiring Higher Education Presidents

On average, 25% of higher education institutions in the United States experience presidential transitions each year (Mallard, 2015). Academic presidents embody the values and goals of their institutions (Poston, 1997). When a president leaves his or her post, it has a significant effect on the organization (AAUP, 1966) and can have a lasting effect on the institution and its subunits (AAUP, 1966; Poston, 1997). With that being said, the exit of baby boomers from the workforce is expected to continue through 2026 (BLS, 2017). The transition between the outgoing and incoming president can be disruptive (Poston, 1997), but it can also be enriching for an institution if proper plans are in place for effectively addressing the changeover (AGB, 2017; Mallard, 2015). If done correctly, the presidential transition could be an opportunity to create overlap between the incoming successor and the outgoing president. This would provide a chance for the incoming successor to be involved in decisions that will impact his first year of presidency, learn the systems of the institution, meet key stakeholders, and
establish some visibility on campus prior to taking office (Mallard, 2015). Given that knowledge, it would be advantageous for a researcher to examine the processes used by institutions to ensure the smooth transition of presidential leadership upon retirement.

The retirement process of higher education presidents lacks formal systems for their smooth departure (Johnson & Eckel, 2013). The transition processes for outgoing and incoming presidents is informal, arbitrary, and siloed (Johnson & Eckel, 2013). Many factors contribute to ineffective transitions, including a decline in authority within the last 100 days of their presidency, inability to form relationships with their successors, lack of proper channels for transferring institutional knowledge, and lack of feedback from incoming presidents (Johnson & Eckel, 2013). Upon announcement of their departure, some presidents make lists of priorities that need to be executed upon their exit, while others compile reports and transitional materials (Johnson & Eckel, 2013; Mallard, 2015). Yet most HEIs have no formal plans related to presidential leadership departure (Selingo et al., 2017).

Exacerbating the situation, negative implications are also experienced by successors during the presidential search and transition process (Cook, 2012). Most presidential successors have limited knowledge about aspects of the job and their new organizations (Cook, 2012; Johnson & Eckel, 2013) and, furthermore, some successors are not made aware of the institution’s challenges (Johnson & Eckel, 2013) and financial conditions before accepting the presidential position (Cook, 2012). This indicates that there was no overlap between the predecessor and the successor or, if there was, that pertinent institutional information was not transferred from one party to the next during the transition process (Power, 2014; Mallard, 2015).
The lack of strategies within HEIs to respond to the departure of leadership (Jackson, 2017) indicates that they did not have plans in place to assist with the shift in leadership and the passing on of pertinent institutional information (Johnson & Eckel, 2013). It is therefore the responsibility of the persons who orchestrate the recruitment of an academic president to develop and expedite an effective and efficient process for all parties involved (AAUP, 1966; Bowen & Tobin, 2015). In order to investigate planning for leadership succession through succession planning, the researcher will review the roles of the parties involved in the search to fill vacant presidential positions at HEIs.

Higher Education Shared Governing System

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university. The following section will discuss shared governance in higher education, a governing concept that is unique to academic institutions. Individuals participating in the process are responsible for conducting presidential searches (Bowen & Tobin, 2015) and ultimately for organizing presidential succession planning in higher education (AGB, 2017). While the shared governance plays an important part in steering the succession process, it also creates a barrier to the implementation of succession in HEIs and generally lacks having plans in place to address the retirement of presidential leadership (Golden, 2014).

Orchestrators of Presidential Leadership Succession in HEIs

The shared governance of an academic institution refers to the persons responsible for policymaking and making macro-level decisions within an organization (McDonagh Prybil, &
Totten, 2013). In a private higher education setting, governance responsibilities are shared among faculty, presidents, and the board of trustees (McDonagh et al., 2013). The shared governing system in higher education operates as the ruling body of academic organizations, with the board of trustees, president, and the academic community (faculty, senate, council) jointly making decisions in relation to institutional matters (AGB, 2017). Shared governance means that all participating members have a role in the decision making process, although not necessarily at every stage (Olson, 2009). This system creates shared authority among the parties (AGB, 2017), suggesting that consensus is required on various institutional issues such as policies, financial matters, and academic decisions (McDonough et al., 2013). Shared governance is also responsible for the administrative structure of the organization (AGB, 2017) and the board of trustees has the authority to hire and remove presidents from their posts (AGB, 2017; Poston, 1997). Therefore, when a presidential post is vacant, the shared governance system is responsible for orchestrating the selection of a new president (Poston, 1997). Members of the system recommend the final candidates, and the board makes the final selection based on those recommendations (Olson, 2009).

Although shared governance is the governing model in HEIs, the structure of the system differs in private versus public institutions (Olson, 2009). The board of trustees holds the right to exercise legal command and has the final authority (with few exceptions) at both private and public HEIs (AAUP, 1966; Olson, 2009). The board entrusts the conduct of administration to presidents and deans, while teaching and research is assigned to faculty (AAUP, 1966). Statutory or constitutional laws mandate governing boards at public institutions, while governing boards at private HEIs are self-perpetuating (AAUP, 2014). With respect to presidential succession, the board at a public institution is responsible for appointing and firing presidents,
but the legislature or the governor can override the authority of public institutional boards (Lambardi, Craig, Capaldi, & Gater, 2002; Golden; 2014).

Because private institutions are self-perpetuating, they are not bound by the direction of state officials in regards to presidential appointments (Lambardi et al., 2002). Therefore, when a presidential post is vacant at a private HEI, the members of the shared governance are responsible for orchestrating the process of appointing a new president (Poston, 1997). As a result, members of the shared governance directly participate in the recruitment and hiring process to fill leadership positions within their institutions (Poston, 1997). This affects the policies that are set in place to commission successors for leadership roles (AGB, 2017; Poston, 1997).

Finding a suitable presidential candidate is a significant undertaking (AAUP, 1966; McDonagh et al., 2013) and a joint effort is imperative because a president can change the culture and structure of an institution (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). Therefore, mutual cooperation among members is important to conducting an effective presidential search in academia (AAUP, 1966; Poston, 1997).

Implementing succession planning by way of shared governance has implications for academia (Golden, 2014; McDonagh, et al., 2013; Richards, 2016). The barrier posed by the members of the shared governance related to succession planning is two-fold (McDonagh et al., 2013; Richards, 2016). First, the governing system’s policies lead to exclusively hiring externally into senior leadership positions (Richards, 2016; McDonagh et al., 2013). Furthermore the requirement for consensus at various stages of the succession planning process poses a difficult challenge because so many party members are involved (McDonagh et al., 2013). Effective implementation of succession plans would require effective communication within the system (Richards, 2016) and a shift in policy relating to how senior leadership is hired in
academia (Richards, 2016). Succession plans that are easily implemented (Richards, 2016) and executed in corporate culture (Richards, 2016) could fail miserably in an academic environment where an open and inclusive collegial environment defines the culture (Richards, 2016). However, the obstacles to implementing succession planning within an academic environment are surmountable, as demonstrated at academic institutions previously mentioned in this review (González, 2013). Therefore, the next section will analyze the orchestration of the recruiting process for leadership with higher education institutions.

**Orchestrating Recruitment for Presidential Leadership in Higher Education**

The leadership recruitment process set by the governing system is complex; joint effort among members becomes critical in the search for an appropriate candidate with both administrative and leadership skills (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). The search process commences with the appointment of a committee chair by the board of trustees, and then a search committee of 9-20 members is formed (Poston, 1997). The committee is usually composed of representatives from the board and faculty (AAUP, 1966). The participation of senior administration is discouraged because they may represent the perspective of the outgoing administration (Poston, 1997).

The board sets forth the conditions and terms of a presidential appointment (Poston, 1997) and establishes (a) search committee membership, (b) statement of presidential leadership qualities, (c) breadth of the search (regional or national), (d) expectations regarding the use of search consultants, (e) the number of candidates to be recommended to the board for the final decision, and (f) the date by which the board expects recommendations of nominees (Poston, 1997). The search committee then reflects the role of the board in selecting a president and is responsible for (a) designing its timelines and procedures, (b) screening and interviewing
candidates, and (c) making recommendations for potential successors to the board (Poston, 1997).

Most academic institutions use executive search firms to find senior leadership candidates (Seltzer, 2016). Even if search committees are not required to use recruiting firms, it is standard operating procedure for recruiting executive positions in academic settings (Seltzer, 2016; Taylor, 2013). Search firms were used by 82 of 106 higher education institutions in the 2015-2016 academic year to find leadership (Seltzer, 2016). Executive recruiting firms can be quite expensive: the average base cost for four-year institutions to recruit a candidate is $88,000 (Seltzer, 2016; Wilde & Finkelstein, 2017). There are usually additional costs for degree and media checks, criminal background checks, credit reports, and department of motor vehicles checks (Seltzer, 2016). It can take up to a year to find a successor for leadership positions (Seltzer, 2016; Wilde & Finkelstein, 2017).

Although the methodology of using executive firms to conduct nationwide searches has historically worked (Parkman & Beard, 2008; Seltzer, 2016), labor statistics project that as participation in the workforce declines it will be more difficult for organizations to recruit qualified candidates for senior leadership positions (BLS, 2017). Considering that succession planning is a top-down approach (Jackson, 2017) and involves intentionally recruiting and training individuals for leadership roles prior to the exit of predecessors (Jackson, 2017), the structure of the shared governing system and recruitment practices in higher education can undermine the succession planning process (Golden, 2014). Because the corporate strategy is traditionally facilitated from the top, meaning the CEO and boards (Golden, 2014), succession planning in HEIs is in direct contrast to the shared governing system in academia (Golden, 2014), where power is distributed among subunits (AAUP, 1966). Institutions may face a
challenge, as all parties have to concur on aspects of the succession plan (Golden, 2014) and conflict can occur if parties have varying or contrasting agendas (Richards, 2016).

**Succession Planning Defined**

Succession planning was born at the turn of the 20th century when Henri Fayol, a researcher in the field of management, introduced it as a strategic concept to create stability for firms by creating a pipeline for leadership continuity at every level of the organization (Chevalier, 2008). Fayol believed that, in order for an organization to thrive and remain competitive, leaders must proactively create a channel to develop the leadership characteristics and skills needed for organizational continuity. Fayol asserted that if an organization remained reactive to leadership continuity, their vacant senior positions would be filled with unqualified successors (Chevalier, 2008). Therefore, it was management’s job to improve workplace performance by planning, organizing, executing, and assessing activities (Chevalier, 2008).

Fayol’s principles for management include a 14-step guide to improve work performance (Chevalier, 2008). Peter Drucker, who followed Fayol as a pioneer in the world of management and workplace productivity, also believed that the productivity of the organization was the responsibility of the manager (Chevalier, 2008).

Many theorists built upon the foundations of Fayol’s effort to develop a systematic and systemic methodology for boosting workplace performance (Chevalier, 2008). Well known scholars such as Fredrick Hezberg (1923-1990), B. F. Skinner (1904-1990), Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), and Peter Drucker (1909-1925) all referenced Fayol’s (1841-1925) approach when developing their techniques for improving organizational performance (Chevalier, 2008).
Fayol benchmarked succession planning as a means of retaining organizational knowledge (Grossman & Klenke, 2014). Fayol theorized that organizations needed to invest in the training and development of successors for key leadership positions to avoid the implications of hiring unqualified candidates (Grossman & Klenke, 2014).

Succession planning can be defined as identifying, developing, and mentoring an internal candidate over an extended period of time to take over a leadership position in an organization (Bornstein, 2010; Jackson, 2017; Rothwell, 2015). Effective succession planning involves formal strategic planning and is founded upon continuity. It involves recruiting, educating, training, and mentoring potential leaders to ensure the sustainability of the organization (Rothwell, 2015). Succession planning objectives include the following: establishing the skill sets needed by the organization, identifying internal candidates within the organization who possess those skill sets, and creating a long-term development plan for those potential leaders to transition into these roles in the future (Rothwell, 2015). Succession planning includes many levels (Quinn, Smith, & Walker, 2011). On the lower end of the spectrum, it means developing potential leaders for non-managerial positions (Quinn et al., 2011). Mid-level succession planning involves developing leadership programs for individuals who may be ready to take on more responsibility within the organization (Quinn et al., 2011). Highly specialized succession planning involves preparing specific top candidates for key leadership positions (Quinn et al., 2011).

Traditional succession planning focuses on organizational needs rather than the needs of individuals, and is limited to senior and top executives within an organization (Mercer, 2009). In contrast, modern succession planning focuses on identifying and developing individuals for increasingly complex roles within an organization (Rothwell, 2015), because the goal of modern
succession planning is to produce a pipeline for potential leadership within the organization. The next section will analyze succession planning in the higher education sector.

**Succession Planning in Higher Education**

Leadership programs are plentiful in HEIs, but formal succession planning is a strategy rarely practiced in academia (Adams, 2013). Succession planning is a common concept in the corporate world (Pepper, 2016; Lin, 2012), but historically, academia has not accepted corporate culture concepts (Bornstein, 2010; Blackburn, 2015). The academic community views the process as politically charged and as an avenue to playing favoritism among constituents (Luna, 2010). Because internal hiring is not the norm in higher education and is frowned upon, there are barriers for internal employees who may be potential candidates (Luna, 2010). The academic environment requires collective action through shared governance to make major decisions regarding policies (AAUP, 1966; AGB, 2017).

The board at a public institution is responsible for appointing and firing presidents, but the governor can override that authority (Lambardi et al., 2002). Private institutions are not directed by state officials in regards to presidential appointments (Lambardi et al., 2002). Therefore, when a presidential post is vacant at a private HEI, the members of its governance are responsible for the selection of a new president (Poston, 1997).

This practice and culture is in direct contrast to corporate culture (Pepper, 2016), in which individuals are singled out to be groomed for future leadership (Luna, 2010). Even when strong internal presidential contenders are available within an institution, academic organizations still conduct national searches to find senior leadership (Lapovsky, 2007). However, although succession planning is rarely practiced in higher education (Luna, 2010), some academic
institutions have adopted the formal and informal version of succession planning to develop an internal leadership plan for organizational continuity (Davis, 2012; Blackburn, 2015).

In response to the retirement announcement of its long-time president, Michael Crow, Arizona State University (ASU) developed a succession plan model for leadership continuity (Selingo et al., 2017). ASU created professional development programs for faculty and staff to prepare them for leadership roles. The university has continued to build a pipeline of individuals by extending its programs to senior administrators (Selingo et al., 2017).

Emory University’s pipeline for succession planning through its Excellence Through Leadership program (Emory University News Center, 2014) selected individuals to participate in a yearlong program focused on leadership development (Davis, 2012). In an effort to create a pipeline for succession planning, the candidates engaged in curricula comprising core leadership competencies and access to senior administration, in addition to developing their administrative skills (Davis, 2012). Using Emory’s multipart and multiplan financial leadership succession plan, they selected Carol Dillon Kissal as the vice president of finance and chief operating officer (Emory University News Center, 2014). Kissal was handpicked as part of Emory’s long-term succession plan for leadership and organizational continuity (Emory University News Center, 2014). The selection process was part of a strategy that required buy-in from constituents, including faculty, staff, business officers, and deans (Emory University News Center, 2014).

When Wilmington University president Audrey Doberstein decided to retire after 23 years of service, a succession plan had already been in place for 18 years (Lapovský, 2007). Although a successor had not been chosen at the time of her announcement, there was a potential successor in queue who had been groomed by the president (Lapovský, 2007).
Williams College gives faculty members opportunities to serve as dean or provost under the supervision of the college president (Bornstein, 2010). Williams has produced 12 college presidents over a 40-year period and has chosen one of their own administrators for their own presidency 41% of the time (Bornstein, 2010). Although Williams College does not have a formal succession plan with a clear path to the presidency, the college’s in-house training served as a pathway to leadership succession through mentorship, professional development, and training (Bornstein, 2010).

A small number of academic institutions use succession planning to select leadership for different levels of the organization, and each organization designs its plans to fit its own needs (Bornstein, 2010). While ASU developed a plan for leadership continuity (Selingo et al., 2017), Emory selected Kissal because she had leadership qualities that contributed to the institution’s mission and long-term strategic plan (Emory University News Center, 2014). Williams College had an informal plan in place for leadership continuity (Bornstein, 2010), while Wilmington University’s formal plan had a successor waiting in the wings upon retirement of its president (Lapovsky, 2007).

Succession plans are still scarce in higher education due to the academic culture and governing system (Pepper, 2016); however, these institutions have shown that a strategic plan can be successfully implemented and practiced in an academic environment (Bornstein, 2010; Selingo et al., 2017). Nevertheless, academic institutions have been slow to adapt to hiring internal candidates, as over 80% of presidents were hired from outside their organizations (Selingo et al., 2017; Seltzer, 2016). These academic organizations (Selingo et al., 2017) have demonstrated the success of their programs by producing internal successors who had been groomed for leadership in anticipation of vacancies in key senior positions (Bornstein, 2010;
Selingo et al., 2017). In order to conceptualize leadership development through succession planning, the next section of this review will analyze how succession plans are designed.

**Leadership Development through Succession Planning in Higher Education**

When a senior position becomes vacant, it can take a long time to find a replacement (Wilde & Finkelstein, 2017). Once a replacement is chosen, there is also a period during which the successor learns the culture of the organization and becomes acclimated to the position (Bidwell, 2011). This process can take months or years (Bidwell, 2011; Wilde & Finkelstein, 2017). The benefits of transitioning new leadership through succession planning is that the candidate has already received years of mentoring, coaching, and assessing activities within the organization in preparation for the role (Grossman & Klenke, 2014). Succession planning would not only allow HEIs to invest in their employees (Barden & Curry, 2013), but also allow them to mentor individuals who reflect the mission and values of their organizations (Adams, 2013).

To identify the benefits of utilizing succession plans to develop leadership within HEIs, the researcher must evaluate the process of how leaders are groomed and mentored for leadership through succession planning. The recommendation to develop internal employees through succession planning does not eliminate external candidates from the hiring pool (Selingo et al., 2017). There are occasions when an external candidate may be a better fit for a specific position. Succession planning simply increases the number of qualified candidates for a vacant position (Selingo et al., 2017).

Succession plans can be designed to suit the respective needs of individual institutions (Adams, 2013). Overall, there is no blueprint to succession planning. Plans can be distinguished by the timing, direction, scope, dissemination, and individual discretion of an organization (Rothwell, 2010). Although succession plan designs vary, the succession goals among sectors
are similar. They are usually geared towards developing human capital (Rothwell, 2010), in order to preserve institutional knowledge for continuity (Grossman & Klenke, 2014) and to prepare the organization for anticipated and unforeseen threats (Rothwell, 2010).

When an institution decides to build leadership through succession planning, it must consider a succession model that will allow it to create long-term objectives for leadership development (Rothwell, 2010, 2015). During this process, an organization’s objective is to create succession planning programs that will stabilize its tenure of personnel by matching the organization’s current talent to its future needs (Blackburn, 2015). Because succession models differ (Blackburn, 2015), organizations can choose the one that will best suit their objectives (Blackburn, 2015). Therefore, the succession models that will be examined below are those that would be best suited for a higher education environment and would attenuate the implications of leadership shortage due to the retirement of baby boomers.

Peters’ (2011) model for building leadership through succession planning includes three components: planning, forecasting, and sustaining leadership. This approach tackles succession planning on simultaneous levels rather than continuous levels. The first element in this process is forecasting, which involves a proactive approach of predicting and preparing for vacancies in key leadership roles. This allows the organization to take a proactive approach to leadership replacement instead of reacting to the vacant position after the leader has departed. The second element in the process is sustaining, which involves distributing leadership beyond the jurisdiction of one leader. In this process, all constituents are held accountable for the successes or failures of the organization. This provides an avenue for leadership support and a support system for sustaining democratic leadership. The third element, planning, consists of preparing for transition of the current leader to a successor. This involves a deliberate overlap of the
current leader and successor for a period of time. This eliminates the leadership vacuum and helps the successor make a smooth transition into the new role. Overall, Peters’ (2011) plan provides a basic approach to succession planning and, like other models, allows an organization to identify and develop the competencies it would like to see in its leaders (Peters, 2011).

Competency based succession plans have been recommended to address succession planning in higher education (Barton, 2017). Richards (2009) proposed a 5Cs approach to succession planning in higher education, by which she concedes that competency-based succession planning elevates an individual’s capacity for leadership while simultaneously ensuring alignment of the organizational goals. In that same sentiment, Luzbetek (2010) also advocated competency-based planning as an essential part of succession planning, and both authors conceded that identifying organization operational competencies and engaging in a deliberate leadership training are key to achieving successful leadership development through succession.

Job-based competency models are used as tools designed to illustrate behaviorally the specific skills, knowledge, and personal attributes required to perform a job in an exceptional manner (Jones-Moore, 2016). Competency models can be used during succession planning to illustrate reliable and valid competencies that are tied to exceptional job performance (Rothwell, 2015). Competency models have long been used by organizations to identify talent for leadership during succession (Blackman & Shweyer, 2007). In order to create high potential internal leaders, organizations must connect competency development with the core competencies of the organization (Blackman & Shweyer, 2007; Rothwell, 2015). Although competency models vary based on the structure and needs of individual companies (Profiroiu, & Hurdubei, 2018), they are similar in the sense that they all aim to produce certain behaviors and
practices that will improve the performance of the organization (Blackman & Shweyer, 2007; Profiroiu, & Hurdubei, 2018).

Baldwin (2000) and Rothwell (2010) introduced activity-based succession planning theory, which focused on leadership development and knowledge retention through purposeful activities centered on institutional knowledge transfer and leadership development. Their models for succession planning center on a range of specific experiences aimed at developing the successor. Their activity-based succession programs were designed to provide sensory input that would develop knowledge and transfer it to successors (Muniz, 2013). Activity-based succession planning places a heavy emphasis on socialization strategies, which allow predecessor and successor to share information (Muniz, 2013). During activity-based succession planning, participants take on endeavors such as mentor-mentee relations, networking, and job shadowing in preparation for leadership roles (Muniz, 2013).

Peters (2011), Baldwin (2000) and Rothwell (2010, 2015) provided examples of plans that would provide an overlap between the predecessor and the successor prior to retirement. While Peters’ (2011) model would possibly allow HEIs to gradually transition retirees while transferring knowledge to successors and developing their leadership skills (Peters, 2011), Rothwell’s (2010, 2015) models focus on transferring knowledge for leadership development and continuity.

Rothwell’s (2010, 2015) managerial succession model is best suited to a higher education environment because it helps with the implications of retirees leaving the academic sector. Designed to address the current and future implications of leadership turnover, Rothwell’s (2010, 2015) succession planning and management (SPM) model focuses on targeted problems, such as critical turnover within an organization. In addition, SPM focuses on preparing people for
leadership at every level of an institution. It thereby creates talent pools within each division inside the organization (Rothwell, 2010, 2015).

Although Rothwell (2010) proposed five succession planning and management models, only two could potentially be applied to a higher education environment. Rothwell’s (2010) top-down approach, market-driven approach, and futuring approach all stem from corporate strategy, where power is concentrated at the top. These strategies might fail in a higher education environment where the governance model shares power among its members.

Rothwell’s (2010) career planning approach focuses on individual career planning in conjunction with organizational superiors as part of a strategic plan to develop a particular individual for current and future organizational needs. Although this model may be appropriate in some cases, it does not identify or address the implications of turnover within the organization; therefore, strategic goals may not be met.

Rothwell’s (2010, 2015) rifle approach represents a shift from the traditional roots of succession planning. His rifle approach to succession is an appropriate model because it focuses on a specific, identifiable problem (such as critical turnover) within an organization and allows the organization to include new considerations that will affect the workplace of the future. The rifle approach expands strategic goals to include succession planning, knowledge transfer, and greater reliance on retirees. The mentor-mentee relationship in Rothwell’s framework emphasizes improving perspectives on job security, knowledge sharing, and the advancement of job opportunities (Rothwell, 2015). It ensures that institutional memory will be preserved and reflected upon to provide continuous improvement relative to the stability of the organization (Rothwell, 2015). It also allows organizations to address leadership development in direct response to a shift in the workforce (Rothwell, 2015). With that in mind, Rothwell’s (2010;
2015) rifle approach is appropriately designed to address the current and future implications associated with leadership turnover in higher education. Because knowledge transfer is a key component of succession planning (Rothwell, 2015), we can assume that candidates would receive institutional knowledge during the succession that would be pertinent to the success of the organization.

**Institutional Knowledge Transfer during Succession Planning in Higher Education**

Loss of knowledge through presidential retirement is one of the biggest threats to HEIs (Shadow, Barbeau, Schechter, & Steinhauer, 2018). The knowledge attrition that occurs during presidential retirement can be attributed to the lack of formal systems within HEIs that would retrieve knowledge from retirees prior to departure and store that knowledge for future use (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012). The lack of knowledge management systems within HEIs poses a threat to institutions, as presidential retirees walk out the door with vital institutional knowledge (Shadow et al., 2018). The continued loss of knowledge through presidential retirement poses a significant threat to HEIs (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012), mostly because it is difficult to access this knowledge once the retiree leaves the organization (Shadow et al., 2018). Approximately 42% of an organization’s knowledge lives within its employees, while only 46% of institutional knowledge exists in an explicit form, meaning information that can be captured and documented through reports, charts, and other systematic methods (Muniz, 2013). Succession planning aids in knowledge transfer (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004) because the strategy creates a systematic structure for gathering and retaining institutional knowledge (Shadow et al., 2018). Methodologies for sharing information through formal succession planning have been explored by many theorists (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Therefore, the researcher will examine the
manner in which succession planning can be used to transfer institutional knowledge to incoming successors (Shadow et al., 2018; Power, 2014).

Shadow et al., (2018) performed a study to examine the impact that the absence of knowledge transfer systems and succession planning had on executive leadership transition in higher education. The purpose of the study was to gain insight on how the participants were transitioning into the new roles without the presence of either strategy. The study included executives, faculty, and administrators.

The study found the participants reported a lack of transparency and lack of clear communication. Executives found that they were unable to share knowledge with their predecessors because there was no available time or opportunity to do so. This knowledge was considered stuck, meaning that knowledge within organizations often depletes due knowledge barriers (Szulanski, 2003), and while all knowledge requires some degree of effort to transmit, sticky knowledge (p. 22, Szulanski, 2003) requires more work and effort to transmit. The participants expressed the need for more effective knowledge sharing tools such as meetings, mentoring, and documentation on previous performance and steps to achieve desired goals (Shadow et al., 2018). The absence of succession plans played a huge role in the barriers to knowledge transfer because succession plans are designed to identify and address knowledge transfer issues and gaps (Shadow et al., 2018). Even if the participants proposed these strategies to address the lack of knowledge transfer, the problem is that the systems were never initiated in a formal manner, therefore providing lack of avenues to conduct these knowledge transfer activities (Shadow et al., 2018).

Culture plays a part in the sharing of knowledge within an organization (Szulanski, 2003; Wang & Wang, 2014). In order to address knowledge attrition, institutions
need to create a culture built on exchanging knowledge routinely (Rechburg & Syed, 2014). One of the ways to do so is to integrate how individuals within the organizations process knowledge (Rechburg & Syed, 2014). Although interaction between predecessor and successor is paramount (Shadow et al., 2018), technology plays a vital role in knowledge transfer within higher education (Rechburg & Syed, 2014; Richter, Stocker, Müller, & Avram, 2013). Technology can provide organizations with the additional options to store, extract, and code institutional data, in addition to adding ease to accessing this stored data. It also allows the successors to make more informed and effective organizational decisions (Richter et al., 2013). Organization can facilitate culture of knowledge sharing through succession (Shadow et al., 2018).

Muniz (2013) placed heavy emphasis on work-related activities, allowing for narratives that involve sharing explicit and expressible tacit knowledge. This methodology, the sharing of information through socialization and learning activities, has combined brain-learning physiology in neuroscience, knowledge management theory, leadership theory, and succession planning theory to create a predictable basis for retaining information in HEIs.

Phased retirement is another avenue for knowledge transfer during leadership transition (Applebaum et al., 2012). This process involves flexible arrangements in which pending retirees reduce their hours while mentoring junior counterparts and then stay on with the organization after retirement in a limited mentoring role. This part-time role would include, but would not be limited to, consulting, job sharing, and telecommuting. This arrangement has been successful because it positions retirees as valuable assets to the organization, and junior counterparts and successors feel more comfortable seeking answers to questions because they are not being formally evaluated (Applebaum et al., 2012). Knowledge transfer during phased retirement
involves several components: (a) it encompasses technical knowledge and a threshold competence transferred and comprehended; (b) it includes information about the institution’s past and current history; and (c) it provides specific knowledge relative to leadership, risk taking, and decision making (Applebaum et al., 2012).

While the Applebaum et al. (2012) methodology is based around managerial succession planning, their plan is focused on developing people for leadership at every level of the organization. Rothwell (2004) addressed the preservation of specialized institutional knowledge through technical succession planning. Technical succession planning is an effort to capture, store, and preserve institutional knowledge and thereby ensure continuity in an organization, department, or work group (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). It focuses on training individuals to preserve and enhance specialized knowledge through professional development (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Rothwell (2004) proposed a seven-step road map for technical succession planning to preserve institutional knowledge. The plan emphasizes passing on the right information to the right people at the right time to ensure continuity in the organization. The roadmap includes: (a) making the commitment to identify and capture specialized institutional knowledge prior to losing an employee; (b) mapping out the key processes to the organization’s mission; (c) identifying individuals within the organization who are expertly skilled in key work processes; (d) clarifying those work processes that are performed by those skilled workers; (e) capturing and extracting specialized knowledge from those who possess it; (f) considering how to maintain and transmit that specialized knowledge to key individuals who are essential to the continuity of the organization; and (g) regularly assessing knowledge gaps, evaluating strategies utilized to address the gaps, and assessing the results (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004).
Knowledge transfer is the greatest challenge of technical succession planning, as it is difficult to transmit the results of experience to successors. Nonetheless, organizations must make an attempt to capture institutional memory that reflects what the organization has learned from past experiences (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Knowledge management in this context means passing on lessons to successors so they do not waste time doing things that have already been done (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Rothwell’s (2004) model for technical succession planning addresses tacit knowledge; in other words, it addresses knowledge that people carry around in their heads. This knowledge is not documented, and it is usually gained through the experiences of the persons who possess it (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Institutional knowledge may be vital to the incoming presidential successors in academia (Shadow et al., 2018). However, studies have shown that knowledge management systems are subpar and inadequate in HEIs (Shadow et al., 2018; Power, 2014).

Although Rothwell’s models directly address the implications of leadership turnover and knowledge transfer in higher education, they do not directly address the barriers to implementing succession planning in academic environments. Therefore, the researcher must direct attention to the obstacles to implementing succession planning models in an academic setting.

**Obstacles to Succession Planning in Higher Education Institutions**

In order for HEIs to reap the benefits of succession planning, it is particularly important to address some significant barriers that will cause succession plans to fail in an academic environment (McDonagh et al., 2013; Richards, 2016).

Voluntary exits from a position are not traditionally discussed until the incumbents have left (Johnson & Eckel, 2013); therefore, hiring practices in higher education have always been
reactive rather than proactive when incumbents depart from leadership positions (Lovett, 2017). In rare cases, an institution may have a formal or informal succession plan in place that will yield a successor (Bornstein, 2010; Selingo et al., 2017), but most academic institutions do not have a succession or strategic plan to address leadership turnover (Stripling, 2011; Seltzer, 2016). There are several obstacles to succession planning in an academic environment (McDonagh et al., 2013; Richards, 2016). Higher education’s governing system and its traditional recruitment practices have contributed to the industry’s sluggish response to retiring leadership and succession planning (Bowen & Tobin, 2015).

A significant barrier to succession planning in academia is the process by which higher education institutions recruit successors for senior leadership positions (Taylor, 2013). Hiring procedures within organizations are in congruence with the policies set by governing systems of academia (McDonagh et al., 2013). Therefore, to conceptualize the obstacles facing the leadership recruitment process at HEIs, the researcher must first review the governing structure of academic institutions (Taylor, 2013).

**The Academic Culture and Succession Planning**

Succession planning in higher education is a taboo subject. It is rarely talked about or practiced (Lovett, 2017). Individuals in higher education have varying definitions of the concept and little knowledge about the process (Klein & Salk, 2013). Combined, these issues create a barrier to successful implementation of succession planning (Bowen & Tobin, 2015).

There are four prevailing themes in the academic literature on succession planning in higher education: (a) succession planning was not being addressed well (Bornstein, 2010; Lovett, 2017), (b) succession planning was only being addressed at an interim level (Klein & Salk, 2013), (c) there was a heavy reliance on national searches (Seltzer, 2016; Wilde & Finkelstein,
(d) mentoring and leadership development was only being addressed at the senior administration level (Klein & Salk, 2013). In addition, there seemed to be little awareness about the leadership shortage among the next generation (Klein & Salk, 2013). The culture of academia is not conducive to successful implementation of succession planning (Taylor, 2013). Klein and Salk (2013) showed that members of the shared governance are unwilling to depart from traditional practices for recruiting senior leadership (Taylor, 2013). However, HEIs will have to address leadership continuity in the face of retirement, and succession planning seems to be an obvious solution to the implications of a leadership shift (Lovett, 2017).

If leadership transition through succession planning were to be addressed, then the shared governance would be required to take an active role in spearheading the succession process. In order to do so, succession planning needs to be facilitated by the governance so it can receive buy-in from the organization (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). Leaders must construct a strategic method to present the idea of succession planning to the higher education community. The plan must be sound, credible, and highly beneficial to the organization and all its constituents (Taylor, 2013). The principles for launching change involve organizational leaders delivering a sound plan with a sense of urgency (Burke, 2013). The method by which leaders introduce succession planning is just as important as the plan itself. It is imperative for leaders to guide the organization through change (Burke, 2013); therefore, the succession planning process has to be spearheaded by senior administration (Bowen & Tobin, 2015).

**Conclusion**

Literature has shown that the retirement of senior leadership has profound implications for HEIs (Lovett, 2017). Not only will there be a shortage of qualified candidates to fill vacant
leadership positions as baby boomers leave the workforce (ACE, 2017; BLS, 2017), but the retirees are exiting with valuable institutional knowledge that is not being captured by institutions before their departures (Power, 2014). Compounding the issue, constituents of higher education institutions have no formal plan to combat the implications (Lovett, 2017), and some are unaware of the shift and its consequences (Stripling, 2011).

Succession planning is therefore a practical approach for colleges and universities to maintain capable and effective leadership during inevitable periods of transition (Bornstein, 2010; Lovett 2017). First, the strategy allows organizations to set forth formal long-term plans for leadership development (Adams, 2013), as it creates an avenue for higher education to develop a pipeline of qualified candidates in anticipation of vacant leadership within their organizations (Rothwell, 2010). Although the tradition of conducting external searches has worked in the past (Seltzer, 2016), qualified candidates will be in demand. and this may lead to selecting candidates with lower qualifications to fill the leadership vacuum (Seltzer, 2017a). Developing and implementing a succession plan can ease this impending leadership crisis (Bornstein, 2010).

Secondly, succession planning captures valuable knowledge from retirees before their transition (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012; Power, 2014). As previously mentioned, 42% of organizational knowledge does not exist in explicit form (i.e., documented information) but rather resides exclusively within employees (Muniz, 2013; Rothwell, 2010). Since this knowledge is often not shared or available to other key individuals (Rothwell, 2010), employees often leave the organization with knowledge and, as a result, fail to transfer this knowledge to their successors (Wang & Wang, 2014). Current strategies for managing knowledge in higher education are not formalized and are sometimes ineffective (Power, 2014).
Since the loss of institutional knowledge during retirement is one of the biggest threats to HEIs, succession planning would provide a way for organizations to retain knowledge (Power, 2014).

In addition, research has demonstrated that formal development and implementation of succession programs has saved organizations time and money, and also has allowed continued success (Rothwell, 2015). The most prosperous organizations in the corporate sector have adopted formal succession plans and accomplished the following:

- Built a comprehensive strategic plan for continued success (Lin, 2012; Rothwell, 2015),
- Provided a vision of shared mission and values (Rothwell, 2015),
- Developed a methodical plan for succession of leadership positions (Adams, 2013),
- Developed comprehensive systems for knowledge management (Rothwell, 2010), and
- Provided cross-functional development and mentoring to build talent at every level of the organization (Barton, 2017)

Although it is rare, some academic institutions have used succession planning to develop leadership within their organizations (Bornstein, 2010; Selingo et al., 2017). In both the academic and the corporate sectors (Rothwell, 2015), succession plans vary according to the mission, size, resources, and skill set of the organization (Bornstein, 2010; Selingo et al., 2017). Succession plans allow the institution to remain competitive by creating programs that pay attention to instructional design and focus on providing training for potential future leaders (Rothwell, 2015). They also include potential leaders who represent varying degrees of work experience and represent different generations, thereby avoiding cloning old leaders and producing diverse ideas (Rothwell, 2015). Succession planning also allows institutions to
identify past successes and mistakes, thereby preventing successors from repeating past mistakes (Rothwell, 2015).

One of the most important aspects of creating succession plans in higher education is avoiding disruption of the governing structure of the organization (Taylor, 2013). The succession planning process should be developed according to the infrastructure and shared governing system of individual HEIs (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). Multiple parties are required to concur on the process; therefore, the process must be transparent in order to avoid mistrust and disruption (AGB, 2017; Bowen & Tobin, 2015). Leaders in higher education need to be cautious of the tension this process can create in a shared governing system (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). Tension is not always destructive, as it can allow for discussion and development of the process (Burke, 2013). Open discussion can often be productive, if facilitated by an effective leader (Burke, 2013; Taylor, 2013). This process must include all members of the governing system (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). A succession plan that maps out processes and procedures for continuity (Rothwell, 2015) should aid in overcoming the barriers that can result from uncertainty and miscommunication (Burke, 2013; Taylor, 2013).

Succession planning will not always produce internal successors (Bornstein, 2010), but it does have other positive results (Klein & Salk, 2013). It shows that an institution places value on its employees, it can improve the quality of an institution’s current staff and attract new staff of higher quality, it improves employee morale (Rothwell, 2015), and it saves the institution money (Bidwell, 2011; Seltzer, 2016).
Chapter 3: Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university. This chapter will commence with a general discussion and rationale for using a qualitative case study to conduct this inquiry. That section will be followed by a discussion of the theoretical lens that was used to guide and shape inquiry, followed by the central research question for this inquiry.

The subsequent section provides the rationalization for utilizing a case study design as a way to understand and describe the occurrence of succession planning in higher education. The participants’ criteria, including information on access to the site and the methodology through which data were collected, stored, and managed, will then be outlined. The methodology for data analysis will then be discussed, followed by the researcher’s ethical considerations for maintaining the participants’ privacy and confidentiality, as well as methods that were used to keep collected data secure.

The final section of this chapter contains a discussion of the study’s validity and reliability, the researcher’s positionality, and limitations of the inquiry.

Qualitative Methodology Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university. The researcher chose a qualitative methodology for this case because of the particular characteristics associated with qualitative studies (Stake, 2010). Qualitative studies create an empathetic understanding for the researcher through thick
description of the case (Stake, 1995). During this study, the phenomenon being examined was recounted through multiple subjective accounts by the participants and depicted through the interpretation of the researcher (Stake, 1995). To keep the inquiry within a reasonable scope, this case was bound between certain parameters, such as time and activity (Stake, 1995) in order to gain better conceptualization of the two presidential succession events being studied.

A single case study with embedded units was used to examine two presidential leadership succession planning events at one institution. This method was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to examine AMU and its succession program during two periods of time. The design allowed for extensive analysis of multiple contextual conditions within each unit. In order to understand presidential succession, the researcher needed to study the organization as a whole. The two events served as subunits and its activities served as smaller units within the case. Presidential leadership succession is not just one single occurrence, but was linked to a sequential set of activities and processes that took place before the appointment of the successors (Rothwell, 2015) during each event. These programs, activities, and processes that led up to and took place during leadership succession were subunits for analysis because examining them provided additional insight into two presidential leadership succession planning events at AMU. The researcher performed cross analysis within the subunits to identify themes across events (Yin, 2018).

The backdrop for this qualitative case study enabled the researcher to gather information by talking to participants in their natural settings (Yin, 2018). Engaging participants during a case study provided them with a space to speak openly and on their terms; it also provided a platform for them to share their stories and enabled the voices of multiple people to be heard (Stake, 1995). This constructivist approach to inquiry was particularly important because the
researcher relied heavily on the stories of a collection of participants during inquiry (Stake, 1995).

Qualitative case studies did not restrict the kinds of data collected during inquiry, but instead allowed the researcher to include any data that shed more light on the events (Stake, 2010). Gathering of data and analysis was guided by the theoretical framework. Rotthwell’s (year) succession planning and management conceptual frameworks served as a blueprint for inquiry (Stake, 1995), and simply provided direction for gathering and analyzing data (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

Examining the collected data through Rotthwell’s theoretical lens provided propositions that directed and shaped findings during analysis (Yin, 2018). This lens assisted this research by providing meaning to the data that was collected, and helped the researcher formulate a greater conceptualization of succession planning. His theory assisted the researcher in discerning and interpreting the data on succession planning that was gathered for this research. Although the study results included only its findings, this conceptual framework helped the researcher form general assertions about the findings during analysis.

**Participants and Access**

Inquiry sampling can occur at the participant level, site level, and the event or process level (Yin, 2018). This inquiry included data from two or more levels. The researcher planned a sampling strategy ahead of time (Yin, 2018) because there needed to be flexibility during the study -- sampling changed as the story developed. The participants were briefed of the purpose of the study and informed consent was given. The researcher maintained the confidentiality of the participants by assigning pseudonyms to the site and participant data throughout the study.
At the site level, Abram Ministry University (AMU) was chosen for this study. AMU is a leading academic research university in the United States. The religious institution offers baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral degrees. It has an enrollment over 10,000 students, and it has a yearly budget of over 1 billion dollars. This large faith-based institution has been in existence since the 1800s, and it became a secular institution in 1900s. This university has a long history of deep-seated faith-based traditions, and its core values are reflected in the university’s teachings and philosophical beliefs, all which are embedded in the organization’s mission statement and strategic plan. The university made a commitment to long-term leadership succession and organizational continuity, and has a history of presidential succession planning as means of replacing retiring leadership. The institution has had many presidents, but appointed two presidents through presidential leadership successions over the last three decades. This site was chosen due to its dual occurrence of formal presidential succession planning. Data was collected on organizational leadership succession programs and activities that supported the two succession planning events being studied.

At the event level, data were collected on the occurrence of two succession planning events that took place in response to the retirement of two presidential leaders at AMU. The first presidential succession (PS1) event took place in 1987 and the second presidential succession (PS2) took place in 2005. The researcher gathered data on the two events and provided individual accounts from participants, and examined the data related to each succession event to examine the processes that took place.

At the participant level, the researcher used snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to select a pool of participants who all had the same characteristic of participating in presidential succession planning (Yin, 2018). Snowball sampling was used during data collection
to identify study candidates based on the recommendations of the participants in the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The criteria for selection included individuals who participated in either of the two presidential succession events. Organizers of the succession planning were members of organizational leadership and key shareholders who had a vested interest in the stability and continuity of the organization (Rothwell, 2015). The researcher identified a key participant and used snowball sampling to recruit the remaining three. Through referrals, the researcher identified three additional individuals who played a key role in the two succession events at AMU. With this in mind, the primary participant of this study included the former president, Minister Paul (the predecessor). Based on the recommendation of the former president, the researcher recruited a member of the board of trustees, a former succession candidate and a long-time faculty member. Due to the confidential and political nature of succession, information on the event was limited to people who directly took part in the process. The recruiter was only able to recruit from a small group of individuals who actually participated in the events. The researcher reached out to other potential participants who were not available or willing to take part in the study. In addition, due to the length of time since the events took place, many of the possible participants who were involved in both events have passed away or moved on from AMU. The researcher protected the confidentiality of the participants by assigning pseudonyms to each participant.

**Minister Paul.** He was the former president of the institution. He was the key participant for the study and directly took part in both presidential succession events. Minister Paul was appointed through succession planning. Prior to his appointment, he was selected as a candidate to succeed a long-term president who was slated for retirement at this institution. He led the institution for almost two decades. Upon his retirement, his successor was appointed
through succession planning. The scope of responsibility given to the sitting president during the succession planning process involved assisting in the leadership development activities of the potential succession candidates and participating in the transition period once the successor was appointed. This participant is a former beneficiary of succession planning, and he participated in the appointment of his successor due to his retirement. Therefore, he was well positioned to provide valuable insight about the event, in-depth detail concerning leadership succession in relation to retirement, and lessons learned from practice.

**Trustee Thomas.** He was a long-time board of trustees member and he met the criteria of having participated in the orchestration of the two presidential leadership succession events at AMU. Trustee Thomas played a significant role in vetting nominated candidates in both succession events. As a board member, he was responsible for determining and verifying that the successor possessed the competencies required to lead the organization into the future.

**Minister Francis.** He was a former succession candidate during the first succession event in 1987 and a participant of succession during the second event in 2005. Similarly to Minister Paul, he took part in both presidential successions but played different roles during each event. As an individual who took part in both events, the participant was able to provide new insight on the presidential succession.

**Dr. Peterson.** He was a longtime faculty member at AMU. Although he did not directly participate in either succession event, he was a member of the faculty during both events. He was able to provide insight as a member of the university community and an observer of the events.

**Procedures**

**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**
The researcher sought approval from the IRB board at Northeastern University and permission from the Office of Research Compliance at AMU (Yin, 2018). The researcher gained access to the site and human subjects by providing a proposal detailing the procedures of the study to the review board. Upon consent from AMU’s Office of Research Compliance, the researcher proceeded with data collection (Yin, 2018).

**Data Collection**

The researcher gathered data through open-ended interviews, and through examination of public and institutional documents on the two succession events, to answer the research question. The researcher followed the four principles of data collection, which included (a) collecting data from multiple sources, (b) creating a database for inquiry, (c) preserving streams of evidence, and (d) using caution with information from electronic databases (Yin, 2018).

**One-on-One Participant Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for this inquiry (See Table 1, Kvale, 2011). The interview questions were open-ended, specific, and posed in a conversational manner (Yin, 2018). The purpose of qualitative interviewing was to gain a real-life subjective account of the presidential succession events from the perspective of the interviewees (Kvale, 2011; Yin, 2018).

The researcher pursued qualitative information expressed through the voices of the interviewees and focused on descriptive information to identify the qualitative distinctions that depicted diversity within the experiences of the interviewees. Specificity was also important in the accounts of situations and the experiences of interviewees, therefore the researcher sought specific information (Kvale, 2011) on both leadership succession planning events. The openness and protocol of semi-structured interviews helped the researcher focus on the topic of exploring the processes used for both leadership successions through succession planning at AMU.
Table 1 *Participant interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Data Collection</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews:</td>
<td>Minister Paul</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20 min &amp; 46 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minister Francis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustee Thomas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Peterson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four interviews were conducted. Each interview was designed to include open-ended questions to accommodate the roles of the participants involved in the succession planning process. Through these interview questions, the researcher aimed to obtain reflective views of the events from the participants’ perspective. The researcher gained in-depth detail concerning the leadership succession process in relation to retirement, and heard lessons learned by the participants. The researcher started off with basic questions in order to collect background data on participants (Jacob & Fergerson, 2012). The researcher began with easy-to-answer questions and led into more difficult ones. The interviews also included big expansive questions to extract unexpected data from the interviewees (Jacob & Fergerson, 2012). This allowed for new, unexpected information to be collected and for the researcher to make changes to the interview protocol based on responses gathered from interviewees (Jacob & Fergerson, 2012; Yin, 2018). Subsequently, shorter questions were used during interviews to clarify information as needed.

The researcher used Zoom to hold and to record interviews. One-on-one interviews were conducted. The interviews ranged from 25-45 minutes long. Three interviews were audio-recorded and digitally stored; One participant agreed to be interviewed but declined being recorded. Scrupulous notes were taken and manually transcribed.

**Succession Planning Documents**
A collection of public and institutional materials related to the matter was collected (Yin, 2018). This information was used to corroborate and support data being collected from participants. The documents also added more meaning to some of the interview data. Documents provided evidence to enhance or verify other sources of data (Yin, 2018), and therefore played a pivotal role in the collection of data for this study.

Competency models were found on AMUs human resources website. Job competency models for leadership positions within the organization were examined (See Table 5). The researcher matched up leadership training activities that were performed by the candidates with AMUs job competency model to determine the manner in which each competency was developed within the candidates (See Table, 6). The researcher examined books that were written about the professional development activities that were conducted during the events. The books corroborated the recollection of the participants and they provided new data about the leadership development training at AMU. The researcher examined magazines, newspaper articles, and announcements to find additional information on the succession process such as presidential retirement and transition related activities.

Several biographies were examined. While some of the biographies were retrieved from AMUs website others were garnered from public interviews that took place at the time of the events. The researcher gathered information on work history, leadership experience and education of the succession candidates. Photographs associated with the events were also examined. These photographs included documentation of the candidates’ engagement in leadership development activities such as missionary work, global travel and attending special events.
The researcher analyzed meeting minutes from AMUs public database. The minutes provided valuable information about the climate within the organization in relation to presidential leadership and succession. Institutional and strategic plans were found on the university’s website. These documents reflected the core competencies or the strategic strengths of the organization (See Table 9). These plans provided additional information about the university’s long-term goals, mission and organizational values. In addition, information on the retirement of baby boomers from the United States labor force, historical organizational information on presidential appointments through succession planning, and past succession planning events and activities were examined.

Although this inquiry examined two instances of succession planning at AMU, in response to the retirement of two presidents, formal succession planning was an integral part of the organization’s culture and therefore was an ongoing part of achieving leadership continuity (Rothwell, 2015). As a result, documents pertaining to ongoing succession efforts within the institution were examined.

The researcher made audio recordings during three interviews and stored them digitally for transcription. Recorded interviews were made by a professional transcription service and notes, memos, and master lists of information were stored in Excel and Word documents on a password-protected computer (Yin, 2018). The researcher created a master list of all data collected and presented it in a matrix for identifying and retrieving information (Yin, 2018), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2:

Sources of Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
<th>Archival records</th>
<th>Direct observation</th>
<th>Participant observation</th>
<th>Physical artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Data Analysis

Initial data analysis took place simultaneously with data collection (Stake, 2010). At the onset of data collection, the researcher looked for emerging patterns in the data while reviewing documents, and interviewing participants (Stake, 1995). The researcher took these preliminary actions during data collection to draw attention to any significant information that may be used for future coding (Saldaña, 2015). The researcher noted preliminary findings during data collection.
collection by jotting down any tentative words or phrases on interview transcripts and by circling or highlighting information on institutional and public documents related to succession planning at AMU.

Figure 8. Data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Stake (1995) described data analysis as involving categorical aggregation and direct interpretation. Essentially, this involved forming categories and scoring the frequency of patterns. The researcher started the first cycle of coding by thoroughly reading the interview transcript for each participant. Through an iterative process, the researcher methodically reread each interview transcript and used descriptive coding to identify emerging patterns in the responses of the participants. Similarly classified interview responses were color-coded and were assigned descriptive words or short phrases. The researcher segregated and grouped the coded data in an analogous manner to form categories. The researcher went through the process of rereading, reorganizing, and categorizing the coded information to refine and shape the data in preparation for the second cycle of coding.

The researcher began the second cycle of coding by re-examining categories of similarly coded information to identify themes across the participants’ interview responses (Saldaña,
2015). The researcher examined the themed categories, giving thought to the research question and generalizations about leadership succession planning (Stake, 2010). This inductive approach to analysis, as seen in Figure 8, allowed for interpretation of presidential leadership succession at AMU to arise from the data (Stake, 1995). The researcher performed triangulation by re-examining the results from the multiple sources of coded data for congruency in themes (Stake, 1995).

**Ethical Considerations**

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher sought approval from the participating university’s institutional review boards and consulted with local sanctions. In addition, the researcher found a gatekeeper within the institution to assist with navigating the systems. The researcher kept abreast of ethical standards required for inquiry at AMU and did not select a site where power issues might arise. The researcher disclosed the purpose of the study to all participants, informed them of their rights as participants, and obtained consent from all individuals who took part in the inquiry. The researcher demonstrated respect for the gender, cultural, and religious diversity of all the inquiry participants.

During data collection, the researcher respected the site and minimized disruption to it and to participants’ daily operations. The researcher informed all participants of the manner in which the collected data would be used and avoided disclosing sensitive information about the organization and participants. While conducting data analysis, the researcher reported the diverse perspectives of the participants, included contrary findings, and assigned fictitious names to protect the privacy of the participants.

The researcher reported findings honestly, utilized required APA guidelines for referencing the work of scholars, and developed findings in a manner that did not reveal the
participants’ identities. The researcher will provide all involved with copies of the final report, including the results and the findings, and avoid using the information for other publications.

Credibility

In order to ensure trustworthiness, the researcher conducted validity and reliability tests to authenticate research findings (Yin, 2018). To establish validity, the researcher used multiple sources of evidence and created chains of proof. Multiple sources of data were collected through open-ended interview questions and examination of documents, in an effort to triangulate information gathered during data collection (Yin, 2018).

Case studies are prone to ethical violations and bias because the researcher must understand the nature of the issues being studied beforehand (Yin, 2018). Consequently, if a researcher discovers that a case may produce undesirable results, she may be tempted to interject information to generate favorable study results (Yin, 2018). For this reason, the researcher utilized a peer reader during data collection to review preliminary findings. This peer reader provided alternative perspectives and suggestions for data collection, which were applied to corroborate findings (Yin, 2018).

Potential Research Bias

I was born on the island of St. Lucia and migrated to Massachusetts as a young adult. As a native of St. Lucia, I possessed what one would call indigenous knowledge (Fennell & Arnot, 2008), as I spoke the native language, cooked traditional recipes, and took part in culturally rich traditions. Being a woman in a developing country, my opportunities for education were few due to the limited socioeconomic resources. The women of my mother’s generation were
traditionally mothers and wives, but the women of my generation were taking advantage of academic opportunities in Europe and America; education was the path to fighting oppression and was necessary for upward mobility. The disparity between the poor and middle class was clear, and being educated provided the means to improve one’s socioeconomic status and move out of poverty. While there were limited resources for the poor, degrees from abroad were especially valued, so my parents sent me to the United States at the age of 13 to attend school. As a result, the importance of education was engrained in my upbringing and has affected my perspective in relation to my experiences. I have always valued learning in my personal and professional life. I went on to receive my bachelor’s degree in psychology, was the first person in my family to receive a graduate degree, and will be the first to receive a doctoral degree.

I was a product of informal succession planning at a corporate organization where I worked for six years. I was promoted from administrative coordinator to director of administration. I was in the role of administrative coordinator when my supervisor, the director of administration, informed the company that she would be departing in a few months to start a family. My organization was already building a talent pool to ensure leadership continuity, so I was cross-trained prior to my supervisor’s notice of resignation. In addition, I received intense training through the informal succession planning process and I was able to smoothly transition into the role upon her departure. The process was challenging, but I was committed to self-development and to the organizational leaders who believed I was capable of getting the job done. Therefore, I did not want to disappoint leadership or myself.

After several years in the position, I left the corporate sector in 2009 and moved to a position as an administrative manager at a college in Stowe, Massachusetts. The college was led by its founder, Patricia Daniel, until Bowen Sanders was inaugurated as president in 2003 after
Patricia Daniel’s retirement. When Bowen Sanders took office, the college went through its share of turbulent times with leadership. In 2008 a lawyer had presented the board of trustees with evidence of fraudulent financial activities and corrupt hiring practices on the part of President Sanders. As a result, they immediately voted 20-0 to fire him. After his firing, the university founder, Patricia Daniel, returned as interim president. Shannon Porter was inaugurated in 2009, but only lasted one year. Michael Cohen succeeded him in 2010 and stayed for a year and a half. Cohen’s successor, Susan Davis, became president in 2011. The college was on its fourth president in six years, which created a chaotic environment. The continuous turnover within administration led to an atmosphere of uncertainty within the organization. I worked at the college until 2015 and witnessed the turmoil firsthand. I often wondered why the college never proposed a succession plan to combat the issue of frequent leadership turnover, as the college had qualified individuals within the organization who served as interims during transitions. I then discovered that succession planning was not a normal practice in higher education. I was inspired to research the topic further due to the turmoil taking place at my former organization.

Succession planning provided me with an opportunity for upward mobility within my organization, so I realize that I am partial to succession planning due to my experiences. I am also aware that succession planning would not only help organizations, but also provide upward mobility opportunities for marginalized groups such as women and people of color. As one of two minorities in a position of leadership within my corporate organization at that time, my promotion served as a tool for self-awareness and self-discovery. Succession planning placed me in a leadership role among my colleagues, who were mostly White and male.
As a researcher, I am aware that my experiences can shape my interpretation of the data in this study. I remained open-minded to the experiences and data collection during inquiry.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to the study. First, the events that were examined took place in 1987 and 2005. By the time the researcher started the study, there were several changes in the organizational structure. Therefore, some key individuals who were directly involved in the events had either passed away or had since left the organization. Consequently, the researcher was unable to make contact with these individuals for the study.

Second, due the confidentiality of succession planning, the researcher was unable to gain access to AMU succession documents that revealed all the individuals involved in both processes. Individuals who participated this study were found mostly through snowball sampling and were recommended by individuals at AMU who were directly involved in the process. Therefore the researcher could not determine the scope of members who were involved in planning each succession event. The researcher was limited to identifying the particular groups that were involved, but members of the groups were not all revealed.

Another limitation relative to confidentiality is that individuals could not reveal certain aspects of succession. For example, names and background of all succession candidates, the manner by which the board chose the final candidates (e.g. assessment methods) and succession documents that revealed any confidential information about the candidates or AMU. This created a barrier because it limited the researcher to unclassified information as an option to examine and
use for the study. Therefore, the researcher relied heavily on firsthand information from participants involved in the process.

The final limitation for the study was the political implications surrounding the presidential search and presidential succession at AMU. Some participants were concerned about anonymity and hesitant about revealing certain aspects of what took place in the process. Other individuals who were directly involved, and were contacted for the study, declined to participate in this research. Due to the political nature of some of the information that was revealed during the study, the researcher was concerned with anonymity and protection of participants of the study. Therefore, the researcher did not include sensitive information that may reveal the identity of any of the participants of the study.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university. This chapter provided a general discussion and rationale for use of a qualitative case study, followed by participants’ criteria, along with information on access to the site, and the methodology that was used to collect data. Then the methodology for data analysis was discussed and the potential for research bias was provided.
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private, religious university. The first three chapters described the purpose of the study, a literature review, and the research methodology. This chapter reports the findings that surfaced during data collection. The chapter begins with a brief description of the phenomenon being studied, followed by the themes that emerged during the collection of data.

Findings from the Study

The themes and subthemes are (1) Emphasis on unique qualifications: (a) H.C.P. Minister (b) leadership and administrative skills (c) tenured faculty and (d) competency requirements for succession candidates in PS1 and PS2; (2) Intentional efforts to build talent for potential presidential succession; (3) The board of trustees is the final determinant in the succession process (a) persons responsible for selection of the presidential successor (b) AMU procedures for selecting the successor (c) selection of candidates during PS1 and (d) selection of candidates during PS2; (4) Input from university stakeholders is critical during presidential succession: (a) The president and (b) the university community; (5) Transition period between outgoing president and the successor: (a) transition period during PS1 and (b) transition period during PS2; (6) Succession is beneficial for candidates, even for individuals who are not selected and (7) University stakeholders desired a more open and democratic process: (a) The board (b) maintaining openness (c) faculty and students (d) The candidates.

The description provided for each theme includes narrative and direct quotes regarding the succession processes during two events of presidential leadership succession at the
university. Due to the confidential nature of the presidential succession, the researcher was only able to interview four persons for this study. Since presidential succession is a closed process, knowledge about the inner working of presidential succession is limited to those who are directly involved in conducting the search and selecting the final candidate. Three of the four participants for this study directly participated in both succession events that took place at Abram Ministry University. The majority of the information yielded for this study was garnered from direct interviews. The narratives include details about the origin and purpose of succession planning at the institution, the steps taken to continually build talent among the staff, and the processes used to transfer leadership from predecessor to successor. Information was also gathered from public records such as the university’s strategic plan, faculty senate meeting minutes, the university’s website, press releases to news organizations, public profiles, and books. The researcher was not privy to confidential documents generated during either succession event.

Table 3 presents demographic information about the participants interviewed for this study. All participants were present during both succession events, which took place in 1987 and 2005. The researcher maintained confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms to the participants. The researcher anonymized some interview data dates and citations to maximize the protection of the study site and the participants’ responses. This was done while still maintaining the integrity of the study data.

Table 3

Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Educational background</th>
<th>Positions held at the university</th>
<th>Number of years at university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minister Paul</td>
<td>Ph.D., C.S.C</td>
<td>Former president of AMU, executive vice president &amp; provost, faculty</td>
<td>40+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Minister Francis  M.B.A./J.D., C.S.C  Succession candidate, executive vice president, faculty  40+

Trustee Thomas  J.D.  Board member at Abram Ministry  40+

Dr. Peterson  Ph.D.  Tenured faculty member  30+

**Case Background**

Abram Ministry University was chosen for this study. This institution is a leading academic research university in the United States. It offers baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral degrees. The university has an enrollment of over 10,000 students, and it has an annual budget of over one billion dollars. This large, faith-based institution has been in existence since the 1800s, and it became a secular institution in 1900s. This university has had a long history of deep-seated faith-based traditions, and its core values are reflected in the university’s mission, teachings, and practice. The institution has appointed two presidents through presidential leadership succession.

The following timeline outlines significant events related to presidential succession at Abram Ministry University. The events listed had a significant impact on or shaped the manner in which presidential succession was conducted at the university. The timeline includes the succession of two presidents, Minister Paul (1987-2005) and Minister Abe (2005-present). The timeline also includes Minister Benedict (1952-1987) because his retirement triggered the first presidential succession that took place at the university. Thus far, the university has only had two presidents elected through formal presidential successions. The researcher will refer to the
succession of Paul in the 1980s as Presidential Succession 1 (PS1) and to the succession of Abe in the 2000s as Presidential Succession 2 (PS2).

- **1950s**: Minister Benedict was elected by the regional council to be president of Abram Ministry University. At this time, the university had no process in place for presidential succession. The regional council was responsible for governing the university and appointing the president.

- **1960s**: The university established a lay board of trustees and a two-core structure of trustees and fellows. The new board of trustees, made up of laypersons, was now responsible for overseeing policy at the university, evaluating administration, and selecting the president. The board of fellows, made up of six clergymen and six laypersons, was responsible for preserving the university’s religious mission and identity. Although the board of trustees elects the university president, the board of fellows can engage in the process.

- **1970s**: The matter of presidential succession was discussed during this time because Minister Benedict had run the university for many decades and was approaching retirement age. At the time, Benedict was the longest-running president of the institution. He was a prominent figure in the academic world and he had also been instrumental in shaping and elevating the reputation of Abram Ministry University. Therefore, finding a qualified candidate to replace Minister Benedict was vital to leadership continuity at the university.

- **1980s**: A few years prior to Benedict’s retirement, a few individuals were selected for leadership development in preparation for his departure. The ultimate goal of the
university was to have a pipeline of qualified candidates to take over the position as Benedicts’ successor.

- **1980s**: Minister Benedict retired after being the president of the institution for over 30 years. A successor was appointed through succession.
- **1987**: Minister Paul became the 16th president of the university.
- **1980s-2000s**: Following in the footsteps of his predecessor, Minister Paul developed individuals from his administration for potential leadership succession during his time in office. Once again, the goal of the president and the university was to have a pipeline of qualified candidates who could take over the position as Minister Paul’s successor.
- **2000s**: Minister Paul retired and three candidates were interviewed for the position.
- **2005**: Minister Abe succeeded Minister Paul as the 17th president of Abram Ministry University

**Themes**

**Emphasis on Unique Qualifications**

*Limited options for unique leadership.* The first theme that emerged during investigation of both events was emphasis on unique qualifications. The presidents appointed during PS1 and PS2 had similar work experiences and qualifications. They were both tenured faculty members at the university; they both had doctoral degrees; they both held positions as vice presidents and associate provosts; and they were both Holy Covenant Parish (HCP) ministers (see Table 3). Individually these qualifications were not particularly extraordinary, but the combination of these qualifications proved hard to find in a single individual. There were others available who were ministers and faculty members at the university, but few ministers stood out as possible contenders for presidential leadership. These were all requirements for
presidential leadership as set forth by the board of the university and written in the university’s bylaws. Table 4 lists the qualifications of the successors during PS1 and PS2 at the time of their presidential appointments.

Table 4

Qualifications of the Successors during PS1 and PS2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements for presidency at the time of succession</th>
<th>PS1 successor qualifications</th>
<th>PS2 successor qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.C.P minister</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced degree</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenured faculty experience</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration experience</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minister Paul, the successor in PS1, explained what kinds of qualities he looked for in potential succession candidates when he looked for individuals who could replace him upon retirement. He explained, “They had to have the appropriate advanced degree,” and “They had to be tenured, faculty members.” He went on to provide additional qualifications for leadership by stating

Because of some other expertise. But in our case that was necessary. They had to have displayed some capacity for leadership. Yes. And as a religious president, you have to be able to preach as well as be a public speaker. Run meetings. Inspire. All those kinds of things.

HCP minister. The first unique requirement for presidential leadership that is written in the university’s bylaws is being a minister of the Holy Covenant Parish (HCP) congregation. Minister Paul explained, “You have to have the particular identifiers,” meaning identifiers required for presidency at Abram Ministry University. He went on to say that the minister had to
be a member of the HCP Regional Council and more specifically part of their congregation. He said this particular sector of ministers was unique to their parish. “You couldn’t take somebody out of a parish and make them president,” as he referred to presidency at Abram Ministry.

Minister Paul said that being a member of the community was an important part of qualifying for the role. Being a member of the HCP ministers was an important factor, but another factor was the limited number of ministers within the congregation, especially ones who met all the other required qualifications for the presidential position. The mission of the HCP Regional Council was tied directly to the mission of the university. The congregation called for ministers to be educators and live side by side with students. This mission was also engrained in the practice at the university. Minister Paul noted that the ministers at the university live on campus grounds, and there is regular engagement within the group through living, working, and participating in on-campus activities. They are familiar with the institution because of the unique nature of the position and community. Minister Paul said that the requirement of being an HCP minister placed the future president in a position to integrate with the community he would eventually run.

This unique and vital requirement for HCP ministers to be appointed as presidents dates back to the university’s development of requirements for presidential succession. During a December 1970s faculty senate while they were discussing presidential retirement and provost succession, the matter of finding a suitable successor arose. A member of the senate faculty committee voiced a concern about not finding “qualified” HCP ministers to replace President Benedict upon his retirement. This was of concern to the constituents of the university because the requirement for the president to be an HCP minister was unique to the institution. The response to the question provided in the relevant meeting minutes was, “Under present bylaws,
the president must be a member [of the HCP congregation] so that if the provost were thought of as next in line, he too would have to be a member of the Congregation.” The importance of having an HCP minister in the position and the quantity of qualified ministers available was a recurring concern in the university community. Even after the requirements were expanded to include HCP ministers from other provinces in order to have a larger pool of candidates, the group was still small. A participant explained that “having a succession that is restricted” produced a limited number of candidates during both successions because the search was limited to HCP ministers within the regional council. He explained how that has since changed, saying, “Now that succession has been broadened to basically ‘they could bring in anybody from abroad or, or whatever,’ so it, it’s a much bigger tool.”

**Leadership and administrative skills.** Although being a minister is a requirement, the capacity to lead was just as important as a qualifying characteristic for presidents. According to Minister Paul, “They had to have displayed some capacity for leadership.” Minister Paul explained the importance of also being in a leadership role prior to being nominated for succession, “And you need to have experience in administration that would qualify you in everybody’s eyes.” He said that these kinds of roles provide opportunities for individuals to demonstrate their leadership skills, which usually meant that they were potential options for succession candidacy. This was especially true for those in the vice president and associate provost roles. To get a better understanding of how these roles were connected to presidential succession at the university, the researcher examined documents related to provost succession.

The changes to the university’s governing structure that took place in the 1960s also triggered changes to the job description for the university provost. In the 1970s, the new job description for the administrative provost was revamped and directly linked to the presidential
position as a means of leadership continuity at the university. Excerpts from a Faculty Senate meeting that took place in the late 1970s referred to the new job description for administrative provost, as the faculty senate members were looking for clarity in the job description following this statement in the *Academic Manual*, which stated “The Manual further designates the provost as first in succession as acting president during the absence of the president.” The attendees wanted clarification on the presumption that the administrative provost would be the automatic successor to the president in his absence. The *Manual* offered a response to the faculty senate’s concern, according to a respondent at the meeting, who said that in his view, the successor assumption for the administrative provost, “should not be made one way or the other.” It is important to note that the new job description required the provost to be a minister, faculty member, and former administrator. Therefore, an individual who was appointed provost at the university would need to have all of the qualifications to become president, but it was not assumed or explicit that the sitting provost would be next in line for succession. However, it was a good indication that all presidents who had been selected through succession planning had previously held the provost title. A long-time board member, Trustee Thomas, who participated in the presidential succession events, explained that “current source, requires a minister” referring to the presidential position. He went on to say, “We have very limited candidates and are aware of potential successors coming along. Senior roles are an indication.” He added that he was “hopeful of having successors from within and hope to continue doing that.”

This seemed to be the consensus within the university community regarding qualifications for the presidency, and was admittedly a good way to identify who may be potential successors for the job. When the researcher asked participants for their reaction to the announcement of Minister Benedict prior to PS1 as well as their expectations for the next
successor in line for the job, Dr. Peterson responded, “Really all that I can say at that time is that, when it was announced [that Minister Benedict was] going to retire, there was a lot of scuttlebutt here among the faculty.” The researcher was curious about his expectations for the next in line for president, to which Dr. Peterson stated, “What would happen is that people would look. Well, since it was known that the succession had to be a member of a particular province, [meaning the HCP Regional Council].” He continued, “There was a lot of speculation; it had to be an academic. It had to be basically a full professor [and] there were not a great number” of faculty members with the qualifications. Therefore, Dr. Peterson said, “People would look at unusual or, you know, unexpected promotions…to, get an idea of who might be in line for the appointment.”

**Tenured faculty.** The final unique qualification was the requirement for the president to be tenured faculty. All tenured faculty held terminal degrees. Minister Paul expressed the importance of being a tenured faculty member as preparation for leadership:

They had to be tenured faculty members…. I mean it’d be imaginable there were people that hadn’t been tenured faculty members have been made presidents of universities.

Because of some other expertise. But in our case that was necessary.

The roles of minister and faculty member required members to be immersed in the on-campus community. These roles allowed individuals to become part of the community and participate in activities that might place them in line as a potential presidential successor.

As a result of these requirements for the presidency, few people stood out as possible candidates for presidential succession. Minister Paul’s successor possessed all the qualifications listed above. He was a faculty member at the university for a number of years. He was then promoted to vice president and associate provost. He served in that position for five years before
being elected to the presidency. Minister Paul said his successor also had all these qualifications and served in administration for five years before becoming president of the university.

The researcher wanted to know the manner in which a minister at Abram Ministry University went from being faculty to gaining a position in administration. Minister Francis, a potential candidate during Minister Paul’s succession, explained the route to attaining all the required qualifications for presidency at the university:

Research and teaching students and they have to understand that role. But it’s, different. It’s so different from a corporation. Let’s suppose I get my degree and I go to work for IBM, just to name a company, in a management training position, so I’m in a management training position and the idea is I eventually work my way up to manager, maybe a vice president, but [pause] anyways, the whole plan… That is not the way it works at a university. At a university, you start as a faculty member in English . . . , and that’s where you’re going to stay the rest of your life. You go from assistant, to associate, to full professor, and a few might move on to administrative positions, but when you start at a university in a faculty member’s position, there’s not the expectation or intention that you’re going to be involved in management.

The participant suggested that succession at AMU provided faculty members a route toward leadership administration which they may not otherwise have. The researcher identified persons from both successions who were considered potential successors to the presidential position.

**Competency requirements for succession candidates in PS1 and PS2.** The potential successors of PS1 and PS2 all had relevant qualifications that were required for the presidential position. Documents show that they were all HCP ministers, they all had doctoral degrees, and
they were all faculty members, but documents also show that only some held tenured positions at the university. Relative to leadership experience, the group held positions as directors, provost, and executives within the organization. Their administrative experience ranged between two and seven years and their leadership experience ranged between one and seven years. Both groups were composed of candidates from within AMU and they both had similar educational qualifications and work experience.

Although the candidates had the qualification for the position, this did not necessarily give them the ability to be successful in the job. Succession candidates also needed to possess the competencies to perform the duties of the job. The Presidential Leadership Council and members of leadership at AMU designed the following competency model (See table 4), to demonstrate competency requirements for leadership positions within the organization. According to the document, the objectives of the competency model were to (a) define the competencies necessary to be a successful leader at AMU, and (b) provide opportunities for leadership development at AMU. The following competencies or core knowledge, attitude, and skills, were deemed necessary to be successful in the role of leadership at AMU.

Table 5

*Competency requirements for leadership positions at AMU. Adapted from the Office of Human Resources at AMU*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required competencies for leadership at AMU</th>
<th>Competency Requirements Defined</th>
<th>Skilled Candidate Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>People Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Able to communicate with others</td>
<td>Constructs compelling development plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develops others, and expands the capability of the organization</td>
<td>Take on individuals who want to be developed for leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides clear vision and persuade others to follow</td>
<td>Effectively takes on leadership roles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trust others to perform |
| Supports the learning process |
| Change Leader | Effectively leads change and realizes the impact they have on others | for others and helps people learn from their failures Leads complex organizations and connects interdependent groups Plans for change and manages it effectively Uses groups effectively when making change Understands the culture of AMU and how change will be received by others in the organization |
| Organizational Influence | Uses influence to steer organization, adjust approach based on audience and has a clear approach on the best manner to gain support | Effectively maneuvers complex situations Anticipates and handles obstacles effectively Adjusts to the realities of politics and is sensitive of people and organizations |
| Global Perspective | Culturally savvy and able to work across borders Recognizes the value diversity brings to the organization | Appreciates and embraces culture Promotes Diversity Globally aware and uses it to embrace others Considers new ideas |
| Mission Sensitive | Understands the HCP ministry and informed in daily activities | Understands the HCP Ministry Mission and considers it in all decisions Informed about the heritage and history of AMU Makes decisions that are consistent with the mission of AMU Has a positive view of the organization |
| Sound Judgment | Takes appropriate risks and uses sound judgment Evaluates options and weighs the consequences and costs of taking those actions Can cope with ambiguity and | Makes decisions based on analysis, wisdom, judgment and experience Seeks advice and solutions from others |
**Visionary**  
- not having all necessary information to make decisions  
- Communicates an inspiring and compelling vision  
- Evaluates options and weighs the consequences and costs of taking those actions  
- Can cope with ambiguity and not having all necessary information to make decisions  
- Articulates future possibilities clearly  
- Optimistic  
- Relates well to everyone  
- Works well in creative situations and is a creative problem solver

**Emotional Intelligence**  
- Self-aware by recognizing strengths, weaknesses, and limits  
- Able to maximize these attributes to make a positive impact  
- Aware of how decisions affect and impact others  
- Seeks and uses feedback from others  
- Gains insights from mistakes  
- Relies on others where skills lack

**Summary.** AMU had strict requirements for presidential leadership. These qualifications and competencies were linked to the mission of the institution and the presidential role. The fact that AMU had a limited number of candidates with those required qualifications compelled leaders of the institution to develop a strategic plan to build leadership from within the organization, hence presidential succession at AMU. Ministers do not typically gain opportunities to develop these competencies through their daily lives at AMU. Therefore the development of competencies within candidates for leadership had to be intentional, purposeful, and targeted.

Furthermore, the need for presidential succession at AMU was also vital because Minister Benedict, the president for three decades, had grown the university and its programs to a recognizable status and the university community were concerned about institutional and
leadership continuity. Therefore, the university created a plan for presidential leadership development through succession.

**Intentional Efforts to Build Talent from Within for Potential Presidential Succession**

The second theme to emerge during the study was *Intentional efforts to build talent from within for potential presidential succession*. The intention of succession planning was to develop candidates who possessed the qualifications for presidential leadership. Succession was particularly important to the university because few HCP ministers possessed all the qualifications for leadership. At the time of PS1, there were at least three HCP ministers available for potential succession, and there were also three at the time of PS2. Therefore, it was the intention of the university leadership to take purposeful actions to produce candidates. As shown in Table 5, AMU had created specific competencies for leaders within the organization. These competencies had to be developed within these potential succession candidates through intentional training and development. Although the researcher could not determine the scale by which each succession candidate was assessed, analysis demonstrates that succession candidates engaged in activities that led to the development of these competencies required for leadership at AMU (See Table 6).

By the 1990s, Minister Paul had led the university for several years and was close to retirement age. Just like Minister Benedict during PS1, Minister Paul had taken intentional steps to prepare potential leadership candidates for his departure and for the PS2 transition of leadership. As a former candidate during succession planning, he had firsthand experience with the benefits of the knowledge and training he received prior to his presidency. He wanted to do the same for incoming leadership in preparation for PS2. He described his experience as a
potential succession candidate in PS1 and the access to leadership activities that prepared him for the role:

We interacted with the Board of Trustees and various advisory councils. We went to the officers’ meetings. So we were given access to pretty much all of those leadership functions, fundraising events. So by the time that I was elected president, I’d done a lot of groundwork that was very helpful afterward.

The former president expressed a sense of obligation to provide the same caliber of training he had been given as an aspiring leader during PS1: “I deliberately said to do something comparable with the next generation of potential leaders.” When asked how the candidates were identified for development, he explained, “So you, you recognized that through just kind of looking at the work that they’ve done, looking at their daily lives or the roles that they play within the university.” He went on to describe observing individuals for potential leadership:

So it wasn’t as if the three of them all went home each night to some other place. Now we don’t live in the same buildings. We lived in different residence halls, but I felt that I had sufficient ongoing contact, both of the personal kind and also the professional kind, that I could discern how they were doing as time passed.

He explained that, to develop the qualifications necessary to attain the presidential position, he provided an opportunity for these individuals to engage in leadership activities while in certain leadership roles. This allowed potential successors to gain some of the experience they needed to qualify as viable presidential candidates.

According to Trustee Thomas, “Senior roles are an indication.” When a minister at the university was promoted to a leadership position, such as executive vice president or provost, leadership development for the presidency became a byproduct for that person. Minister Paul
exposed the potential successors to activities that might be included in the scope of duties taken on by a president. These activities included attending leadership functions, leadership meetings, leadership retreats, and fundraising events. He provided additional detail and explained his intentions for leadership development: “Well again, I, spent time with them. I gave them access to a lot of what we were up to. We had annual meetings in the summer at our retreat… where we talked about everything.” He added

So I think they had a pretty comprehensive view of the university and, and all its complexity. Which I think prepared them well. And then I would encourage them if they had aspirations for what they might want to do, to pursue them.

As his predecessor had during PS1, Minister Paul identified and selected three potential successors during his time as president and provided them with opportunities for leadership training and advancement. In a book he later published, he provided additional details on developing them for leadership within the institution “because I wanted to make sure that I prepared the way for the next generation.” Referring to HCP ministers who had been promoted to tenured faculty and who he wanted to develop for leadership positions, he wrote

I met regularly with all three, together and as individuals. I made sure that they were appointed to committees involved in developing our 10-year strategic plan, both because I wanted strong . . . representation in that process and because I knew it would engage the three of them in a wider network of faculty and administrative colleagues. Overall, I think this worked reasonably well.

These activities were important because they provided these potential candidates with firsthand insight into the leadership activities, and also the training to navigate the presidential job duties.
This opportunity for training was strategic, intentional, and part of the organization’s long-term plan to build leadership from within. Referring to the purpose of the activities of the candidates in the candidates participated, Minister Paul stated, “Yes. It was very intentional.” Once potential successors were identified, they were promoted to leadership roles and became involved in various presidential activities with the intention of familiarizing them with the presidential role. The potential successors engaged in these activities with knowledge that the presidential position was not guaranteed. Minister Paul explained, “It was never explicitly said, but it was implicit. And I described it as trying to prepare people for possible positions of leadership in the future.” The former president went on to explain that in order for HCP ministers to gain qualifications for presidency, they needed a pathway to the presidency.

This was also true for potential candidates in PS1. Although several individuals were picked for leadership development, there could only be one presidential successor. Minister Francis, a potential succession candidate along with Minister Paul during PS1, explained how he was notified that he was being picked for leadership development: “You know, but there’s going to be some changes.” He was told that he would be promoted. He said, “You’re going to be executive assistant” to the second-in-charge at the university, and he knew that he would be promoted to “vice president and associate provost.” The purpose of the promotions was explained to him: “So that five years from now,” when Minister Benedict retired, “there is going to be a group of people from whom we can pick the president of the University.” Therefore, as these candidates went through the process, there was little indication of the outcome. Minister Francis explained:
You know? So anyway, so that was five years of just kind of being involved with administration and having been given the chance to look at me and things of that nature.

I was living in a residence hall and I was also teaching a business law class.

The following table lists the activities linked to the development of those competencies within successors prior to being selected for the presidential position at AMU.

Table 6

*List of activities linked to competency development in PS1 and PS2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required competencies for leadership at AMU</th>
<th>Competency requirements defined</th>
<th>Activities linked to competency development PS1</th>
<th>Activities linked to competency development PS2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People Leadership</td>
<td>Able to communicate with others</td>
<td>Reduced course load to dedicate more time to leadership training</td>
<td>Attended and took part in university-wide events and other special occasions (e.g. prominent religious figures and US presidents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Leadership</td>
<td>Develops others- and expands the capability of the organization</td>
<td>Joined and participated in higher education organizations (i.e. served and chair the Higher Education Commission on HCP Ministry Local Division, Served on Association of Ministry Colleges and Universities)</td>
<td>Served as vice president and provost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Leadership</td>
<td>Provides clear vision and persuades others to follow</td>
<td>Met with major figures in higher education through these organizations</td>
<td>Served in leadership on HCP related organizations (i.e. HCP seminars)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attended leadership seminars</td>
<td>Member of HCP higher education organizations (i.e Association of Ministry Colleges and Universities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximized opportunities to make AMU visible though these organizations</td>
<td>Attended board of trustees meetings as an observer and get to know the members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attended Officer Group and Trustee meetings,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attended and took part in university-wide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Leader</td>
<td>Effectively led change and realized the impact they had on others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposed to debate and involvement in implementing change within AMU and the HCP Ministries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implemented curriculum that focused on global awareness and the value of diversity and inclusivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assisted with the development and direction AMU of strategic plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assisted with finalizing and implementation of AMU’s 10 year strategic plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implemented budget for expanding and implementing new programming at AMU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased AMU’s endowment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Influence</th>
<th>Used influence to steer organization, adjust approach based on audience and had a clear approach on the best manner to gain support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participated in office group meetings and provost advisory committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fostered a relationship with faculty (met one-on-one to get general feedback about their departments and AMU in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participated in office group meetings and Provost Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Took part in the faculty tenure and promotion process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developed familiarity with the people, facilities, and social systems that supported and sustained AMU

Took part in the faculty tenure and promotion process

Global Perspective
Culturally savvy and able to work across borders.
Recognized the value diversity brings to the organization

Conducted multiple global missionary trips (e.g. biblical exploration of the Holy Land, Greece and Rome, Conducted mass in churches of ancient provinces)
Took missionary trips to Central and South America

Mission Sensitive
Understood the HCP ministry and inform daily activates

Addressed various groups on and off campus in the area of spirituality (e.g. missionary trips, confer the sacrament of the sick, baptism, hospital visits, counsel and spiritual direction, offered retreats and conferences on spiritual topics, talks on HCP spirituality, moral development) Traveled to various provinces to broaden base knowledge of HCP Ministry

Wrote a book and several articles related to the HCP Ministry

Received religious courses at AMU

Traveled to various provinces to broaden base knowledge of HCP Ministry

Director of HCP seminary

Sound Judgment
Took appropriate risks and used sound judgment
Evaluated options and weighed the consequences and costs of taking those actions

Assisted in developing the HCP decree that constitutes HCP institutions in higher education

Sought advice from stakeholders from inside and outside the
Coped with ambiguity and not having all necessary information to make decisions

| **Visionary** | Communicated an inspiring and compelling vision. Evaluated options and weighed the consequences and costs of taking those actions. | Formed committee at AMU to invest the surrounding community. Partnered with mayors, county commissioners, local business owner and nonprofits to lead the charge. The group efforts led to the opening of multiple agencies which addressed socio-economic issues within the community. Planned to expand AMU football stadium. | Continued to work partnerships with existing community organizations and planned to increase those partnerships. |
| **Emotional Intelligence** | Self-aware to recognize strengths, weaknesses, and limits. Able to maximize these attributes to make a positive impact. | Global travel was “spiritually enriching” and “theologically stimulating”. Wanted to become better scholar, preacher, person of the faith. Read the new and old testaments with fresh understanding and sensitivity. Exposure to culture and poverty was a constant reminder of inequities. | Engaged in spiritual teaching and writing in the HCP Ministry. |

**Summary.** There were no guarantees made to the individuals who were being developed for the position. In addition, participating in these activities did not guarantee development of
those competencies. The researcher did not uncover the tools used by AMU leadership to measure these competencies within succession candidates nor could the candidates determine exactly how they were measured.

Due to limited access, the researcher was not able to uncover all the activities conducted by the successor of PS2 prior to succession, but the researcher was able to examine information on some of the functions performed by the candidates in both events.

Both candidates engaged in activities that demonstrated their leadership skills and that helped with development of their leadership competencies. In documents concerning some of the leadership training he received, Minister Paul stated that his time as provost “proved invaluable” in his presidential years. The duties he performed during that time exposed him to supervision of employees, development and promotion process for faculty, budget implementation and management, and access to leadership and stakeholders (e.g. president, board of trustees, donors).

But some areas of development were more complex than others, and this is where Minister Paul exercised and demonstrated some of these competencies. He stated in documents that the evaluation process for faculty tenure proved to be “complex” and “complicated,” but his duties as provost had exposed him to the multi-layered system at AMU. It taught him how to deal with political or ambiguous situations. In other areas, he was faced with making complex organizational decisions that would sometimes result in contention among certain groups, but he stated that he decided as “fairly” as possible and learned a “great lesson” in making these difficult decisions. His emotional intelligence came into play when he realized that he was not capable or equipped to take on certain tasks but could address these situations with the
appropriate help. He stated “I usually trust my instincts to know when I am beyond my personal competence and require the assistance of others with specialized training.”

Another area of developed was the ability to demonstrate dedication to the HCP mission in their daily life practices. Both candidates engaged in activities that expanded their knowledge of HCP theology and other religions. This was done through reading, teaching and writing literature, national travel, and global missionary trips and through community service. Engagement in these activities allowed them to evaluate and broaden their knowledge of religions outside of the HCP ministry and other religions. Minister Paul described some of his religious travels as “spiritually enriching” and “theologically stimulating.”

Both candidates had heavy participation in higher education groups and non-profit organizations outside of AMU. This was an essential part of expanding their knowledge about academia, becoming integrated into the higher education community, and finding ways to represent and make AMU more visible on a national and global platform. The president was the face of the organization, and the successor would be responsible for integrating himself into these communities to build mutually beneficial and sustaining partnerships. Minister Paul said in his book that some of these experiences “reinforced” in his mind the “importance” of AMU’s outreach and involvement outside of AMU. The exposure to the diversity and culture was a “constant reminder of the “inequities” of the world.

Overall, the participants were able to be involved in activities that expanded their broad-based knowledge on some issues and demonstrate their competencies through their leadership roles.

**The Board of Trustees is the Final Determinant in the Succession Process**
The next theme that arose from the study was *The board of trustees is the final determinant in the succession process*. The search process for presidential leadership through succession planning was structured and designed to always have potential leaders in queue in the event of presidential retirement or sudden departure. By the time each succession candidate was selected for candidacy, he had received leadership development and possessed the required qualifications. The university had systems in place to develop leaders so that there were at least three or more persons in line to step up as candidates during PS1 and PS2.

**Persons responsible for selection of the presidential successor.** The selection of the university’s president was quite different prior to PS1. Minister Paul explained that prior to his predecessor, the university had no process in place for succession and the governing structure was different. He said that his predecessor ran the university for 35 years and was chosen as president by the HCP Regional Province during its council meeting. He stated, “And there was no process. So the council’s meeting. That’s just the way things were done.” He added, “But once we went into a predominantly lay board of trustees and a board of fellows, it was just presumed that mainly lay people would be involved in the selection process.” He described the board structure at the university: “Well our board is predominantly lay. We have a two-board structure. A board of fellows, which is half lay and half minister.” The two-board structure (see Figure 12) comprises the board of trustees and the board of fellows. The board of trustees is made up of laypersons and is responsible for selecting the president during succession. The board of fellows comprises six laypersons and six clergymen, and although the board of trustees is responsible for selecting the final candidate, the board of fellows can provide feedback and affect the succession process. Minister Paul explained how the final decision on selecting the president was made: “And trustees, who have the approval, the responsibility, for choosing the
president [are made up of] predominantly lay persons. … The chair of the board is lay. That just means ‘not cleric.’ And so that’s the kind of structure.” Figure 9 depicts the persons responsible for succession at Abram Ministry University.

Figure 9. Structure for the Board of Trustees and the Board of Fellows at Abram Ministry University, in relation to succession and other university matters.

**AMU Procedures for selecting the successor.** The university has a general plan in place for executing succession (see Figure 10). Minister Paul described the succession process and said that it began with the board forming an “internal committee” of members of the community, which should include “representatives of the faculty and the student body and probably alumnus.” Candidates are interviewed, the board receives input from stakeholders, and then the board selects the president. This is the general process for selecting a presidential candidate through succession at the university. However, the board of trustees can adjust those plans at its discretion. According to Minister Paul it is “the prerogative of the board of trustees” to select the presidential successor because “they were the final determinants.” Although all the
candidates in PS1 and PS2 had qualifying experience for the job, the researcher was not informed how each candidate was individually recommended and selected for interviews.

*Figure 10.* Process for selecting of succession candidates at the university

**Selection of candidates during PS1.** During PS1, an internal committee of board members and university stakeholders interviewed the candidates. The board made the final decision on the successor and the successor was announced to the university community upon acceptance. Minister Francis, a potential successor during PS1, explained the moment he was notified: “So now comes time to name the president and so they do the meeting where they’re going to name him. The four or five of us go into another room while they’re voting and talking, and then they came in.” He described the scene in which the interview candidates received the news of whom would be the next president: “Congratulations.” Minister Paul’s name was announced by a board member. “You were named President.” According to Minister Francis, “Everybody, I assumed, it was going to happen that way. I mean, I did not even think of myself as a candidate for President.” He continued:

I mean, I was not an academic. I was a lawyer… So... but it became clear there was... it seemed to me it was either going to be me or him [Minister Paul], which as I said it was quite simple. It was going to be him as far as I was concerned.

According to Minister Francis, Minister Paul was the obvious choice for the presidential position. This was also the apparent choice to others in the community. He was the most qualified of the candidates and he was at the time executive vice president and provost.
Selection of candidates during PS2. During PS2, the search committee brought three people before the board of trustees to be interviewed for the presidential position. The candidates were interviewed and the board decided on the successor. The successor was notified upon acceptance and then the university community was informed. Although Minister Abe had all the qualifications to become president of the university, there were no previous assumptions that he would be Minister Paul’s successor and the next president of AMU. Since the succession process is not explicit about naming succession candidates until the time of interviews, the community can only guess who these individuals may be based on their experience and promotions within the university. According to participants, there are sometimes “obvious” choices for succession, as in PS1, and it is unpredictable in other instances, as in PS2. Although surprising to some at the time, Minister Abe’s appointment as successor to Minister Paul has been described as the “best available choice” at the time of PS2. Table 7 depicts the selection process for both candidates during PS1 and PS2.

Table 7

Processes Used to Execute Succession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection of candidates through succession</th>
<th>PS1</th>
<th>PS2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search committee</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview process</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input from university stakeholders</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of successor by the board</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Input from University Stakeholders is Critical during Presidential Succession

The president. Some participants acknowledged that the sitting president at the time of PS1 had more “influence” over the succession process and the board of trustees because he sat on the board of fellows. One participant said that Minister Benedict, AMU’s sitting president at the time of PS1, “was on the board, was also on the board of fellows and could speak his mind
and convey which candidates he might have preferred, and so on. So there was a process anyway. Which involved both lay and clergy.” Another participant explained further about the influence of Minister Benedict during PS1. He agreed that during PS1, the first succession that took place at the university, the long-time president had more influence on the process: “So in terms of the succession, you know, the board of trustees are the people who made the appointment, but, you know, what you have is a sort of bond,” meaning a bond between the board of fellows and the board of trustees at the time of PS1. The participants went on to explain the powerful influence of Minister Benedict in relation to succession during PS1 because he had the ability to sway the board. President Benedict “probably had a lot of sway in determining who would succeed him,” one participant explained. The case was different during PS2. Minister Paul explained, “I knew it wasn’t going to be up to me who my successor was going to be.” Although succession was set up to include feedback from university stakeholders, the board of trustees could use its discretion in the selection of the candidate. According to participants, the influence over the selection process for presidential succession shifted more toward the board during PS2.

**The university community.** During PS1, there were also opportunities for the university community to provide feedback about the candidates. According to one participant, there was a “faculty committee and things of that nature that had their input.” Another described the event as “inclusive” of feedback from the community about the potential presidential successor. In addition, Minister Paul met with representatives from various departments at the university during transition and in his first year as president. As a result, the community had an opportunity to vet and to get to know the new president in an informal way.
Participants stated that during PS2, unlike PS1, university stakeholders (e.g., faculty, students, and other members of AMU) did not have an opportunity to provide feedback on Minister Paul’s successor during the selection process. Regarding feedback on selecting the president during PS2, participants said things like, “Nobody really had much input except a small inner circle of the board” and “Faculty had no input.” Another said, “The faculty don’t decide but they certainly should have their input.” One participant described PS2 as a “closed” process and another said that a closed succession process makes the successor “beholden” to the board of trustees. According to participants, the succession process is supposed to be a “democratic” procedure involving “feedback” from “various constituencies” within the university. In addition, the process described in earlier conversations by participants fostered a collaboration to include a diverse group of individuals that represent various departments within the university. Therefore, the researcher wanted to probe further concerning the lack of input from certain groups during PS2.

In conversations, the participants mentioned that the community looked for “unusual” or “unexpected promotions” to “get an idea of who might be in line for the [presidential] appointment.” One participant mentioned that there were some signs during PS1 that Minister Paul would be the next president, but according to participants the person chosen to be the successor was not anticipated in PS2. Books written about AMU presidencies indicate that Minister Abe had all the qualifications to become the next president, but his appointment was not predicted as the next candidate in line for succession. One book (Anonymous, 2016) stated that there was “no speculation” that Minister Abe would “one day be the president” of AMU. Another book stated, “No public search process was taken” in the appointment of Minister Abe, meaning there was no input from the AMU community during the presidential search. The book
continued by stating that the search was “predetermined” and that the “powerful inner circle” of the board of trustees had “determined” the successor from the “onset” (Anonymous, 2019). Consequently, the appointment of Minister Abe as next president of AMU came as a “surprise” to some members of the community, but one book stated that Minister Abe was the “best available choice” for presidency at that time, given AMU’s limited pipeline of qualified candidates for presidency.

According to one participant, the board of trustees is not bound by the university to receive feedback from university stakeholders prior to selecting the president, but participants stated that succession should be an “open” process and to include “feedback from multiple constituents” at the university. In addition, since the succession process allowed the board to decide the manner in which the search for president would be conducted, it was the board’s “prerogative” to include the opinions of university stakeholders when making the final selection.

**Summary.** Although input from university stakeholders was a resounding theme among participants, PS1 and PS2 had different outcomes in comparison on the matter. While participants mentioned having more input from stakeholders during PS1, the event around PS2 was described as a more closed process. Participants also mentioned that the power of succession had shifted from the influence of the president during PS1 and PS2 to the influence of the board during PS2. The researcher continued to analyze the contrasting outcomes relative to input from stakeholders during the two events and wondered what were, if any, implications due to the closed nature of succession and lack of input during PS2. The participants expressed that they understood succession called for some confidentiality, but feedback from the university community made the process more credible.

**Transition Period between Outgoing President and the Successor**
The next theme that arose from this study was *Transition period between outgoing president and the successor*. There were overlapping periods between predecessors and successors prior to, during, and after PS1 and PS2. As far as the board of trustees was concerned, interaction between the two parties during the transition was encouraged. Trustee Thomas said, “The board encourages interaction between successor and predecessor. Natural transition in the outgoing and incoming staff. The successor already understood how the academy worked, so it makes it a smoother transition.” Since the board determined the succession process, they were responsible for facilitating or encouraging interaction between the outgoing president and the incoming successor. Table 8 lists how the predecessors and successors from PS1 and PS2 overlapped before, during, and after succession.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition from predecessor to successor</th>
<th>PS I</th>
<th>PS II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional relationship prior to succession</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted during the transition period</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided guidance and advice on university matters</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available for presidency consultation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The transition period between the predecessor and successor is a strategic process.

Trustee Thomas explained that interaction was “encouraged” because it was a vital time for the predecessor and successor. It was a period for the successor to pass on information to the predecessor, for the predecessor to ask questions and receive guidance on university related matters, and a time for the successor to provide council on entering the position as a new university president. It was also a time for the successor to be available for consultancy as the predecessor shifts into the presidential position.
**Transition period during PS1.** Both Ministers Paul and Francis served as assistants and worked with Minister Benedict prior to PS1; therefore, the men had a professional relationship with the retiring president. Minister Francis explained that he referred to President Benedict and his counterparts, as “Legends. They had come together for 35 years and I guess people were thinking.” He explained the impact Minister Benedict had on the university and the world of education in general. He and Minister Paul had taken on the monumental task of running the university and carrying on its mission and values. He explained, “It’s like president and vice president of the United States. They come as a team.” As Minister Francis explained, Minister Benedict was a “legend” in the field of education and responsible for bringing AMU to the forefront as a nationally respected academic institution.

In an effort to understand the depth of responsibility Minister Paul was taking on as the successor to Minister Benedict, the researcher wanted to know more about Minister Benedict’s impact on AMU. According to AMU’s site and documents, Minister Benedict was a “champion of the social sciences” and he contributed to the “growth and development” of the university’s science programs to establish AMU as one of the top research universities in the United States. Minister Benedict was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his contributions to the world of research and science as result of work inside AMU and in the field of education.

According to his bio on AMU’s website, he grew the university’s endowment from nine to over three hundred million dollars in his time as president. He also opened up admissions to women at AMU, which was once restricted to clergymen. He grew the university’s research awards from two to almost thirty million dollars and he “embraced faith and science” to pave the way for AMU to be “one of the world’s great research universities.”
Minister Benedict had a tremendous impact on AMU’s growth, and Minister Paul had to take on the responsibility of continuing and building upon the “solid foundation” that Minister Benedict had built at AMU.

The researcher wanted to get a firsthand account of Minister Paul’s experience as he transitioned from provost to president during PS1. He spoke about his experience as a presidential successor: “As a new President, I wanted to be my own person and he wanted to be his own person.” He went on to explain his experience and the immediate steps he took to transition into the presidential position:

I was elected in November. And I took over in July. I used that time very effectively. I went to various universities and met with sitting presidents. And I asked for their advice. That was very helpful. I started reading even more heavily into the literature on higher education.

The transition period at the time of PS1 provided a time for Minister Paul to acquaint himself with the job while he gradually eased into the position. Although Minister Paul had been groomed for five years prior to becoming president, Minister Benedict had established a high standard of quality for the presidential position. Minister Paul sought guidance advice from within and outside of AMU.

Minister Paul also made a point to meet constituents during his transition, and this trend continued though his first year of presidency. He met with “every administrator and every faculty member.” According to him, he met with “all academic units, all the buildings, all of the enterprises.” He went on to interact with them so that he could “become even more knowledgeable” on AMU as an institution and its constituents. Minister Paul described this experience as very valuable in his role as president. He continued the trend of meeting and
greeting with the student body. He spoke to the researcher about his interaction with the AMU students: “And then I would, I went out to the different dorms, gave a little chat and then interacted with them. So I tried to deal with the students as well.” He stated that he went to events and local clubs on campus to get to know all the university community and for them to know him, and “they were all curious about who I was or what I was up to.” Everyone was curious about the new president because Minister Benedict had been a long-time president of AMU. And even if Minister Paul had also been at the university in a leadership role, the impact of Minister Benedict’s work at AMU had been profound, so the expected level of quality was high.

Minister Francis, who also was considered a potential successor during PS1, was promoted to executive vice president at the university after Minister Paul became president. He helped with the transition after Minister Paul took office during PS1. He explained

We spent that [pause] this would have been in October [pause] we spent that whole year and the rest of that academic year until June or July when we took over meeting with every department of the university, every academic department, every faculty member.

We got in groups, just kind of basically so they could meet us, we could meet them.

Minister Paul and Minister Francis explained their attempt to meet and greet all constituents at the university prior to officially taking office. It was important to the men to get to know various stakeholders at the university and for others to know more about them. Minister Francis explained the benefit of the transition period: “So it was, it was helpful to have that period of time and then, once we took over, I suppose you kind of learn on the job to a certain extent.” By using their time effectively during that period, Minister Paul and Francis were able to take the time to get advice from former presidents, meet with the AMU community, and consult with
Minister Paul said the he saw that he found value in these meetings, which would serve him well in his role as successor to the presidential position.

Minister Paul had to choose a team of people for his administration. He said, “I made, made decisions about who I wanted to be in my administration. I got my first executive assistant at that point as well. So for me, it was a privileged chance to think about what my role as president was going to entail.” Minister Paul hired his staff based on his needs as AMU president. In his book, he spoke of distributing responsibilities among members of his team.

When the time came to physically move into the president’s office during PS1, Minister Francis helped with the move and set-up. There were no explicit rules on the logistics of succession relative to the move into the presidential office. Although the predecessor had to leave office by a specific date, there was no guide as to the manner in which it would take place. It was left up to the predecessor and successor to arrange the logistics of the move. He explained that once the predecessor and staff left office, they “took every file and everything with him,” but that it “wasn’t out of spite. They just kind of moved their office.” Minister Francis went on, “So, I mean, I didn’t have a lot of files.” He recalled that he was able to reach out to the former president and assistant to ask questions, such as

Do you have the file on this? And then he’d go get the file for me. Stuff like that. So, I mean, even if you have a lot of succession planning and stuff like that, you still have to learn on the job. You can’t possibly—I mean, you’re, you’re a bit, little better prepared but, but, you have to get into the job, I think, in many ways to really learn it.

PS1 was the first succession that took place at AMU and at that time, there were no written processes in place concerning the logistics of the physical move for successor and
predecessor. The men transitioned using their own methods to facilitate the move and pass on necessary information.

**Transition period during PS2.** By the time Minister Abe took office during PS2, he and Minister Paul had formed a professional relationship and had worked on various leadership projects and initiatives throughout the university. As with Minister Paul, Minister Abe had been at the university for a number of years when he was appointed to office and he too had previously held positions as tenured faculty, vice president, and provost. The two men had worked on several projects together and developed a professional rapport. Once Minister Paul’s retirement was announced, there was a 2-month period between May and July for him to move out of the presidential role and make way for the successor to take over. Minister Paul mentioned that he had wanted to be his “own person” as a new president and he allowed the same for his successor. He also said, “So we didn’t, you can’t push too far.” He explained the delicate balance of assisting with transition from successor to predecessor. Although he was there to assist, he explained that he had to allow his successor some autonomy during the transition. Since Minister Paul had direct experience with presidential succession, he understood that the successor needed time to navigate some of the transition on his own terms. With that being said, Minister Paul needed to facilitate the changeover of leadership to Minister Abe. He explained how he started to prepare for the transition. He said he tried to “prepare conversations [about] things that had to be done.” He explained the transition that took place between him and the successor during PS2:

I think the transition, as far as I was concerned, went quite well. I always liked him, always got along with him. So, and then, after I stepped down, I tried to get out of the
way for a whole year as my predecessor did. I was available for consultation, but basically I kind of spent a year doing some traveling and writing and so on.

Minister Paul described some major tasks the new president had to take on. He “had to decide who was going to be part of the central administrative team.” He claimed, “My successor kept a number of people.” Although the new administration kept some of the staff during PS2, other people moved on. Minister Paul explained that his successor “had a number of open positions to fill” and there was a sufficient number of positions available for his successor to “get his own team.” He went on to explain that he was also available for advice after his successor took office even if he had other university obligations. “And since that time, I have a budget and the prerogative to do a lot of different things on behalf of the university.”

Even though the two men knew and had worked with each other, they still met frequently in the beginning to facilitate a smooth transition. As time went on, they spent less time together. As Paul explained, he did not want to “push” the candidate during the process. This involved a delicate balance of helping but not dominating the process. He made himself available but left some of it up to the candidate to reach out to him if he needed assistance. “Well, initially we met extensively just because it was appropriate. But as time went on, he became more confident and, and it was only if he wanted to know something that I would be directly involved.” Paul explained that even after development through succession, the successor would only get a true sense of the presidential role after they have accepted the position. He said, “You never [pause] you can observe it from a distance, but when you actually have the job, there’s a whole different thing, set of things that you have to deal with.”

Minister Paul explained the transition period from firsthand experience and what the process was like for an incoming successor: “But there’s no way that when you, when you, wake
up someday, you’re the president of the university. Everybody sees you differently than they did before.” He elaborated:

It’s like any other leadership position. And so you just had to adjust accordingly. In fact, everybody thinks of you as an administrator even though you’re still a faculty member. And the students think of you as their president, and the board of trustees and the advisory council think of you in a different way. So then the first year of the presidency, they’re all looking to see what changes are going to be made. The, the old guard are going to want to keep things that they like. The Young Turks will want significant change.

But he did his best to “pass on” information that was pertinent to the presidential office and the successor’s incoming administration:

So there was information passed on. And there were meetings held. He [Minister Abe] had to decide, what to do with certain critical positions, whether he wanted to bring all new people on or not. Which he didn’t. He, he has a mix. One of the things I was advised to do is make sure I had the, the appropriate number of assistants who reported directly to me. I started with one and I ended with three.

Important university matters were also covered, such as the AMU athletic program and the university’s strategic plan. He mentioned additional details:

He [Minister Abe] had to figure out the rotation of, of meetings, the rhythm of meetings. On football weekends here are really a big deal. That’s just a lot of kind of sitting around, kind of cheering and old stories. If he had come in from the outside, it would have been a different reality.
Minister Paul had mentioned that he and his predecessor had worked on the university’s strategic plan and the researcher wanted to know if there were any talks about how the goals in the plan would be addressed by the incoming successor. He explained this in his book:

I was the author of the final report, as I had been of its predecessor ten years earlier, but my main job was simply to give some coherence and consistent prose style to what had already been agreed to by the coordinating committee. Even though it turned out that I would not be responsible for its ultimate implementation, my successor had also been deeply involved in the process and could easily embrace its central thrust.

Minister Paul explained that he had no doubt that the vision in the strategic plan would be carried on by his successor: “I never had my doubts that he would implement most of it. It’s just with the passage of time.” He also said that he had to do the same with his predecessor during PS1.

When the researcher wanted to know if the transition would have been more difficult if the successor were an outsider, Minister Paul responded, “If he had come in from the outside, it would have been a different reality.” Meaning, since Minister Abe was a member of the AMU community, he already had knowledge and experience of some aspects of the job. That led to a smoother transition in some ways, because they had some familiarity and work experience relative to the duties of the position.

**Summary.** In both cases of succession, there was significant overlap between the predecessor and the successor throughout the succession process. The process for transition during succession was described a balancing act of not “pushing too hard” while still passing on knowledge about the position and university matters. Due to the confidentiality of succession, the researcher did not obtain explicit detail of the matters discussed between the predecessor and successor during the transition in PS1, but Minister Paul gave the sense that he passed on
information that he deemed “important” or vital to the presidential role. The predecessors and successors were able to communicate on particular aspects of the position and university matters, but participants still expressed the successor will not learn the job until they enter the role. As the participants spoke of presidential transition, they expressed that development through succession lays the groundwork for the job but stated that an individual will never comprehend the full scope of the presidential position until they assume the role.

**Succession is Beneficial for Candidates, Even for Individuals who are Not Selected**

The next theme was *Succession is beneficial for candidates, even for individuals who are not selected*. Development of candidates for succession was an ongoing process within the university, and selection was not promised to any of the candidates. The process was more implicit, based on who would be seriously considered as a successor. Succession planning did not always produce a successor, but the leadership training that candidates received during the process proved beneficial, as a few of them have moved on to become university presidents at other higher education institutions. Therefore, when a candidate was not selected for the presidential position at AMU, they could take those leadership skills to another institution. In both cases of succession at this university, most succession candidates went on to presidential positions elsewhere. In PS1, two people who were possibly considered to replace Minister Benedict went on to become presidents at other institutions.

During PS2, the successor went on to the presidency, but some of the other candidates advanced to leadership roles elsewhere. Minister Paul said, “Like we’ve had, like I said, three of my people that work in my administration became presidents.” Minister Paul explained how individuals from his administration went on to leadership positions at other universities because
of the leadership development they received at Abram Ministry University. Minister Paul explained how four people from his administration “went on to presidency at other universities.” He elaborated, “And one became my successor… And, let’s see. I think, well, there are some others who are still out there that someday might be presidents as well.”

While the successors from PS1 and PS2 went to presidential positions at AMU, documents show that most of the candidates from PS1 and PS2 went on to presidential positions at other institutions within five years of taking part in leadership development through succession at AMU. Most of the candidates held executive roles, such as provost or vice president, at the university prior to taking presidential positions at other institutions within the university.

Minister Francis was one of the potential candidates during the succession of Minister Paul who went on to become president at another institution. He took the skills he had developed during training to obtain a presidential leadership position at another institution. When asked how his experience at Abram Ministry shaped his leadership capacity to become president, he explained, “Well, I think it prepared a lot. I mean, it was, in terms of I suppose what I learned, including the mistakes I made.” He added, “But you, develop, what is a reasonable leadership style because everybody has a different management style, but, I mean, in some ways the most important lesson you learn is from mistakes.”

Concerning lessons learned from mistakes, Minister Francis said, “You realize that you don’t have all the answers [as president] and that you’ve done some things wrong, so you don’t make that same mistake again.” He added how his time at Abram Ministry University prepared him for the presidential role. In an interview provided by another about his time at the university in relation to his ability to lead and his job experience, he said that his “years as executive vice
president [at Abram Ministry University] were incredibly demanding and exciting.” The work as executive vice president provided the qualifications Minister Francis needed to become president at another university. The same was true for other succession candidates who moved on to presidential roles after being groomed for leadership through succession.

**Summary.** The intention of presidential succession was to develop leadership within AMU but the succession process, according to participants, is “implicit” for candidates. While they were aware that they were being groomed for the position, the presidential position is not promised to any single candidate. With that being said, some individuals from PS1 and PS2 still possessed those skills after succession and used it to become presidents of other institutions. The participants acknowledged that succession candidates have gone on to presidential roles at other higher education institutions.

**University Stakeholders Desired a More Open and Democratic Process**

The final theme was *University Stakeholders Desired a More Open and Democratic Process*. According to Minister Paul, succession planning was ongoing throughout the organization, and it included a number of stakeholders who played distinct roles at the various stages of the process. Presidential succession at the university directly involved the predecessor who provided leadership development for the candidates; the potential successors who took on the role of being developed for leadership; and the internal committee developed by the board to interview the potential successors for the presidential position. The internal committee was made of members of the AMU community, including the board of trustees, who made the final decision on the candidates, and the board of fellows, who provided feedback on the candidates and intervened if necessary concerning the selection of the presidential successor. In addition, the faculty, student body, other members of the university community, and the search firm (if
used) can also provide feedback during the succession process. According to participants, although various groups were involved, the board of trustees made the final decision on the presidential successor (see Figure 11). The succession process at AMU included various parties keeping the process open and democratic to all involved during the succession process was a resounding theme from participants. According to participants, this joint process allowed various parties feedback to provide input about the candidates. Figure 11 depicts the constituents who were directly and indirectly involved in presidential succession at AMU.

*Figure 11*. Constituents who are involved in presidential succession at AMU.

**The board.** The succession process can be a delicate balance of listening to the needs of all parties involved and trying to accommodate their requests. According to participants, maintaining democracy throughout the process means keeping all parties involved through feedback and open during steps in the process. Since the board set the standards for succession and decided on the final candidate, openness during succession began with the board of trustees.
One participant explained, “I think the big thing is that the board of trustees needs to be clear about what their role is, what process needs to be followed, and how to keep it as democratic as possible.” According to the participant, the board had the ability to steer the process by selecting individuals to help conduct the search and by determining the agenda for presidential succession. The board determined the manner in which succession would take place during PS1 and PS2, but due to the confidential nature of succession, the researcher was not privy to details of the manner in which the board determined the logistics for conducting the events and the individuals who were involved.

**Maintaining openness.** This meant conveying a clear message about the succession process to internal and external constituents who were involved. One participant stated, “Be open about the process. I think primarily those would be the main things. Don’t have it, the process, run behind the scenes.” Being “open” during the process meant including community members who may not be directly involved but had a vested interest in the university.

Being open during succession planning has its limitations. According to one participant, there are confidential matters of succession that cannot be discussed publicly. Therefore the board does not make certain information public regarding succession. With that being said, participants mentioned that there were ways for the board of trustees to be more inclusive during succession. One participant mentioned that being open about succession meant involving various representatives from cross sections of the university. The participants said that it was important to get feedback from those stakeholders to add credibility to the succession process. One stated, “If you choose from inside, you need to get as good a feedback as you can about, from a cross section of those who work with this person.” Although the participants said that the
board was the determinant of succession, participants agreed it was important for university community to be heard if they had feedback on the process and on the potential successor.

As participants spoke, they mentioned that not only was it important to include representatives from university stakeholders in the succession planning, but the community should also have an opportunity to meet the candidate and ask them questions. One participant elaborated, saying that potential successors should be, “interviewed by the committee that the board sets up, which would include members of the various constituencies.” During PS1 and PS2, the board formed internal committees, but the confidential nature of the succession did not permit the researcher access to the information of the individuals involved. The participants did mention that the internal committee should include various members of the university community.

The participants continued to speak of ways in which the university can maintain openness during the succession process. Another way was to have the potential successors present as a means of introducing the potential successor to the stakeholders:

And I think internally to the campus, if you have a set of candidates or two candidates or whatever, you need to gain some credibility by having that person, those persons, make some presentations or be interviewed or something like that.

Since the board can determine the manner in which succession is conducted, it is up to the board to have presentations or interviews arranged so that the members of the university can meet the candidates. During PS1 and PS2, the board formed an internal committee, but the confidential nature of the succession did not permit the researcher access to that information. The participants did mention that the internal committee should include various members of the university community.
One participant expressed that being open during succession is important and adds credibility to the process. Due to the set-up of the process, it is possible for an individual or group to act on the interest of one side. The participant explained how this can occur:

The temptation for people who can ally with one candidate or another is to want their, kind of push their candidate, rather than simply have a conversation about what’s best for the institution. I think a lot of institutions have had the dilemma of choosing presidents that didn’t, that were the choice of a particular individual or camped within the, within the board. That’s one issue.

**Faculty and students.** The researcher asked the participants to elaborate about university stakeholders who needed to be included in vetting the potential successor. One said, “I guess it would be a matter of just making sure that you’ve had input from people that should have input, whether it’s faculty, staff [pause] I think there are times when students should have input.” Unless, the student or faculty member is chosen to be part of the board’s internal committee, or unless the board provides a platform to meet the potential candidates, the faculty and students are not directly involved in presidential succession at AMU. There are systems set up for both groups to intervene with feedback if they choose to do so. The faculty senate is one avenue for faculty to provide feedback on succession and for students the student senate serves the same purpose.

According to the participants, faculty should also have a participatory role in vetting the potential successor. A participant said, “I mean, you don’t totally ignore faculty, but, but just because faculty have input doesn’t mean you have to follow everything that they recommend. I mean, but at least they had their opportunity to make their position heard.” Participants
mentioned that having faculty included in the process is vital because they are stakeholders in the university community.

While one participant agreed that faculty needed to be heard during presidential succession, another indicated that it made the process more complex to have input from a “faculty point of view” during the process. He elaborated by saying, “And in some ways, you know, having it out of the faculty’s hands completely, basically, I think probably solves, a lot of, you know, hurt feelings and what have you as, as you go along.” He also said, “But I understand where, you know, where it’s coming from, and, and in some ways having, a very closed process, you know, helps get over a number of issues that, could arise.”

When the researcher asked the participants to elaborate on including faculty in presidential succession, one response was

I think if they have a top candidate, I think it would be very important for them to, before the announcement is made, to bring that person in to allow, you know, a select group of faculty to be able to talk to them and build up some support, particularly if it’s coming from the outside.

As a member of the shared governance of the university, the faculty does have a say in university matters, and that includes presidential succession. One participant suggested that not having faculty involved could have implications in the succession process. He explained:

So all you need is a situation where he gets cross wires with some faculty members and then he’s in deep trouble ‘cause he’s not their candidate. He could be the greatest president in the world, the greatest, the greatest choice, but you, have to have the right process as well.
The “right to process” meaning faculty had a right to provide feedback in the succession process even if they were not the final decision makers. The participants suggested that there were long-term implications to not having faculty input because they were stakeholders within the university and had the ability to provide feedback or address concerns about a potential successor. The participant suggested that inclusion of faculty lends to the democratic process of succession and the implications for not doing so produce long-term consequences.

Although the students are at the university for a short period of time, and they are not directly involved in succession, they too have a say in selecting a president of the university. Additionally, inclusivity during succession has to include all members of the university community.

**The candidates.** Being open in selecting a candidate is also vital. Succession includes a number of potential candidates, but only one will be picked for the position. According to Minister Francis, it can be a “sensitive” process for the candidates. A glance at succession focuses on leadership development and continuity, but there is not much information on the implications for succession candidates who do not get selected for the presidential position.

Minister Francis recalled being told that he would be moving to administration at the start of PS1. He said he was simply told that Minister Benedict would be retiring soon, and the university was preparing leaders in anticipation of his retirement. At the time, he was provided with little information, but the end result was clear: the university was preparing a successor to the president. This was the first succession at the university and there were few details about how the process would be conducted, so he assumed that the candidates who did not succeed would leave the institution after succession. Minister Francis described his experience as a young potential:
I think that’s a worry about as a succession candidate is [pause] it gets back to what I said before when people used to say, “Oh, it’s too bad you can’t all stay here at the university.” Like, whoever going to be named president stays. The rest of you will have to leave.

Being open with the potential successors during succession was important to the participants. The participants revealed that not much was detailed to potential successors during PS1; therefore the candidates were unaware of where they stood in comparison to each other during that time. Similarly to a job interview, the details on the final selection were not given until the board chose the successor. Therefore the candidates could only speculate as to who would be the successor and what would be the future of their fate at AMU after succession.

Minister Francis cautioned that there were implications for succession candidates who were not picked as successors. He said, “If you have identified four of five people that the next president is definitely going to be one of them, then you run the risk of whoever isn’t named, destroying them.” The potential risk or downside to the candidates during succession was matter that had not been addressed in the literature; therefore the researcher wanted the participant to elaborate on the matter. Minister Francis explained:

I think you have to be careful, so that you don’t destroy somebody, in the process of having them be a succession candidate. I think also be sensitive to people who don’t get the position or how you set up the succession planning, so that you haven’t set up people for perceived failure.

There were no processes in place at AMU for individuals who did not get selected for the presidential role during PS1 and PS2. The researcher was not able to gain interviews with the
candidates, but participants expressed that being more open during succession would be helpful to the candidates involved.

**Summary.** Succession planning in higher education involves multiple parties. The participants agreed that being open during the process and allowing feedback from the community was one way to keep the process democratic and add credibility to the succession process. In order for this to happen, the participants stated that it would be up to the board to determine the process.

**Conclusion**

This chapter included seven themes that emerged from four interviews with individuals, three of whom directly participated in presidential succession at Abram Ministry University. The interviews revealed similar themes during both presidential successions, but the two events diverged regarding feedback during the selection process and the influence of the presidents during PS1 and PS2. Although presidential succession is designed to be inclusive, most participants agreed that the process should be even more open and inclusive.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used at a private religious university. The research question for this study was the following: What succession planning processes were used during two presidential succession events at a private religious university? The researcher chose a qualitative methodology for this study because of the particular characteristics associated with qualitative research (Stake, 2010). Qualitative studies create an empathetic understanding for the reader through thick description of the case. During qualitative studies, the phenomenon being studied is recounted through multiple subjective accounts by the participants and depicted through the interpretation of the researcher. To keep the inquiry within a reasonable scope, case studies should be bound between certain parameters, such as space and time (Yin, 2018) or time and activity (Stake, 1995). This case study was used to investigate two events of leadership succession due to retirements of university presidents. Therefore, this case was bounded by time and activity (Stake, 1995) in order to gain a better conceptualization of the phenomenon being studied.

Chapter 4 reported the findings that surfaced during data collection. This chapter relates the findings to the theoretical framework used for this study and other literature related to succession planning. The findings are summarized into seven themes related to presidential succession planning, which were discussed in relation to the literature.

Theoretical Framework

Rothwell’s (2015) succession planning and management (SPM) was the conceptual framework used for this study. SPM shifts away from the traditional roots of succession planning. The framework encompasses considerations that will affect the workplace of the
future, because it specifically supports the stabilization of the tenured personnel within an organization (Rothwell, 2015). SPM is a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity, encourage leadership advancement, and retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future. Rothwell’s SPM programs have been used to examine leadership development and knowledge transfer across all industries (Rothwell, 2015), including higher education (Richards, 2016).

Succession planning objectives include establishing the skill sets needed by the organization, identifying internal candidates who possess those skill sets, and creating a long-term development plan for those potential leaders to transition into these roles in the future (Rothwell, 2015). Effective succession planning involves formal strategic planning and is based on continuity. It involves recruiting, educating, training, and mentoring potential leaders to ensure the sustainability of the organization (Rothwell, 2015). Succession planning can be defined as identifying, developing, and mentoring an internal candidate over an extended period of time to prepare him or her for taking over a leadership position in an organization (Bornstein, 2010; Jackson, 2017; Rothwell, 2015).

Rothwell’s (2015) SPM provided insight into the process of leadership development and presidential succession at Abram Ministry University (AMU). It helped the researcher make generalizations about succession planning (Stake, 1995) and guided the analysis of data on presidential succession. Using theoretical assumptions provided by the framework, the researcher was able to examine Presidential Succession 1 (PS1) and Presidential Succession 2 (PS2) events and evaluate and explain the meaning behind specific actions taken during the processes. SPM allowed the researcher to evaluate the data in a critical manner, deconstruct the
events, examine the processes used, explain why they were utilized, and predict the possible outcomes of AMU’s succession design for presidential leadership continuity.

Rothwell’s (2015) model for succession planning includes a seven-step framework, which guided the researcher through the study of presidential succession at AMU. Step 1, *making a commitment to succession planning* by assigning time and effort to the process, is the foremost step for succession planning and management at any institution. Step 1 helped the researcher examine intentional actions taken by AMU leaders to demonstrate their commitment to presidential leadership continuity through succession planning. The most important parts of creating an effective plan were designing a plan with measurable program goals, determining the

Figure 12: Rothwell Succession Planning and Management Model: Adapted from: *Effective succession planning: Ensuring leadership continuity and building talent from within* by Rothwell, W. J. (2015).
roles of various groups involved, and establishing a level of accountability to those individuals (Rothwell, 2015).

Determining whether AMU’s presidential succession plans were designed with measurable goals was the first sign of the institution’s commitment to succession (Rothwell, 2015). The researcher analyzed the processes used to design AMU’s presidential succession plan, examined the intent and mission of the plan, and determined whether succession goals were accomplished during those events. Uncovering the purpose and goal of AMU’s plan was a critical step in conceptualizing the underpinning of presidential succession at the institution. As the researcher examined the data, Rothwell’s framework helped her identify specific variables that provided meaning to AMU’s succession plan. The framework helped the researcher identify objectives within the plan that indicated the goals had to be met and needed to be measurable: the end result would indicate success or failure. Rothwell’s framework helped the researcher deconstruct and reconstruct the institution’s succession design so she could develop a deeper comprehension of the justification for AMU’s presidential succession design.

Rothwell’s framework also helped the researcher examine the orchestrators of leadership succession, the means by which each group was chosen, the roles they played in succession, and their impact on the process. AMU established a succession plan that had measurable goals and chose groups within the organization to steer the process. Its method of creating groups was akin to the governance of higher education, and the procedures for assigning accountability to each group was aligned with Rothwell’s model for succession. These were all indicators of commitment to succession at AMU.

Steps 2 and 3 are *evaluating the organization’s people, work and performance*, and its potential for long-term stability (Rothwell, 2015). Evaluating the organization for continuity is
an important part of succession planning. Rothwell’s framework helped the researcher identify factors that indicated whether those needs for stability were being addressed at AMU, how they were being addressed, the potential benefits from targeting those needs, and the harm if they were not addressed. This step in the framework led the researcher to examine institutional strategic plans and documents that reported on or discussed leadership and organizational continuity through succession planning at AMU.

While Steps 2 and 3 helped analyze the health and stability of the organization at the time of PS1 and PS2, Step 4 helped analyze the current work and people of the organization for future needs. This step provided insight into the bench strength (Rothwell, 2015) of the organization, meaning the number of candidates available to fill the presidential position in the event of a vacancy (Rothwell, 2015). This involved evaluating AMU’s human capital to determine the organization’s resources, its ability to perform, and its competitive viability in the future. This step would determine whether the organization had enough employees with the right qualifications for leadership development who could fill future presidential leadership roles. This step helped map out how AMU matched future leadership skills that were required for the presidential position against the inventory of candidates available for leadership development.

Step 5, evaluating performance, assisted in exploring data on how AMU’s orchestrators of succession planning considered forthcoming requirements as they assessed and measured employee performance and potential for advancement. This step provided guidance for analyzing data regarding the method used at AMU to appraise the individual performance of employees within the organization, the process it used to identify candidates who possessed leadership potential, and the methods it used to match the current skills of candidates to its future needs. Using Step 4 as guidance, the researcher was able to get a deeper understanding of the
appraisal process and to gain insight into the competency models that were used to pinpoint the best candidates for accomplishing succession goals.

Step 6, developing people, helped examine how AMU created succession plan programs to address skills gaps in potential succession candidates. It directed the researcher to examine how developmental activities were conducted to build required competencies for presidential leadership. This allowed the researcher to examine how AMU used succession candidates to build bench strength through succession planning and develop a pipeline of succession candidates for presidential leadership.

Step 7, evaluating programs, is the pivotal step that sets Rothwell’s conceptual framework apart from others. In Rothwell’s model, succession planning is wedded to succession management to create a cycle of assessing succession programs for their efficacy. AMU had only two successions, but there was evidence of succession program continuity. The study established that the restrictions on the presidential role at AMU made succession programming not only necessary but also critical to the survival of the institution. The ongoing efforts to promote leadership continuity through succession planning and the propensity to conduct necessary improvements were the final indications of AMU’s commitment to succession planning (Rothwell, 2015).

Overall, Rothwell’s model aligned with succession at AMU and created a roadmap for: development and execution of succession planning. In addition, it helped the researcher answer the research question: What succession planning processes were used during two presidential succession events at a private higher education institution?

Presidential succession at AMU was complex, and several moving parts were included in the process of creating a smooth design for presidential leadership development. These events
took place several years ago; it was up to the researcher to dissect these moving parts individually to understand the significance behind the actions that were taken. Rothwell’s framework allowed the researcher to investigate the presidential succession event while using theoretical assumptions to make sense of and explain the processes used and their meaning.

In order to understand the logistics of presidential succession planning, the researcher sought first to comprehend how succession plans were designed. Rothwell’s conceptual framework for succession planning was used to examine the events and to help deconstruct the succession design to identify how the plans were developed. Although succession plan designs vary, there is a blueprint or methodology to creating an effective one (Rothwell, 2015).

The goal of succession is to address the current and future implications of leadership turnover (Rothwell, 2015). More specifically, Rothwell’s (2010, 2015) SPM model focuses on “critical turnover” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 16), meaning the turnover of high-impact positions, such as the president of a university. AMU faced this problem because its president, Minister Benedict, was slated to retire after the five years of PS1 and due to the required unique qualifications for the presidential candidates at AMU; there were only a limited number of qualified ministers to replace him.

According to Rothwell (2015), there are several reasons why an organization would commit to succession planning. One reason is to “identify replacement needs [such as retirement], as a means of targeting necessary training, employee education, and employee development” (p.17). The retirement of Minister Benedict was not only a concern of the leadership, but as discussed in Chapter 4, it was also a concern of university stakeholders. AMU had specific qualification requirements for the presidential role, so finding a qualified candidate to replace him was vital to the religious identity, reputation, and survival of the institution.
Another reason for succession planning is to “increase the talent pool of promotable employees” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 17). In order for AMU to have a pipeline of candidates prepared for succession, the organization had to be intentional and strategic with regard to developing its leaders for succession. This was the case in both PS1 and PS2. Targeted plans to recruit, develop, and implement the next president had to be created. Establishing and committing to a plan was an essential part of the succession process that AMU used to find suitable candidates for development. Rothwell (2015) stated that SPM had to be “deliberate” (p. 7) and “systematic” (p. 7) in its efforts to build leadership continuity for key positions, retain institutional knowledge for the future, and promote individual advancement. AMU had to be intentional about building leadership to replace Minister Benedict. Participants said, and documents showed, that Minister Benedict was not only a prominent contributor to the world of education and science, but he was also responsible for expanding AMU’s programs and status to a national level.

The limited options for leadership candidates was a prominent theme, which led to the PS1 and PS2 events. Prior to identifying those ministers for succession, AMU had to develop and implement a succession plan for presidential leadership. According to Rothwell (2015), making a commitment to succession planning by assigning time and effort to the process is the foremost step for succession planning and management at any institution.

**Collective commitment from presidential succession planning participants.** The structure of AMU’s succession process is unique, but it aligns with the governance structure of higher education institutions. The shared governance system in higher education operates as the ruling body of academic organizations, with a board of trustees, president, and an academic community (faculty, senate, council) jointly making decisions regarding institutional matters (AGB, 2017). Shared governance means that all participating members have a role in the
decision-making process, although not necessarily at every stage (Olson, 2009). This system creates shared authority among the parties (AGB, 2017), suggesting that consensus is required on various institutional issues such as policies, financial matters, and academic decisions (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). Shared governance is also responsible for the administrative structure of the organization (AGB, 2017), and the board of trustees has the power to hire and remove presidents from their posts (AGB, 2017; Douglass, 2005). Therefore, when a presidential post is vacant, the shared governance system is responsible for orchestrating the selection of a new president (Poston, 1997). Members of the system recommend the final candidates, and the board makes the final selection based on those recommendations (Olson, 2009).

AMU’s general plan for succession was a democratic process with a similar structure. The succession process at AMU involved its board of trustees, board of fellows, the internal committee, the succession candidates, and members of the university community. These groups were assigned certain responsibilities and played distinct roles during the succession process. Although various groups were involved, the board of trustees made the final decision on the presidential successor. This joint process allowed various parties to provide input about the candidates; therefore, commitment from all parties during the process was vital to maintaining trust and confidence among the groups (Rothwell, 2015).

**Commitment from AMU leadership.** The first sign of commitment to succession planning at AMU was the fact that the university had a general process in place for presidential succession. Rothwell (2015) stated, “Systematic succession planning occurs when an organization adapts specific procedures to ensure the identification, development, and long-term retention of talented individuals” (p. 7). The process at AMU included a means of selecting potential candidates (i.e., required qualifications). According to Rothwell, the requirements set
by AMU for presidential leadership can be described as “competency identification” (p. 90), meaning that AMU had identified the qualifications needed to be successful in the presidential position and created a “competency model” (p. 90) (i.e., job description and by-laws) that conveyed these requirements. In order to determine whether a candidate was qualified for potential succession, AMU used the competency model to conduct an assessment, comparing it with potential successors.

Establishing a competency model during succession is particularly important because it helps the organization align its needs with the candidate qualifications (Barton, 2017; Rothwell, 2015). Lining up the requirements for continuity with the skills of the candidate is a key requirement for the presidential position because an ineffective leader or someone who lacks the qualifications to successfully run the organization can harm the future of the organization (Rothwell, 2015).

AMU had a system in place for advancing succession candidates within the institution in preparation for presidential succession. During both PS1 and PS2, the candidates were observed by leadership, identified according to their education, background and work experience, and promoted to leadership roles as a part of leadership development, where they engaged in activities that provided the experience necessary to qualify as a candidate for presidential succession. According to Minister Francis, the system was designed to promote HCP ministers who were faculty and would not otherwise have opportunities to obtain leadership experience. This system was strategic on the part of AMU because faculty members often do not get opportunities to obtain leadership experience within their institution due to the nature of their position (Barden & Curry, 2013). Since faculty mostly focus on curriculum and academic
matters, they have little chance to engage in the institution’s business matters (Barden & Curry, 2013).

Another critical sign of commitment to succession was determining the roles of various groups involved (Rothwell, 2015). AMU established accountability for the people who were involved in succession. Like most universities in the United States, AMU operates on a shared governance structure, and representatives of the governance were included in presidential succession during PS1 and PS2. Figures 10 and 11 demonstrate the structure of and process for presidential succession at AMU. Although the board of trustees is responsible for picking the final candidate, succession at AMU included an internal committee that conducted interviews, a board of fellows that maintained the religious mission and values of the organization, and the university community that provided feedback on the candidates. Establishing roles during succession assigns accountability (Rothwell, 2015) to the participants involved.

**Commitment from the predecessor.** Minister Paul intended to build leadership in preparation for the future, just as his predecessor had done for him. Minister Paul had taken the baton from Minister Benedict and continued the cycle of leadership development. According to Rothwell (2015), “succession planning, like a relay race, has to do with passing on responsibility . . . Drop the baton and you lose the race” (p. 12). In other words, the plan in place at AMU for presidential succession required continuous development of candidates for the presidential position. The responsibility for developing future candidates had been passed from Minister Benedict to Minister Paul.

During PS2, Minister Paul made intentional efforts to build leadership in preparation for his departure. By the time PS2 occurred 18 years later, Minister Paul had already groomed individuals through many years of leadership development in preparation for presidential
succession. He stated in Chapter 4 that he “deliberately” wanted to provide leadership development to the next generation of potential leaders. Minister Paul elaborated about the candidates for PS2. He had been a succession candidate during PS1 and had experienced the benefit of leadership development through succession. He stated that the succession process helped him “lay groundwork” for his role as president of AMU and that he wanted to do something comparable for the next generation of potential leaders. Not only did Minister Paul acknowledge the benefits he gained from leadership development, but he also expressed that he had a certain responsibility to do the same for future leaders. This sense of obligation for developing future leaders was not a coincidence on the part of Minister Paul.

Prior to ever being selected as presidential candidates for leadership development at AMU, individuals from PS1 and PS2 were watched or assessed by administrative leadership for succession potential. According to participants, this method of scouting by AMU leadership allowed individuals coming up through the ranks or individuals being promoted to leadership roles to be identified as potential candidates for presidential leadership. AMU’s leadership was intentionally and continuously looking for potential leaders among the HCP ministers at AMU. This step in the succession process allowed AMU to assess its workforce and “establish an inventory of talent” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 78) within it. In order for succession to be conducted, there needed to be commitment from the predecessor because the predecessor facilitated leadership development for succession candidates. Although the predecessors do not select the final candidate during succession, they take part in mentoring and grooming the candidates for succession and they also take part in facilitating the transition of leadership to the successor.

Commitment from potential candidates. The succession process was implicit for candidates. When they were selected for leadership development, the candidates were not
explicitly told the details of the process. Minister Francis mentioned that prior to accepting his promoted role at AMU he was told that there were going to be some changes and that he would be promoted to be the executive assistant to the second-in-charge at the university. He was also told that the purpose of his promotion (along with the others) was that so there would be a group of people from which the next president of the university would be selected when Minister Benedict retired.

By accepting the position as executive assistant, Minister Francis made a commitment to the succession process. It is important to note that HCP ministers take a vow of obedience as ministers of the congregation. Therefore, when succession candidates are promoted, it is part of the commitment to succession and is aligned with the commitment these individuals made to the church as ministers. Documents that provided information on vows taken by HCP ministers state, “By our vow of obedience we commit the entirety of our life” at AMU “to a faithful adherence to the decisions of the community and the authority” of the HCP Regional Council. Given the vow to the ministry, the candidate made a commitment to the process.

When an institution decides to build leadership through succession planning, it must consider a succession model that will allow it to create long-term objectives for leadership development (Rothwell, 2010, 2015). During this process, an organization’s objective is to create succession planning programs that will stabilize the tenure of personnel by matching the organization’s current talent to its future needs (Rothwell, 2010, 2015). Because succession models differ, organizations can choose the one that would best suit their objectives (Adams, 2013). Commitment from all parties involved in succession is essential to a successful and smooth succession process. Because succession is not a one-time event, but rather is an ongoing
process at AMU, commitment was established at every stage. The signs of commitment at AMU are established in its policies, mission, and community.

Themes

Theme 1: Emphasis on Unique Qualifications

Abram Ministry University had very specific qualifications for presidential candidates. To be considered for the presidential position, individuals needed to be tenured faculty with a doctoral degree, possess administrative and leadership experience, and be a Holy Covenant Parrish (HCP) Minister who was on the Holy Covenant Parrish (HCP) Regional Council. These required qualifications had been set by the board and was written in AMU’s bylaws. The requirements were directly linked to the values and mission of AMU, suggesting that the presidential position at AMU was linked to the preservation and continuity of the institution’s religious identity and academic reputation. This emphasis on qualifications was a prominent theme during this study but having these qualifiers did not denote whether a candidate was best suited for the job. Therefore the researcher examined AMU’s competency model (See Table 5) for leadership, to identify competencies needed to be successful in the position.

Job qualifications are implicitly or explicitly (Ellström, 1997) set by an employer and can be defined as the skills required by an employer to successfully perform a job task. Qualifications can include education, work experience, skills (e.g. verbal and written communication skills, interpersonal skills, leadership skills), and it can also include physical attributes (e.g. ability to physically perform certain tasks), (Ellström, 1997).

However, having qualifications for the role did not automatically indicate a candidate’s ability be successful as president. Candidates also needed to possess the appropriate
competencies to be successful in the role (See table 6). Competencies are an individual’s collective knowledge (e.g. personal traits, skills, social role, motives) that result in optimal work performance (Rothwell, 2015). The capacity of an individual’s competency can be measured in terms of cognitive factors (e.g. knowledge and intelligence), personality traits (self-confidence), social skills (e.g. cooperative skills and ability to communicate effectively), affective skills (e.g. motivation, personal values) and perceptual motor skills (e.g. physical performance required for the job) (Ellström, 1997).

In other words, job competencies are related to work performance and results that translate to productivity (Rothwell, 2015; Ellström, 1997) and job qualifications are requirements (set by an employer) for a particular class of work (Ellström, 1997). Job qualifications are usually listed in the job description. However, human resources departments and members of leadership use competency models to compare and measure the level of productivity in each candidate for a particular job (Rothwell, 2015).

In order to assess the competencies of individual succession candidates and decide on the best person for the position, AMU would have to (a) compare succession candidates against their competency model (See table 5; Rothwell, 2015) and (b) develop a scale to measure the level of productivity between potential candidates (Rothwell, 2015). The researcher did not obtain access to the tools used by AMU to measure each candidate’s competency level, nor were the candidates fully aware of the process used to pick the finalist and successor.

But there were opportunities for competency development through various activities. Table 6 reflects some of these activities in relation to the competency development for each successor. The next section will discuss the intentional steps taken by AMU to develop these candidates.
Theme 2: Intentional Steps to Develop Internal Talent for Presidential Succession

Academic presidents embody the values and goals of their institution (Poston, 1997). Therefore, when a president leaves his or her post, it has a significant effect on the organization (AAUP, 1966) and can have a lasting effect on the institution and its subunits (AAUP, 1966; Poston, 1997). Father Benedict had a tremendous impact on the development of AMU’s expansion of its programs. His departure would have a profound effect on the institution, which was reflected in the documents on his presidency and conversations with participants during interviews. As a way to address his imminent retirement, AMU leaders developed a plan for presidential succession and AMU had to find talent (potential successors) to participate in those plans.

There is no universal approach to succession (Rothwell, 2015), but succession plans have similar themes. Succession planning is “systematic” and ensures “the identification, development, and long-term retention” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 9) of talented individuals within the organization. During succession planning, the development of a strategy for conducting the event precedes the selection of potential succession candidates. Prior to picking potential succession candidates, AMU leaders looked at the organization to analyze its “needs under changing conditions” and develop “activities necessary to satisfy these needs” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 17). In order to develop a strategic plan for presidential succession, AMU leaders “assess[ed] present people and work requirements” (Rothwell, 2015 p.18) within the organization to determine the organization’s potential for long-term stability.

A key part of strategic planning for succession is identifying the organization’s “core competencies.” Core competencies are an organization’s “strategic strengths” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 14), the key factors that make the organization stand out among or provide leverage against its
competition. Documents show that AMU strengths were its HCP ministry character, undergraduate education, research and scholarship, stewardship, and external engagement (See table 9).

Table 9. AMUs Mission, Values and Strategic Goals. Adapted from AMU Office of Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMU Mission</th>
<th>Organizational Goals for AMU</th>
<th>Organizational Values for AMU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transmit knowledge through teaching and mentoring (Intellectually and spiritually)</td>
<td><strong>HCP Character:</strong> Ensure HCP character informs daily life</td>
<td><strong>Integrity:</strong> Demonstrate ethical and moral behavior. Display wide moral character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the holistic development of students (Intellectually and spiritually)</td>
<td><strong>Undergraduate Education:</strong> Offer unsurpassed undergraduate programs that address students intellectually and spiritually</td>
<td><strong>Teamwork:</strong> Work collaboratively as a member of a team and care about the team’s objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster knowledge and discovery through research and scholarship</td>
<td><strong>Research and Scholarship:</strong> Advance human understanding through research, scholarship, and teaching that seek to unify, unite, enlighten</td>
<td><strong>Leadership Excellence:</strong> Take initiatives by demonstrating commitment to improving results. Consider the common good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><strong>Stewardship:</strong> Exercise stewardship by utilizing AMU’s resources</td>
<td><strong>Accountability:</strong> Take responsibility for decisions, results and actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><strong>External Engagement:</strong> Engage in external collaborations to expand and enhance AMU’s impact gain support</td>
<td><strong>Leadership in Mission:</strong> Understand and support the HCP Mission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AMU is one of the few top-ranked religious research universities in the United States.

Being a top-ranked university made AMU stand out because of its religious mission and
practices, in addition to its research. As a religious university, its practices revolved around integrating the HCP faith into every aspect of the organization. Like many religious academic institutions, AMU had to balance maintaining a commitment to developing students intellectually through its education programs while incorporating its faith to support students spiritually (Barton, 2017).

To preserve their identity or core competency, it is a best practice for organizations to use a “core set of leadership and succession management competencies” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 17) to identify talent for succession. While AMU had competency models and assessments to help select candidates, it had to develop a strategic plan to address the competency gaps among the potential candidates selected for development. According to Rothwell (2015), strategies to address competency gaps through succession focus on “what is,” meaning the current level of competency or qualifications within potential candidates, and “what should be,” meaning the competencies AMU would like its leaders to possess. Strategic planning for succession focuses on

Identifying the purpose of an organization, establishing its measurable goals, scanning the future external environment to identify opportunities and threats, analyzing the present internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization, choosing the direction of the organization best able to capitalize on the future, and evaluating strategic results against the goals. (Rothwell, 2015, p. 14)

AMU’s strategic plans for presidential succession reflected the identity, mission, and values of the organization (See Table 9). AMU’s requirements for the presidency (e.g., competency model) were directly linked to preserving the institution’s identity (e.g., core competencies, See Table 6).
According to Rothwell (2015), this next step during succession included “appraising individual performance” (p. 15) of potential successors. Rothwell referred to “talented” employees as people who are “productive” and “promotable” (p. 15). He also stated that there are fundamental best practices for developing that talent through succession. Rothwell suggested that organizations use a core set of “leadership [and] succession competencies” to recruit talent for succession (p. 27). Documents show that AMU had core competencies built around preservation of its religious beliefs, identity, and practice, its research and science programs, its community service and engagement, and its athletic program. In order to recruit talent, every succession candidate needed to possess qualifications that could provide continuity for the organization’s core competencies.

During PS1, Minister Benedict was slated to retire and Ministers Paul and Francis were two of the few chosen for leadership development. When asked by the researcher why they were chosen to be succession candidates, they could only speculate. Documents showed that they both had advanced degrees, had administrative and leadership experience, and were faculty members, which were all the qualifications necessary for the presidential role at AMU. Although both candidates had all the qualifications for the job, Minister Francis believed that Minister Paul was the most suitable candidate for the presidential position. He stressed the importance of having an “academic” in the position. Minister Paul mentioned that candidates were “watched” by the leadership prior to and during leadership development. The duties executed by Minister Paul (See Table 6) throughout his development prior to succession were aligned with the values, mission, and goals of AMU.

Minister Paul explained that as a succession candidate, he engaged in leadership development activities during PS1, such as working on AMU’s strategic plan and attending
“board of trustees and various advisory councils” and other meetings, such as “leadership functions [and] fundraising events.” Some of these activities prepared him for the role and, according to him, “laid the groundwork” for his role as president of AMU. As president, Minister Paul stated he met regularly with the succession candidates during PS2, appointing them to committees, involving them in developing AMU’s strategic plan, and engaging them in the university community through interactions with various stakeholders. Rothwell stated that this is the succession step during which leaders analyze current work and people’s talents for future needs (Rothwell, 2015). Because the men lived and worked on campus, he could observe and work with them in addition to evaluating them from a distance before picking them for leadership development. Through these activities, he was able to demonstrate his level of ability to fulfill each task or desired objective successfully.

The purpose of assessing the organization’s current personnel and work requirements and appraising current individuals for future needs was to match strategy (e.g., a succession plan) with talent (e.g., succession candidates) (Rothwell, 2015). Once the potential successors had been identified, they were selected and developed for leadership. The potential successors engaged in activities that were intentional and designed to serve the specific purpose of preparing them for the presidential role at AMU.

The goal of succession at AMU was to create a pipeline of qualified candidates for succession. According to Rothwell (2015), this step included developing people for the presidential role. Grooming individuals for succession entails a group of development activities, including coaching, training, and engaging in activities that are intended to “build the organization’s bench strength of leadership talent” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 28).
By developing individuals for leadership, AMU developed “talent pools” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 17) in anticipation of each succession event. Instead of singling out one successor and developing that individual for leadership, AMU groomed a group of individuals who may be able to take over the presidential position or another leadership position within the institution.

The activities performed by succession candidates prior to being appointed to the presidential role were similar in nature, intentional and sometimes unwittingly served as the groundwork for the role as presidents of AMU (See Table 6). It undoubtedly improved and built upon competencies to make each candidate qualified to be successor. The activities surrounding the candidates targeted a myriad of competencies for development that complemented each other to form a leader who was appropriate for the presidential position.

As HCP ministers, it was important to succession candidates to have an expanded knowledge of the HCP ministry faith, meaning the history and practices of religious doctrine specific to the HCP Regional Council and broad-based knowledge of the social and theological contexts of other religions. They were required to demonstrate ethical and moral behavior in their daily lives that were connected to the ministry. Candidates also needed to have the ability to deliver religious information (written and verbal) and influence a captive audience. The competency requirement for being mission sensitive (See table 5) was directly linked to the development for being an HCP minister. By engaging in activities, they were able to demonstrate their level of commitment to the faith and their ability to provide an enriching experience to their congregations they were serving (See table 6). The life of a minister serves to guide and act as spiritual leaders to members of their faith (Boyatzis, Brizz, & Godwin, 2011). As leaders, they impact the health of their organization through membership growth and satisfaction. Members expect ministers to be role models, experts, have experience, and have
knowledge of the faith (Boyatzis et al., 2011). But Literature shows that development of certain competencies set outstanding religious ministers apart from others (Boyatzis et al., 2011). These competencies for ministers include cognitive competencies: the ability to think critically and creatively; social competencies: the ability to influence, show empathy and inspire; and emotional competencies: the ability to be transparent, self-aware, and confident (Boyatzis et al., 2011). These were all competencies that were related to a minister’s impact with his organization and could be used as a means to measure the effectiveness of the individual (as a minister) inside and outside of the organization.

To qualify for presidential succession at AMU, candidates needed to be ministers and tenured faculty members. As faculty members with an advanced degrees, the candidates needed to have knowledge of AMU’s education programs, and possess expertise in particular subject matters. Faculty members also needed the ability to deliver education programs in accordance with AMU’s educational standards and in a manner that met the needs of the student body of AMU. In the dual role of faculty member and minister, they were responsible for student development on multiple levels, which included spiritual, moral and mental. This was quite unique to religious higher education institutions (Barton, 2017). Although religious academic organizations are facing the same challenges of replacing retired leadership (Barton, 2017), they provide unique services and programming to their students (Reynolds & Wallace, 2016). Therefore, maintaining their core competencies (religion, teaching, programming, etc.) was imperative to the survival of the religious organization. Faculty members at AMU were expected to teach HCP content that distinguished it from other religions while delivering academically robust and scientifically proven programming to students. Candidates could demonstrate their abilities as faculty members through curriculum and teaching. Tenured faculty
members were expected to teach contemporary topics within the HCP context while addressing the views of a broader society. As ministers and teachers in higher education, there could be contrasting views between religious and social and cultural norms (Reynolds & Wallace, 2016). For faculty members, it was important to be able to find a balance in the debates that involved societal topics (e.g. marriage, gender, sexuality) that may not be aligned with the traditions and practices of HCP ministry. In the higher education culture, it is the job of faculty to facilitate these discussions by presenting the beliefs of the HCP faith while also incorporating the differing opinions and differentiating consequences into the conversation (Reynolds & Wallace, 2016).

As administrators, candidates needed the ability to think critically and to plan strategically, to accomplish key goals and successfully carry out the objectives of AMU, while demonstrating measurable results. Their ability to perform these duties was demonstrated through their roles as directors of various organizational programs and in their time as provosts and vice presidents. The candidates were faced with making decisions that would affect others within and outside of AMU. The candidates reflected on their ability to develop and manage budgets, manage resources effectively, make practical policy changes, and expand academic programming and build relationships with the external community on a national and global scale. The relationships that were developed during their time in leadership roles (pre-succession) built long-term partnerships and networks between AMU and outside constituents. External engagement provides an opportunity for a mutually beneficial relationship between the HEI and the community (Jacob, Sutin, Weidman, & Yeager, 2015). The ability to improve the organization through effective change and external engagement was not only a sign of effective administrative skills, but also a sign of potential for leadership.
The capacity to lead change and the ability communicate is essential for leadership development. The ability to influence and impact the people of the AMU and outside constituents in a positive manner and demonstrating stewardship are key competency requirements for leadership at AMU. Stewardship in terms of leadership can be defined as “attitudes and behaviors that place the long-term interest of a group of personal goals that serve an individual’s interest” (Hernandez, 2008, p. 122). An individual who demonstrates stewardship through action places the needs and wellbeing of the organizations and its employees first. They consider the manner in which their decisions will affect people inside and outside of the organization while “upholding a broader commitment to societal and universal norms” (Hernandez, 2008, p. 122) and although they have an obligation to stakeholders of the organization, it is not at the expense of their moral code of conduct (Hernandez, 2008). Leaders who demonstrate stewardship show evidence of responsibility for the development and wellbeing of the future generation. By doing so, they are likely to influence the future generation to do the same (Hernandez, 2008).

Leadership at AMU required individuals who were change leaders and visionaries (see table 5). AMU’s requirements called for a transformational leader (Bass, 1990; Stilwell, Pasmore, & Shon, 2016). Tucker and Russell (2004) best defined transformational leadership practices as “transformational leaders [who] seek to alter the existing structure and influence people to buy in to new visions and possibilities” (p. 109). The position required a leader who could inspire constituents to fulfill objectives of the organization and unite individuals and groups on a common vision (Bass, 1990).

Although the candidates for succession had the adequate qualifications, they had opportunities pre-succession to demonstrate some of these abilities in the area of competencies.
As previously stated, the researcher was not able to uncover the manner in which the competencies were measured by the board to determine a successor, but the evidence showed that the successors were able to demonstrate behaviors associated with some of these competencies that made it possible for their abilities to be assessed (Rothwell, 2015; Stilwell, Pasmore, & Shon 2016).

**Theme 3: The Board of Trustees is the Final Determinant in the Succession Process**

AMU was a unique institution for multiple reasons, but presidential succession was one key factor that made AMU stand out among similar institutions and among higher education institutions in general. Succession plans are scarce in higher education (Cavanaugh, 2017); however, institutions such as AMU have shown that a strategic plan can be successfully implemented and practiced in an academic environment (Bornstein, 2010; Selingo et al., 2017). Figure 10 shows the process for succession at AMU. Essentially, the board of trustees forms an internal committee of members of the community, which should include representatives of the faculty and the student body and potentially one alumnus. Candidates are interviewed, the board receives input from stakeholders, and then the board selects the president. This was the general process for selecting a presidential successor at the university. However, the board of trustees could adjust those plans at its discretion. It is a best practice to assign responsibility to each group during succession, so all the individuals participating in the process have “dedicated” responsibilities (Rothwell, 2015, p. 58). It is important to assign each group with specific tasks during succession because it makes each group responsible for the success or breakdown of the succession event (Rothwell, 2015).

While each group plays a role in succession, selecting the candidates during succession is a confidential matter at AMU. Information is limited to members of the board and possibly
committee members, but the successor is not known until a public announcement is made. It is important to note that while an open succession involves being candid with the individuals involved, the position is not promised to any candidate (Rothwell, 2015).

The selection of the successor is composed of four basic steps: (a) developing a search committee, (b) interviewing the candidates, (c) obtaining input from the university stakeholders, and (d) selecting the successor. During both PS1 and PS2, processes used to execute presidential succession differed (See Table 4). Although input from university stakeholders was a theme among participants, PS1 and PS2 had different outcomes on this matter.

Participants mentioned having a lot of input from AMU stakeholders during PS1, while PS2 was described as a more closed process. They also mentioned that the power of succession had shifted from the influence of the president during PS1 to the influence of the board during PS2. The participants expressed that they understood that succession called for some confidentiality, but feedback from the university community made the process more credible.

The literature addresses this scenario in a two-fold manner. The first is input from stakeholders during succession and the collaborative, decision-making culture in higher education in relation to succession. While an open succession is designed to be transparent, there is an implicit aspect to the process. As stated above, the board of trustees facilitates succession and can decide how the process is conducted. This means that it can include or exclude as it sees fit. While there are other participants in the process, the board is the final determinant of the successor. The board is not required to share every aspect of succession, and Rothwell (2015) said there may be reasons to keep information confidential during succession: Secrecy during succession is justified on two counts: (1) Succession issues are proprietary to the organization and may expose important information about strategic plans that should be kept out
of the hands of competitors; and (2) decision makers worry that employees aware of their status in succession plans may develop unrealistic expectations or may “hold themselves hostage.” To avoid these problems, decision makers keep the SPM process and its outcomes confidential. (p. 30)

The leadership recruitment process set by the governing system in higher education is complex, so joint effort among members becomes critical (Bowen & Tobin, 2015) in the search for an appropriate candidate who has both administrative and leadership skills (Cavanaugh, 2017; Seniwoliba, 2015). The requirement for feedback and consensus at various stages of the succession planning process poses a difficult challenge because so many stakeholders are involved (McDonagh et al., 2013). Effective implementation of succession plans requires effective communication within the system (Bowen & Tobin, 2015; Richards, 2016) and a shift in policy relating to how senior leadership is hired in academia (Richards, 2016). When the participants spoke of PS2, some described how input affected PS2 while others provided suggestions for making future presidential successions more inclusive.

The collaborative environment of higher education led to concern from participants about the lack of input during PS2. Because the board is the final determinant, the board could decide who should have input. The board does not include other university stakeholders in the decision-making process, which does not fit how business is conducted in higher education (Barden & Curry, 2013; Bowen & Tobin, 2015). As previously mentioned, higher education organizations operate under shared governance (Smith, 2016, and its collaborative nature calls for input from various parties within the institution (Barden & Curry, 2013). Therefore, input from university stakeholders is discussed in the following subsection.
Theme 4: Input from University Stakeholders is Critical during Presidential Succession

Rothwell (2015) conceded that succession could be conducted in an open or closed manner. A closed succession is conducted in a secretive manner and does not require input from the institution’s constituents. Information on the candidates and the activities involved are known to a limited number of people. Unlike a closed succession, an open succession is candid. In an open succession, “work requirements, competencies, and success factors at all levels are identified and communicated” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 30). Documents show and participants agree that succession at AMU was designed to be open. This was aligned to the culture of an academic environment, which is defined by an open and inclusive collegial environment (Richards, 2016).

Input from university stakeholders was a major theme among participants. PS1 and PS2 had contrasting outcomes relative to input during succession. Participants mentioned having input from stakeholders during PS1, while PS2 was described as a more closed process. While participants understood that succession called for some confidentiality, they believed feedback from the university community legitimized the process. The researcher could not find any documents that specifically indicated that the board was required to get input from critical stakeholders during presidential succession, but literature suggests that they should (Bowen & Tobin, 2015; McDonagh et al., 2013). Literature regarding presidential succession planning in higher education states the following regarding input during succession:

Selecting a new president is among higher education’s most sanctified and traditional processes. It focuses on broad input and engagement from critical stakeholders in a process that, done well, can also serve as a form of institutional renewal. The details of the process may vary from institution to institution but often at the core lies an effort to recruit a leader of vision who brings the requisite academic, managerial, fund-
raising, and thought leadership criteria that all institutions seek, especially in times of uncertainty. (Bornstein, 2010, p. 311)

There was a distinct difference in the amount of input from the community during PS1 and PS2, and the researcher dug deeper into how input affected both events. The researcher noticed a difference in PS1 and PS2 regarding input from the AMU community. Prior to taking office and during the first year of presidency, Ministers Paul and Francis made it a point to meet and greet various constituents within the AMU community. This was an intentional move on their part. Minister Paul said he met with every administrator and every faculty member and all academic units, all the buildings, all of the enterprises. He went and interacted with them so that he could become even more knowledgeable about AMU as an institution and its constituents. Minister Paul described this experience as very valuable for him as president. By meeting and greeting the university community, the men also provided an opportunity for the community to get to know them and vet them as candidates (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). Although the university community did not have the power to directly influence the selection of the successor, the meet and greet with the community may have addressed doubts or concerns about the presidential candidates.

A lack of feedback from the community could create tension in the collaborative higher education environment. There are multiple parties who are required to concur on the process; therefore, the process must be transparent in order to avoid mistrust and disruption (AGB, 2017; Bowen & Tobin, 2015). Leaders in higher education need to be conscious about the tension this process can create in a shared governance system (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). Tension is not always destructive, as it can allow for discussion and development (Burke, 2013), but open discussion can often be productive if facilitated by an effective leader (Burke, 2013; Taylor,
This process must include all members of the governing system (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). A succession plan that maps out processes and procedures for continuity (Rothwell, 2015) can help overcome the barriers that can result from uncertainty and miscommunication (Burke, 2013; Taylor, 2013).

**Theme 5: Transition Period between Outgoing President and the Successor**

The transition period between the predecessor and successor is a strategic process (Rothwell, 2015). At AMU, it is a time for the predecessor to pass on information to the successor, for the successor to ask questions and receive guidance on university-related matters, and for the predecessor to provide counsel about entering the position as a new university president. It is also a time for the predecessor to be on hand for consultation as the successor shifts into the presidential position. According to participants, interaction between predecessor and successor was encouraged during that time because it was a vital period for the predecessor and successor (see Table 5).

The transition period is especially vital because this is another period (along with leadership development) during succession when knowledge is passed from predecessor to successor (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Knowledge is an organization’s greatest asset. Higher education institutions are losing over 40% of *tacit knowledge*, which is information learned but not necessarily documented (Muniz, 2013; Rothwell & Poduch, 2004), as individuals leave (Rothwell, 2015). The nature of institutional knowledge being lost through presidential retirements is important (Muniz, 2013) because this information is not documented but only exists in the heads of retirees (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). This tacit knowledge (Rothwell &
Poduch, 2004) is knowledge that is gained through personal experiences; therefore, it is difficult to capture unless purposefully gleaned from the individuals who possess it (Power, 2014).

Succession facilitates knowledge transfer between the predecessor and the successor. Knowledge transfer is the biggest challenge in succession planning, as it is difficult to transmit the results of experience to successors (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Knowledge management in this context means passing on lessons to successors so they do not repeat mistakes of the past (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Rothwell and Poduch’s (2004) model for technical succession planning addresses tacit knowledge; in other words, it addresses knowledge that people carry around in their heads (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). This knowledge is not documented, and it is usually gained through the experiences of the persons who possess it (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Institutional knowledge may be vital to the incoming president in academia (Johnson & Eckel, 2013; Power, 2014).

Knowledge transfer takes place during leadership development and during the transition between the predecessor and successor (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). During PS1, participants mentioned that the transition of power included meetings with various constituents inside and outside of the university and obtaining advice from leadership. It also included the transfer of files and answering questions that were presented to the predecessor by the successor. Likewise, during PS2, Minister Paul needed to facilitate the changeover of leadership to Minister Abe. He said that information had to be passed on and he had to engage in conversations with his successor about things that had to be done.

According to the literature, tacit knowledge is passed on from predecessor to successor during this time (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Transfer of tacit knowledge usually takes place in a “storytelling” manner (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004, p. 83), and includes information that is not
documented but resides in the heads of the persons distributing the information. Although the researcher was not privy to the confidential details of their meetings, Minister Paul mentioned that the predecessor discussed topics such as staffing, filling critical positions, rotation of meetings, and AMU’s athletic program. He also indicated that they were “sitting around, kind of cheering and [telling] old stories” during the transition. According to Rothwell (2004), this is a practical and efficient way to capture and transfer knowledge from one person to another.

Knowledge management systems are subpar and inadequate in higher education institutes (HEIs) (Power, 2014). Loss of knowledge through presidential retirement is one of the biggest threats to HEIs (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012). The knowledge attrition that occurs during presidential retirement can be attributed to the lack of formal systems within HEIs that would retrieve knowledge from retirees prior to departure (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2011) and store that knowledge for future use (Muniz, 2013). The lack of knowledge management systems within HEIs poses a threat to institutions, as presidential retirees walk out the door with vital institutional knowledge (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2011). The continued loss of knowledge through presidential retirement poses a significant threat to HEIs (Muniz, 2013), mostly because it is difficult to access this knowledge once the retiree leaves the organization (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2011). Approximately 42% of an organization’s knowledge lives within its employees, while only 46% of institutional knowledge exists in an explicit form, meaning information that can be captured and documented through reports, charts, and other systematic methods (Muniz, 2013). Succession planning aids in knowledge transfer because it creates a systematic structure for gathering and retaining institutional knowledge (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004).

The retirement of higher education presidents lacks formal systems for their smooth departure (Jackson, 2017; Laal, 2011). The transition processes for outgoing and incoming
presidents is informal, arbitrary, and siloed (Laal, 2011). Many factors contribute to ineffective transitions, including a decline in authority within the last 100 days of their presidency, inability to form relationships with their successors (Johnson & Eckel, 2013), lack of proper channels for transferring institutional knowledge, and lack of feedback from incoming presidents. Upon announcement of their departure, some presidents make lists of priorities that need to be executed upon their exit, while others compile reports and transitional materials (Johnson & Eckel, 2013). Yet most HEIs have no formal plans related to presidential leadership departure (Johnson & Eckel, 2013; Selingo et al., 2017).

Because the two men worked together on many projects, Minister Abe was already familiar with some aspects of the job; but as Minister Paul said in Chapter 4, “You never… You can observe it from a distance, but when you actually have the job, there’s a whole different thing.” He meant that while these candidates are groomed for succession, there is no way to get a true sense of the position until the successor takes office. That being said, the transition period during succession is optimized when knowledge is shared (Applebaum et al., 2012). During this time, AMU predecessors passed on knowledge, including information about the institution’s past and current history, and provided specific knowledge relative to leadership, risk taking, and decision making within the organization (Applebaum et al., 2012).

As demonstrated at AMU, the development of leadership candidates through succession planning can produce candidates who have intimate knowledge about the organization and ensure the transfer of institutional and job-specific knowledge from senior to junior counterparts prior to retirement (Grossman & Klenke, 2014). Consequently, incoming successors would understand the historical, cultural, social, and political environment of the institution they intend to lead (Barton, 2017).
Since Minister Abe was trained for the position for years prior to succession, his transition into the role was smooth. According to Minister Paul, the transition would have been more difficult if the candidate had come from outside AMU. Familiarity with the organization may result in less time needed for the candidate to transition into the new role (Crassweller, 2015) and decrease or eliminate the leadership vacuum that often occurs during a leadership transition (Crassweller, 2015). In addition, as demonstrated at AMU, it would ensure the transfer of institutional and job-specific knowledge from retiring presidents to their successors (Grossman & Klenke, 2014; Rothwell, 2015).

While the goal for succession candidates is to get the job, there can only be one successor. When individuals are passed over for the presidential position, they usually have the option to stay with the organization or leave with their acquired skills (Larcker, Miles, & Tayan, 2016).

**Theme 6: Succession is Beneficial for Candidates, even for Individuals are Not Selected**

There is not much research on individuals who are passed over for succession, and there is even less information on this matter at higher education institutions. However, the limited data shows that over 70% of individuals who are passed over for succession end up leaving the organization (Larcker et al., 2016). Some go on to roles at other organizations; others start their own firms or retire.

The intention of presidential succession was to develop leadership within AMU, but the succession process, according to participants, is implicit for candidates. While candidates at AMU were aware that they were being groomed for the position, the presidential position was not promised to any single candidate. Nonetheless, individuals from PS1 and PS2 used these
new skills to become presidents of other institutions after they were passed over for the position at AMU. Documents showed that two individuals who were not chosen during PS1 went on to become presidents at other institutions. The same can be said for PS2: two individuals who were not chosen went on to become presidents at other institutions.

There were many benefits for the candidates who were not selected for presidency at AMU. Aside from developing a leadership style and skills, one participant mentioned learning from his mistakes as executive vice president at AMU and that the position prepared him for the role as president at another institution.

AMU created a path to leadership for faculty through succession. Even though some individuals were passed over for the position, they were still able to use those skills somewhere else. There is not much information in the literature on those who are passed up for succession. This is not surprising, because the matter is usually conducted in a confidential manner (Larcker et al., 2016). Most succession is closed (Rothwell, 2015), meaning that information on the candidates and the activities involved are kept to a limited number of people within the organization (Rothwell, 2015). Although succession at AMU was conducted openly, information about succession is not readily available to those outside the institution or to some participants in the succession process (Rothwell, 2015).

**Theme 7: University Stakeholders Desired a More Open and Democratic Process**

Analysis of the data from this study indicated that there was political strife involved in the selection process during PS2. But due to the length of time since the events took place and lack of participants to get the full scope of the story, the researcher could only speculate on the impact of the events that took place. Succession included a number of stakeholders who played
distinct roles at various stages of the process, but the board was the final determinant (see Figure 10 and 11).

One of the major themes that arose during the study is that the selection process for the successor in PS2 lacked input from important stakeholders in the AMU community. This caused some contention. Some members of the community had not anticipated this particular successor being chosen, nor did they feel like they an opportunity to vet the individual who would eventually be chosen. PS2 was described as “closed.” There was evidence to indicate that politics played a part in in the process, but the researcher lacked sufficient information to confirm that determination.

There many reasons why politics may play a role in succession, but politics should be avoided if possible because the implications could be long lasting and detrimental to building trust between leadership and members of the AMU community. Although the last event at AMU took place over a decade ago, the process was sometimes spoken of as an anecdote in how politics can influence succession.

Institutional culture, personal issues and politics affect succession in higher education (Coleman, 2013). Although succession has been proven to be successful at AMU, the process can be complex to conduct due to the collaborative and inclusive culture of academia (Barden & Curry, 2013; Luna, 2010). Often boards of higher education institutions do not fully appreciate the “decision making culture” (Barden & Curry, 2013, p. 3) of higher education. In contrast, boards often run institutions “like a business” (Barden & Curry, 2013, p. 3). This could generate hostility from stakeholders who expect the process to be inclusive.

Implementing succession planning by way of shared governance has implications for academia (Richards, 2016). With such a large group of individuals involved in succession,
processes and procedures for continuity though succession should be mapped out (Rothwell, 2015). This should aid in overcoming the barriers that can result from uncertainty and miscommunication within such a large group (Burke, 2013). Failing to communicate clearly within the group during succession can contribute to an unsuccessful or contentious process (Barton, 2017).

Historically, academia has not accepted concepts from corporate culture (Pepper, 2016). The academic community views the succession process as politically charged and as an avenue for playing favoritism among constituents (Coleman, 2013). Because internal hiring is not the norm in higher education and is frowned upon (Barden & Curry, 2013), there are barriers for internal employees who may be potential candidates (Luna, 2010).

Nonetheless, AMU has been successful with presidential succession, even in an academic environment where collaboration is essential. Participants suggested openness as a means to a democratic and smooth succession. Effective implementation of succession plans requires effective communication within the system (Bowen & Tobin, 2015) and a shift in policy relating to how senior leadership is hired in academia (Richards, 2016). Systematic succession plans that are easily implemented and executed in corporate culture could fail miserably in an academic environment where an open and inclusive collegial environment defines the culture (Richards, 2016). However, the obstacles to implementing succession planning within an academic environment are surmountable (González, 2013; Lin, 2012), as demonstrated at AMU during PS1.

**Conclusion**

Succession is not a single activity, but rather a long-term strategy that involves a series of activities dedicated to leadership development and organizational preparedness (Keller, 2018).
The steps taken during succession are intended to support the development of talents that are linked to organizational performance and stability (Keller, 2018).

Overall, AMU had a respectable plan in place for succession. Succession planning was embedded in the organization’s documents (See table 5). It was evident in their strategic plan and organizational mission. It was also clearly outlined in the required competencies for leadership at the institution, and they had taken several steps to develop candidates for the presidential position.

According to SHRM, (2009), clear steps for succession planning include, 1) Adapt to demographic changes and talent deficiency in the workforce, 2) Identify skills gap and the areas for development; 3) Retrieve and retain institutional knowledge, 4) invest in employees to boost retention and morale and 5) Sustain highly specialized and unique competencies. Although AMU had a sound succession plan in place for presidential leadership development, the plan did not take into account their changing demographics of the U.S workforce. The requirements for presidential leadership included the requirement of being an HCP Minister. This was an imperative part of the institutions identity and overall existence, but as a consequence, all of the individuals who were chosen for development through succession were Caucasian males. Therefore this automatically excluded individuals who were not HCP ministers but may have had the remaining qualifications and competencies to perform successfully in the role. The exclusion of any group from the development pool may place AMU at a greater disadvantage for recruiting leadership in the future (BLS, 2017). As the demographics of the labor force shifts, employees are becoming more diverse and organizations are gaining a competitive edge by building a diversified workforce (Greer & Virick, 2008). Higher education organizations have had a history of scarcity of diverse representation among leadership (Hartley, Eckel & King,
Organizations have lacked the proper channels to provide upward mobility to women and people of color within their organizations (Land, 2003). These groups are often left out of candidacy for leadership because they lack the experience that can only be gained progressively over time (Keller, 2018). Understandably, AMU needs to maintain a religious identity in order to successfully address some of the challenges higher education institutions will face in the globalized economy (Reynolds & Wallace, 2016; Landles-Cobb et al., 2015). It would be prudent to explore ways to diversify AMUs pool of candidates through succession.

The search for a president in higher education is political in nature (Armstrong, 1985). One of the biggest concerns of some of the participants was lack of input during the selection process of the final successor during PS2. Succession planning can be affected by politics because it constitutes singling out certain persons for development, therefore excluding others (Swanson, McLaughlin, Colleen, & Brunson, 2018). Employees in higher education generally view the process as such (Swanson, et al., 2018). Rothwell (2015) describes corporate politics as using the corporate ladder to promote allies while pushing out others who may be qualified for the role.

While the data gathered for this study suggest PS2 might have been politically charged, the researcher could not prove or disprove that the appointment was politically charged. These informal judgments can lead ineffective succession processes and, if left unchecked, can lead to the “like me bias” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 65): This occurs when supervisors choose individuals who are similar to themselves, therefore excluding other groups. Or it can lead to the “like us bias” (Rothwell, 2015, p. 65) which has the same effect but pertains to a particular group (Rothwell, 2010).
This situation lends credence to the researcher’s statements above relative to exclusion of other group members. When succession is conducted in a democratic manner, the process must include avenues to add feedback from major stakeholders within the organization (Trickel, 2015). Employee buy-in is an important part of succession. Feedback from stakeholders could be used by leaders to improve succession plans and understand the impact of the strategy on the organization from various points of view (Trickel, 2015). Feedback and input from stakeholders builds trust, and also produces a more transparent process for all parties involved (Cavanaugh, 2017). This would help avoid some of the contention caused by the lack of input during the selection process in PS2. Rothwell (2015) also suggests using an assessment scale to select the final successor. This would help avoid political implications. The researcher did not uncover the method used by AMU, if any. Nor were the participants aware of what kind of scale was used to measure their competency for the position.

Rothwell (2015) stated that there are several reasons for implementing succession. 1) to communicate career paths, 2) establish training and development plans, 3) establish individual careers paths, 4) communicate upward and laterally concerning the organization of management, and 5) establish a human resources plan to recruit talent. Although leaders at AMU followed most of these steps, they fell short on communication with subunits during PS2. Nonetheless, AMU had a robust plan in place that helped them meet their desired goals of producing qualified successors. Most importantly, the plan is continuous, because a part of leadership competency requirements for AMU is to develop future generations of talent. By making mentoring and training a requirement for competency development, it ensures that activities around leadership developments are continuous and engrained in the culture of the organization (Rothwell, 2015).
This continuous cycle will ensure leadership development and ensure institutional knowledge is preserved (Rothwell, 2015).

**Recommendations for Practice**

A presidential search is a politically charged process, and higher education views succession planning as a politically charged strategy (González, 2010). Therefore, presidential succession could be a challenge in a higher education environment (González, 2010). Nonetheless, AMU has proven that succession planning can be an effective tool for developing a pipeline of qualified candidates for higher education presidential succession and that the strategy of succession planning could work in a collaborative academic culture.

These recommendations for practice are centered on mitigating the implications of succession planning in a higher education environment. This is particularly important if other higher education institutions are going to use succession planning as a means to address the exit of higher education presidents from the workforce due to retirement. Although AMU is a religious institution, the following recommendations can be applied to other academic institutions and should be taken into consideration when designing a succession plan for their respective institutions. Considering that succession plans can be designed according to the needs of the firm (Rothwell, 2015) institutions can utilize AMU’s plan as a general blueprint or starting point for design, but can tailor their plan to target specific needs of their respective organizations.

**Widen Qualifications to Diversify the Candidate Pool**

As mentioned in chapter 5, AMU had strict qualification requirements for their presidential succession candidates. As a result of those stringent requirements, AMU had a
limited number of recruits to fill the candidate pool. If HEIs were going to facilitate presidential succession, it would be beneficial to widen their candidate requirement to include a variety of individuals that reflect the future U.S. workforce. Succession can be used to accelerate the development and advancement of a diverse labor force (Rothwell, 2015).

The United States labor force demographics are changing in terms of age, gender and religious groups (BLS, 2017). In terms of age, the median age of the U.S. worker was 42.0 in 2016 and projected to be 42.3 by 2026, the highest median age ever recorded (BLS, 2017). The labor force participation rate peaked in 2012 at 40.5% as compared to 40.0% in 2016 (BLS, 2017). Overall, participation in the workforce will continue to decline as the population ages. The U.S. workforce is projected to shift in 2026 (BLS, 2017). Thirty-nine million individuals are expected to enter the workforce, while 28 million are expected to leave (BLS, 2017). Additionally, more men are expected to be included in the exiting group because the workforce consists of more older white men than women (Lacey, Toossi, Dubina, & Gensler, 2017). As baby boomers exit the workforce, the labor force will become more diversified in term of gender, because the women’s labor force is expected to have a growth rate of 0.8% while men’s labor force is expected to have a lower growth rate at 0.5% (BLS, 2017).

The labor force will also change in terms of race and ethnic groups (Lacey et. al, 2017). Due in large part to immigration, the U.S. workforce will consist of more Hispanic and Asian people and the projected rate of white non-Hispanic people is expected to decline (Lacey et. al, 2017).

Consequently, the U.S. labor force will be more diverse in terms of demographics due to the exit of baby boomers and the increase in women and people of color who are projected to enter the workforce (Lacey et. al, 2017)
Given the projected change of demographics in the U.S labor force, succession planning can be an opportunity to diversify the organizations’ workforce (Greer & Virick, 2008). Workforce diversity reflects similarities and differences between employees’ age, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disabilities, sexual orientation, and cultural background (Saxena, 2014). There are many benefits to diversifying an organizations workforce when planning for succession within an organization. Diversity can help an organization outperform its competitor (Saxena, 2014) because it has been shown that organizations who diversify their labor force have increased job productivity and innovation over their competitors. This is because they (a) have a larger pool of people with various skills and experience, (b) are better suited to communicate and serve external clientele in the global market due to language and cultural experiences, (c) are more likely to provide a more variety of solutions to address sourcing and allocate resources globally (Saxena, 2014).

The succession planning process is susceptible to employment discrimination (Ohio Employment Law, 2011). Employment discrimination is singling out a job applicant or employee because of race, color, religion, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, or national origin (EEOC, 2019). Especially if the all members of the chosen candidates represent one group and those from the other groups are intentionally left out (Ohio Employment Law, 2011).

Diversity and employment discrimination are key issues that should be addressed if organizations are going to implement succession plans as a means to address the retirement of presidential leadership. Succession planning can be used to diversify the pool of presidential leadership, but it can also avert implications of employment discrimination during the succession process (Greer & Virick, 2008). There is a gap in literature concerning diversity in relation to
succession planning. Although there are logistical similarities in succession plans, such as developing a strategic plan, getting pay-in from leadership developing processes and practices, and developing a program (Rothwell, 2015), a succession plan that is designed to produce a diverse workforce has distinct features that stand out. Some of these particular features include (a) determining a values basis for diverse succession and establishing diversity goals among leadership, (b) conducting searches for diverse candidates and evaluating programs for the impact on diversity, (c) providing opportunities for diverse candidates to receive exposure to leadership and design recruitment strategies to prevent cloning candidates, and (d) monitoring the flow of diverse candidates to core areas of the organization and monitor programs for retention of diverse candidates (Greer & Virick, 2008).

**Be Explicit about Inclusivity**

The researcher recommends that AMU develops policies and procedures to make feedback from critical and community stakeholders a required part of the succession process. Currently, it is suggested that the board receive feedback from university shareholders, but the board is not required to do so. Inclusivity is not only necessary for a democratic process, but it also fits the collaborative culture of higher education. The matter of inclusivity can be addressed in several ways, but the most effective manner would be through policy. Because the board facilitates succession, it can decide to be as inclusive or exclusive as it sees fit, but if policy required the board to get feedback from representatives of the AMU community, then the board would be mandated to be more inclusive. Inclusivity can be addressed on many levels. One is to provide opportunities for the members of the community to meet the candidates prior to being selected. These groups should be composed of students, faculty, staff, and senior administrators.
This would give group members an opportunity to vet the candidates. Because inclusivity is a major part of higher education culture, it is important to foster participation among all group members to make the succession process as democratic as possible (Barden & Curry, 2013; Bornstein, 2010).

Comparing the processes used to execute PS1 and PS2 (see Figure 4), both events had an internal committee set up by the board, there were an interview processes for candidates, and then the board made the final selection. The two events varied concerning input from stakeholders at AMU. Some participants reported that there was no input from outside the board for PS2, unlike for PS1. The researcher believes that the steps taken in PS1 by Ministers Paul and Francis to meet the community influenced or played a role in the way both PS1 and PS2 were viewed. Because the candidates had taken the time to meet the community before and after taking office, there was no mystery around them.

If other institutions are going to consider succession planning as a means to build a pipeline of talent to replace anticipated presidential retirement, inclusivity needs to be a definitive part of the process. This means policy and written procedure is one way to ensure inclusiveness. In order to get buy-in on succession from the university community, leaders of succession must conduct the plan in accordance with the environment or culture of the institution (Bornstein, 2010; Rothwell, 2015). In an academic institution, this means conducting succession in a democratic manner that requires input from the parties within the organization who have a vested interest in the institution (Bornstein, 2010; Louisy, 2014). Although AMU’s process had methods for the board of trustees to be more inclusive, there were no written procedures requiring the board to do so.

**Clarify the Succession Process**
Another recommendation for practice is to clarify the succession process to members of the university community. Although succession planning exists at AMU, the details of the succession process are not well known to individuals who are not directly involved (Klein & Salk, 2013; Rothwell, 2015). Employee perception can serve as a valuable source of information for evaluating organizational programming such as succession planning (Swanson, 2018). The only way for organizations to grasp the impact of their employee programs and identify gaps within the process is to get feedback from the source (employees) (Jiang Hu, Liu, & Lepak, 2017). Research shows that employee perception of programming often differs from that of senior managers and it also demonstrates that employee perception of development activities can directly impact the employee morale and buy-in (Jiang et. al, 2017). The practices and behaviors of an employee toward their organization is directly linked to their perception of human resources practices (e.g. the manner in which the organization develops staff), (Jiang et. al, 2017). Employee perception of succession planning in higher education has been a subject of some contention due to the political nature of the process (Luna, 2010; Pepper, 2016). Therefore it would be beneficial for organizations to provide clarity on succession planning.

Literature (Rothwell, 2015) and results from this study demonstrate that most have an idea of the strategic process but are not privy to the logistics or details of succession unless they participate directly in steering the plan. Although succession at AMU is open, some participants viewed PS2 as closed or secretive. This may be because some aspects of succession planning were held confidentially and the board could share information with the public as it saw fit. Specifics of succession (e.g., the candidates being considered for succession and where they rank in the process) are usually internal information. Some participants called for openness during the succession process, but the board had to keep certain aspects of succession confidential.
Addressing the nature of succession to the university community might bring some clarity to the groups who have interest or concerns about the process and the candidates who are being considered. Providing clarity to the university community means being open, but at the same time not compromising the confidentiality or integrity of the succession process. This would have to be facilitated through the board of trustees, which would have to determine the level of information it chooses to dispense to each group. It is assumed that students would not receive the same level of information as faculty or senior administrators.

Other institutions that may want to design presidential succession plans need to keep in mind that presidential searches are generally political (González, 2010), and succession is not a well-known strategic plan in academia. In fact, most of the process is conducted in a confidential manner and most individuals, other than the participants, do not know the inner workings of the process. That level of required confidentiality can imply secrecy, consequently causing implications during the process. But the board can mitigate this by conveying pertinent information to members of the university community. This includes clarity around details of succession, such as what they are looking for in a candidate (core competencies), the logistics of the search process, and a timeline for when the successor would take office, as well as offering an opportunity for the university community to meet the candidates and provide feedback prior to picking the successor (Bornstein, 2010). This would include the university community in the process to a certain extent. These activities would foster inclusion within the collaborative academic environment (Bornstein, 2010).

**Include Faculty in the Group of Final Determinants for the Successor**
The third recommendation is to include faculty among those who select the successor. At AMU, the board of trustees was responsible for picking the successor, although the board of fellows could step in as it saw fit. This design for succession at AMU created checks and balances so the board of fellows could intervene if it determined that the succession candidate was not fit for the presidential position. The AMU board of trustees is made of laypersons. This places the power for selecting the president in the hands of one group. This contrasts with the collaborative environment of higher education (Armstrong, 1985) and perpetuates imbalanced authority for each group in an already politically charged process (Armstrong, 1985). This dynamic creates a situation of power versus influence, placing the group with authority to pick the successor (the board of trustees) in a position of power during the succession process.

Piland and Bublitz, (1998) conducted a study on examining what the concept of the shared governance means to faculty showed that faculty perception of the shared governance tends to convey the notion of collaboration and cooperation faculty and administration as oppose to control by one group (Piland & Bublitz, 1998). Although faculty members believed that their strength laid in curriculum development, hiring, and tenure promotion, they also believed that they should play a role in making administrative decisions that will affect the organization. With matters pertaining to the shared governance decision making, faculty members expected their senate or collective bargaining units to make decisions in collaboration with the board (Piland & Bublitz, 1998).

The relationship between faculty and administration has had a history of contention (Del Favero & Bray, 2010). This is due to the cultural and structural nature of higher education. Although the two groups need to collaborate in theory, the contention is contributed by the fact
those in administrative positions had an increase in their responsibilities and decision-making power, while faculty have experienced a decline in their roles (Del Favero & Bray, 2010).

With this in mind, the researcher recommends that faculty be included in the group that is responsible for determining the final successor during presidential succession in higher education. Collaboration during such decisions would foster transparency and a sense of mutual respect and trust (Piland & Bublitz, 1998; Speck, 2011). Generating trust during succession is particularly important because as literature demonstrates it can negatively impact the process, even if the process was successful (Speck, 2011). My recommendation is aligned with the literature (Piland & Bublitz, 1998; Del Favero & Bray, 2010) stating that faculty should be included in the decision making process, particularly long-term organizational planning.

If institutions who wish to practice succession want to avoid lack of input from the university community during the succession process, they should include faculty in the decision-making process in order to create a more balanced distribution of power during succession, eliminate some of the mystery around succession, and provide an opportunity for faculty to play a meaningful role in the process (Barden & Curry, 2013; Klein & Salk, 2013). Literature reveals a history of breakdowns in communication between faculty and administration due to the contrasting roles the groups play within academic institutions (Speck, 2011; AAUP, 2014). While faculty is focused on curriculum and teaching, university administrators and board members deal with budgets and fiscal matters of the institution (Barden & Curry, 2013). The lack of understanding about each group’s role may contribute to the mystery around presidential succession planning. The researcher suggests that giving faculty an opportunity to participate in picking the successor would (a) provide an opportunity for university stakeholders to play a meaningful role in succession, (b) increase the chances of conducting a democratic succession
process, and (c) reduce implications associated with succession in a higher education environment.

Faculty members play a pertinent role in the success and stability of an academic organization. In an effort to conduct succession in an effective manner, leaders must foster collaboration among group members by implementing policy and leveling the playing field for each group to have an impactful level of input during the process.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher recommends investigating the implications for succession candidates who are passed over. There is not much literature on that topic, which has not been taken into consideration prior to this study. Through this study, the researcher discovered that life after succession might be a challenge when a candidate is not selected, and there may be unforeseen and unintended implications for succession candidates. In the case of AMU, the succession candidates spent a number of years being developed for one position. By participating in these activities, these individuals dedicated time and effort, which equates to commitment to the succession process. What happens if they do not get promoted?

The difficulty with studying the topic of candidates who have been passed over for promotion is that succession is usually a confidential matter: potential succession candidates are sometimes not revealed. The few studies conducted on such candidates have taken place in the corporate sector; literature on such candidates in higher education is almost non-existent. This topic remains important to study because participants and some literature (Larcker, Miles, & Tayan, 2016) pointed out the possible implications for individuals who are not promoted and for the organization.
According to Wharton University (2013), the corporate sector demonstrates that these implications can be severe for candidates, who often end up leaving the organization after they are passed up for promotion. In addition, Bidwell (2011) says, “When a well-performing employee loses out on a promotion, it can be quite damaging. The fact that you were expecting a promotion and didn’t get it can be a signal [that you] are not valued, and that limits [your] advancement” (Bidwell, 2011, p. 4). One participant mentioned being careful not to damage a candidate during succession, meaning that leadership should treat all succession candidates equally or in the same manner, not showing bias or favoritism to any particular candidates. In addition, they cannot make any promises to anyone (Bornstein, 2010; Rothwell, 2015). If succession planning is going to be used to replace retiring presidential leaders, it is important to address the potential implications of succession for candidates.

The implications for succession candidates who are passed up for promotion should be addressed for several reasons: (a) they are valuable employees to the organization because they possess certain skillsets that the organization requires for survival, (b) organizations are losing talent after succession has occurred, because over 70% of these candidates leave, and (c) the implications for candidates may discourage individuals from participating in the future.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings with reference to Rothwell’s (2015) theoretical framework for succession planning and management and other literature related to succession planning. The findings of this study are summarized into seven main themes: (1) emphasis on unique qualifications, (2) intentional steps to build internal talent for presidential succession, (3) the board of trustees is the final determinant in the succession process, (4) input from university
stakeholders is critical during the presidential succession, (5) the transition period between outgoing president and the successor, (6) succession is beneficial for candidates, even for individuals who are not selected, and (7) university stakeholders desired a more open and democratic process. The research question for this study was What succession planning processes were used during two presidential succession events at a private religious university? The question was answered through interviews, AMU’s strategic plan, faculty senate meeting minutes, the university’s website, press releases to news organizations, public profiles, and books.

Presidential succession at AMU was complex. Rothwell’s conceptual framework provided guidance for understanding the phenomenon at AMU. The researcher garnered several key points from the study. The first was that presidential succession in higher education is more complex than elsewhere due to the governing structure of higher education institutions. Succession planning originated in the business sector, where the strategic process is conducted using a top-down approach. In other words, there is usually one person, often the CEO, who steers the succession process and determines the outcomes. That person usually holds sole power and is not required to receive input from other parties before selecting the successor (Lin, 2012). In contrast, higher education has a collaborative environment that encourages a democratic succession process. Thus it came as no surprise that input from university stakeholders was constant at AMU. Although certain aspects of succession were favorable in a higher education environment, other aspects conflicted with an academic environment. At AMU, the board of trustees had the authority to select the successor. This gave the board power during succession, while university stakeholders only had influence over the process. This differentiation between the impact each group has on the final outcome places the highest
authority with one group during presidential succession (Armstrong, 1985). This goes against the collaborative nature and democratic environment of higher education (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). As stated in the recommendations for practice, there should be written policies that can be used to force succession procedures to include university stakeholders (aside from the board of trustees) as final determinants of the successor.

The second key point is that succession in higher education is not a one-time event but is a cycle of ongoing leadership development. Institutions should continuously invest time and money into succession planning and make it part of the institutional culture. In the case of AMU, the institution had monetary resources and the human capital available to conduct succession planning effectively. At smaller institutions that may not have resources available, succession plans may be difficult to maintain. This process may include increased training for potential successors, increased responsibility for the trainer, and (depending on the succession design) increased monetary compensation for the potential successor being groomed. A lack of funding and resources may limit a smaller institution’s ability to support a continuous process, but conversely, recruiting expenses for a presidential search would be costly.

Academic institutions pay recruiting firms an average of $90,000 to conduct a public search for a new president (Seltzer, 2016). This does not include salary, signing and retention bonuses, or moving expenses for the new president. Bonuses and moving expenses for new presidents averaged $140,000 (Seltzer, 2016). Aside from the new presidential candidate’s salary, recruiting expenses alone could cost an institution over $200,000.

Although the cost of conducting a succession program depends on the institution and activities conducted, succession plans can be modified to be suitable for an institution to conduct it in a cost-effective manner. In addition, conducting succession planning as an alternative to a
public search would allow the institution to develop an individual with qualities it would like to see in a president (Bornstein, 2010). Also, succession planning would continuously produce a pipeline of qualified candidates (Klein & Salk, 2013).

The third key point is that AMU accomplished its goal of developing a pipeline of candidates and producing two successors. Therefore, the institution has proven that succession planning can work in the higher education environment. Succession is not a one-time event, and it includes a number of individuals who are dedicated to the institutional goals and committed to the succession process. The roles and responsibilities of the groups involved were equally important. The process required dedicated participation by all who were directly involved. There was sense of allegiance to leadership continuity and a commitment to the stability of AMU as an institution.

In addition, the researcher observed, through conversation, the dedication and commitment some participants had made to the institution. As one former successor spoke, he clearly felt a great sense of honor and pride about the time he had devoted to the ministry, to education, and to helping shape the institution as a whole. Leadership development through succession planning had contributed to shaping him into an effective president. In turn, he was committed to passing on his knowledge to develop a pipeline of leaders for the next generation. The cycle will continue with the current president because the succession design at AMU is an ongoing cycle.

This study demonstrated the tangible and intangible benefits of presidential succession. If higher education institutions choose to implement succession planning as a means of producing a presidential successor, then they will need to address a number of implications brought on by presidential retirement. At best, institutions will have an opportunity to develop
potential candidates with the qualities they would like to see in their leader and strengthen the organization bench for the future.
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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies
Name of Investigators: Principal Investigator: Dr. Shannon Alpert; Student Researcher: Lisa Tison-Thomas
Title: Leadership Succession through Succession Planning in Response to the Retirement of Presidential leadership

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to be in this study because you were one of the individuals who was involved in presidential succession process at (name of organization).

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore two presidential succession events, each in response to a retirement, to gain insight into the succession planning processes that were used. In order to determine if succession planning can be used as a tool to aid implications of presidential retirement, the researcher must understand the roles of all the individuals coordinating the process and their impact on the outcome.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be interviewed at a time and place that is convenient for you. One-on-one in-person interviews will be conducted in person, via conference or Skype. The primary round of interviews will be 60-90 minutes long. Follow-up interviews will take place if clarification is necessary, and will be approximately 30-40 minutes long.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort to participants of this study.

Will I benefit by being in this research?

Participants will not directly benefit from this study; however, this inquiry will contribute to the limited research on succession planning in higher education and will provide an opportunity for institutions to respond to the retirement of presidential leadership.
Who will see the information about me?

Your part in this study will be confidential. Interviews will be conducted with your permission and will be digitally recorded. Interviews will be transcribed manually by the student researcher or by a professional transcription service. Names will be concealed using pseudonyms and only the principal investigator and student researcher on this study will have access to identifying information about you and your organization. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being of this project.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?

No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of my participation in this research.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as an employee.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

You can contact Lisa Tison-Thomas, Student Researcher, at tison.l@husky.neu.edu. Or you can also contact Dr. Shannon Alpert (s.alpert@neu.edu), the Principal Investigator.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, Mail Stop: 560-177, 360 Huntington Avenue, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?

There is no monetary compensation for participating in this study.

Will it cost me anything to participate?

There are no monetary costs for individuals participating in this study.

Is there anything else I need to know?

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study.
I agree to take part in this research.

__________________________________________
Signature of person [parent] agreeing to take part

________________________ Date

Printed name of person above

__________________________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent

________________________ Date

Printed name of person above
Appendix B: Interview Protocols and Questions

Thank you for participating in this interview. You have been selected to participate in this interview because you have been identified as one of the individuals who participated in a succession planning event, in response to the imminent retirement of presidential leadership at your institution. My study centers on succession planning in response to the retirement of presidential leadership from the higher education workforce.

In order to gain greater conceptualization of presidential succession planning in higher education, it is important to speak with those who have participated in the process. Your participation in this interview can provide valuable insight about the event and in-depth detail concerning leadership succession in relation to retirement, and possibly convey lessons learned from practice. To date, very little is known about presidential succession planning in higher education. Through this study, we will investigate planning for leadership succession through succession planning in response to the retirement of presidential leadership at one private higher education institution.

Your answers to my questions are important to this research and I would like to capture all responses my questions. The best way to achieve this is to record today’s session. Do I have your permission to record this interview? I can assure you that all responses will remain confidential and I will be the only one with access to this information. Only pseudonyms will be used when using quotes from transcripts and all recordings will be destroyed after transcription.

In order to meet human subject requirements set by my university, you are required to sign the attached consent form. Essentially, this form states: 1) All information related to this interview will remain confidential; 2) your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to stop participating at any time, and 3) it is not the intention to inflict any harm on
participants of this study. Do you have any questions about the interview process or consent form?

This interview will be 60-90 minutes long. A follow-up interview may be necessary for clarifications or additional questions. There are a number of questions I would like to cover. Therefore it may be necessary for me to interrupt you in order to clarify or elaborate on answer, or move forward in the essence of time. If you are unable to answer a question you have the option to skip it. Do you have any questions at this time?

Interview A

Participant Background:

• Please state your education and professional background.

• What is your current position at (university)?

Pre-Succession:

• Can you tell me about your time as (university) president?

• Do you recall the reaction of the board when you informed them of your impending retirement?

• At the time of your announcement, tell me about formal or informal plans, or protocols already in place, in preparation for presidential leadership continuity in relation to your retirement?

• Can you describe your role in these plans?
Presidential Leadership Succession Candidates:

• Could you provide the background of the candidates who were selected for potential presidential succession in anticipation of your retirement? Also, can you describe the process used for selecting them?

Presidential Leadership Succession Activities:

• Describe the role you played in preparing the succession candidates for the presidential position?
• Can you tell me about the kinds leadership development activities you engaged in with succession candidates? What were the significance or purpose of those activities?
• Can you talk to me about activities set forth by the university for succession candidates in preparation for the presidential role?

Evaluate Succession Candidates’ Performance:

• Can you describe the process that was used for selecting the presidential successor?

Leadership Succession

• Tell me about the transition period between you and the successor. What processes does it entail?

Post Succession

• Given your experience, what insights would you give higher education organizations concerning presidential leadership development through succession planning?
• What advice would you give to predecessors and successors involved in succession planning?
This question concludes the interview. Thank you once again for your time. Do you have any questions?
Interview B

Participant Background:

• Please state your education and professional background.
• What is your current position at (university)?

Pre-Event:

• Can you describe the community’s (university) reaction to the retirement announcement of presidential leadership?
• As members of the board convened, how would you describe the overall mood of the group in relation to, (1) the transition in presidential leadership, and (2) the inclination to find a suitable successor?
• What is the role of the board at the university? Tell me about your role as a board member relative to this presidential succession?

Presidential Leadership Succession Candidates:

• Can you describe the process used by the board to identify succession candidates?

Presidential Leadership Succession Activities:

• What was the board’s role in determining the types of leadership development and training presidential succession candidates received?
• Can you tell me the candidates succession activities aligned with requirements for the presidential leadership and the university’s long-term strategic plan?

Evaluate Succession Candidates Performance:
• Describe the kinds of leadership characteristics the board determined was necessary to effectively run (university) at that time of succession? How did the board determine that a successor possessed those qualifications?

Leadership Succession (The transition period)

• How was the successor announced?

• In what way were you involved in the transition period between the predecessor and presidential successor?

Post Succession:

• What insight or advice would you give to board of trustee members at HEIs concerning presidential succession?

This question concludes the interview. Thank you once again for your time. Do you have any questions?
Interview C

Participant Background:

- Please state your education and professional background.
- What is your current position at (university)?

Pre-Event:

- Can you tell me about your role in this presidential succession event?

Presidential Leadership Succession Candidates:

- Describe the nomination process for the succession candidate. How were you involved?

Presidential Leadership Succession Activities:

- Tell me about the role you played in preparing succession candidates for the presidential role.

Evaluate Succession Candidates Performance:

- Describe the kinds of leadership characteristics you or your group members looked for in the presidential successor.

Leadership Succession

- In what way were you involved in the transition period between the predecessor and presidential successor?

Post Succession:

- What insight or advice would you give to HEIs concerning presidential succession?

This question concludes the interview. Thank you once again for your time. Do you have any questions?
Appendix C: Email Script

Dear (Participant),

My name is Lisa Tison-Thomas and I am a student researcher in the Doctor of Education program at Northeastern University.

My research centers on succession planning, in response to the retirement of presidential leadership from the higher education workforce. You have been selected to participate in this interview because you have been identified as one of the individuals who participated in succession planning in response to the retirement of presidential leadership at your institution.

You will be interviewed at a time and place that is convenient for you. One-on-one in-person interviews will be conducted in person, via conference or Skype. The primary round of interviews will be 60-90 minutes long. Follow-up interviews will only take place if clarification is necessary.

All information related to interviews will remain completely confidential and will be protected. There is no monetary compensation for this study; however, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and contribute to the limited literature on succession planning in higher education.

If you choose to participate, please provide a date and time that would most convenient for you to connect. I can be reached at tison.l@husky.neu.edu or at 781-706-5072. I look forward to speaking with you.

Best,
Lisa Tison-Thomas