

THE LIVES OF PRESIDENTIAL PARTNERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS AND TERMS

- **AASCU** – The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) is an association of nearly 420 state-supported colleges and universities that share a learning and teaching-centered culture, a historic commitment to underserved student populations, and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions' economic progress and cultural development. AASCU, founded in 1961, grew out of the Association of Teacher Education Institutions.

Spouses began attending annual meetings with presidents in the early 1970s. Roberta “Bobbie” H. Ostar, spouse of AASCU President Allan Ostar, began formal programing in 1979, which marked the beginning of the AASCU Spouse/Partner Program.

- **AAU** – The Association of American Universities was founded in 1900 to advance the international standing of United States research universities. Association members are leading research universities including 34 U.S. public institutions, 26 U.S. private institutions, and two Canadian institutions.

The AAU Partners, established in 1977, provides opportunities for the partners of AAU presidents and chancellors to participate in programs concerning issues important to member universities. The Partners hold their meetings twice a year, concurrently with the presidents' and chancellors' meetings.

- **APLU** – The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is a research, policy, and advocacy organization of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and higher education organizations. APLU has 238 members in 50 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories, Canada, and Mexico. An APLU precursor organization, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), is described below.

In 1979, when Robert Clodius became President of NASULGC, his spouse, Joan E. Clodius,

invited presidents' spouses to attend the annual meetings. The spouses' group became a formally recognized part of NASULGC's organization and structure in 1981. The APLU Council of Presidents' & Chancellors' Spouses/Partners meets each fall at the APLU Annual Meeting. The executive committee of the Council meets in the spring to plan programming for the fall meeting.

- **CIC** – The Council of Independent Colleges is an association of 648 small and mid-sized, independent, liberal arts colleges and universities in the United States. Since 1956 CIC has worked to support nonprofit independent college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance public understanding of private higher education's contributions to society.

The CIC Presidents Institute includes a Presidential Spouses and Partners Program and a Spouses and Partners of New Presidents Program.

- **NASULGC** – The National Association of State Universities was founded in 1896 and merged with the American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities in 1963 to become the National Association of State Universities and Land-grant Colleges (NASULGC). In 1995 the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) joined NASULGC. In 2009 the name was changed to Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU).

- **College President or President** – We use this term to refer not only to presidents of colleges, but also to presidents and chancellors of campuses, universities, and systems.
- **Partner** – We use this term to denote spouse or life partner of a president. When citing earlier research, we use the author's terms, such as *wife* or *spouse*, whereas in our study we would use the term *partner*.

Please note: Information about the associations includes language quoted from their websites: www.aascu.org, www.aau.edu, www.aplu.org, and www.cic.edu.

STATISTICAL TERMS

There are two different types of statistics: descriptive and inferential. A descriptive statistic, such as the average age of female presidential partners or the percentage of presidential partners in public institutions, is used to characterize how a particular group responded to a survey question. An inferential statistic is used to examine relationships between survey items (e.g., a relationship between public versus private status and whether or not the institution has an official residence) or differences between groups of respondents (e.g., difference between female and male presidential partners on their overall satisfaction).

The term *statistical significance* refers to a result from an inferential statistic that is likely to be reliable (i.e., not the result of chance findings). Typically, researchers refer to three different levels of statistical significance: $p < .05$ (i.e., less than five in a hundred chance that a difference that large would be found by chance), $p < .01$ (i.e., less than one in a hundred chance that a difference that large would be found by chance), and $p < .001$ (i.e., less than one in a thousand chance that a difference that large would be found by chance). Depending on the size of samples, very small differences may be statistically significant, but may have little value in making meaningful or important distinctions between groups of individuals. Sometimes in discussing findings, researchers use the more generic term *significance* to refer to results they perceive to be important, even if those findings are not statistically significant.

Researchers can calculate many different types of inferential statistics, but the first consideration is to determine what type of data are being analyzed. The first type is nominal data, which refers to discrete responses to a survey item that have no underlying quantitative meaning—for example, being a male versus a female, a public versus private institution, and having or not having an official residence. The second type of data refers to survey responses that have some underlying quantitative meaning, such as how partners responded to the question about their level of overall satisfaction

on a 7-point scale which ranged from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied).

Researchers can calculate many different inferential statistics to examine the association between responses to two questions on the survey, both of which have discrete response categories. For example, one might wonder if there is an association between institutional control (i.e., public versus private) and whether or not the institution has an official residence. In this report, we calculated the chi-square statistic to determine if the association between responses to the two questions is large enough to be statistically significant. The actual formula for the chi square statistic is:

$$\chi^2_c = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

In this formula, O_i refers to the observed frequency in each cell in the two-dimensional table, and E_i refers to the expected frequency in each cell in the table; c refers to the degrees of freedom associated with the two-dimensional table, which is the product of the number of rows in the table minus 1 multiplied by the number of columns minus 1. In the above example, the degrees of freedom would be $(2 - 1)(2 - 1)$ or 1 degree of freedom. Knowing the degrees of freedom is used to determine the possible statistical significance of the calculated value of chi-square.

Sometimes, researchers want to determine the degree of correlation between two survey questions, both of which have an underlying quantitative meaning, such as the correlation between respondent age and overall involvement. In this report, we calculated Pearson product-moment correlations (r) to determine the correlation between pairs of variables. The value of r can range from -1.0 to 0 to 1.0. As discussed above, $p < .05$ is statistically significant.

Sometimes, researchers want to determine if the differences between means of two or more groups of respondents are large enough to reflect something other than chance differences. When

comparing two groups of respondents, such as females versus males, we calculated the *t*-statistic for independent samples using the difference in the means of the two groups but considering those differences based on how much variation there is in the data for each of the two groups. The *t*-statistic is calculated by dividing the difference between the two means by the square root of the sum of each of the standard deviations divided by the number of individuals in each group. The calculated *t* value is then compared to the critical *t* value from the *t* distribution table with degrees of freedom $df = (n_1 + n_2) - 2$ and the chosen confidence level (i.e., $p < .05$, $p < .01$, and $p < .001$). If the calculated *t* value is greater than the critical *t* value, then the null hypothesis of no difference

between the two groups is rejected. When we compared responses of more than two groups or when we used more than two categories in a survey response, we used the more complicated formula for doing a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The resulting F-statistic is used to determine if the difference among groups is large enough to be statistically significant at one of the three levels of significance.

The SPSS version 23.0 statistical software was used to calculate the descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The partner or spouse of a system, university, or college president or chancellor is a unique and potentially consequential figure about whom little is generally known. A study of presidential partners is timely amid the rising complexity and challenge of higher education leadership, increasing numbers of male and same-sex partners, and changing social and workforce realities affecting men, women, and couples.

This survey-based study gave voice to the largest and most diverse known sample of presidential partners to date. We gathered quantitative and qualitative data about the nature and scope of their institutional activities, levels of institutional involvement, rewards and challenges, official presidential residences, and perceptions about the role. The anonymous, online questionnaire was emailed in January 2016 to 836 partners identified by four national higher education association partner groups. Four hundred sixty-one individuals completed at least some questions.

Among those who answered demographic questions, the average age of partners was 58.8. Their presidents led a mix of private and public institutions—55 percent and 45 percent, respectively. Contrary to our expectations, our analysis found few differences between partners in public and private institutions. Eighty-seven percent reported their race or ethnicity as white. The next largest race/ethnicity categories were black/African American (6%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (3%). Ninety-four percent of partners had a bachelor's degree or higher. Twelve partners indicated they were in same-sex couples.

As a group, the partners presented a picture of paradox. Eighty-four percent reported that they found the role satisfying, very satisfying, or extremely satisfying. Rewards and benefits they identified included interacting with students, meeting interesting people, supporting their presidents, and helping to represent their institutions nationally and locally. At the same time, many shared that life as a partner also can entail struggles with role clarity and the stresses of a very

public existence, as well as contexts and circumstances in which expectations of male and female partners can be remarkably different.

The transition to the partner role is a major life event for many partners, and occurs at a time when lack of clarity can be especially problematic. According to survey respondents, the role is seldom made clear before presidents accept their positions, few institutions have written partner policies, and presidential contracts rarely mention the partner role. Asked to define their role in relation to institutions, 74 percent selected “informal responsibilities in an unpaid role.” Such findings are potentially important, not only because greater clarity was associated with higher satisfaction in the role, but also because a quarter of partners believed that an institution's expectations of them had influenced their president's decision to accept, decline, or step down from a position. In a counterpoint to partner calls for greater clarity, however, a substantial share commented that lack of clarity worked in their favor, affording them desired flexibility to shape the role for themselves.

This was the first known study to address specifically how having an official presidential residence affected the partner role. Seventy-one percent of partners at public institutions and 67 percent of partners at private institutions reported that their institution had an official residence. Sixty-nine percent of the houses were more than 50 years old. Most were located on or near campus. Ninety percent of presidents, and 83 percent of partners, who had official residences reported living in them full time. Having an official residence was associated with greater involvement in the partner role. Eighty-seven percent of partners with official residences reported satisfaction with them. Features partners most liked about residences were their location and beauty. The feature liked least was lack of privacy.

Comparing responses from the 349 partners who identified as female with the 77 who identified as male, gender emerged as the variable associated with the most numerous and statistically

significant differences among partners. Males more frequently than females reported having no responsibilities in the partner role. Females were less often employed outside the role, more frequently reducing or quitting employment when their partners became presidents. Females were much more involved with their presidents' institutions, carrying out more campus responsibilities, and reporting higher levels of frustration. Fifty-eight percent of females were very involved or extremely involved with their institutions, compared with 30 percent of males. Twenty-seven percent of males were minimally involved or uninvolved, compared with 12 percent of females.

Partners were asked to respond to the statement, "Expectations (institutional, societal) are different for men in the presidential spouse/partner role than for women." The majority agreed or strongly agreed. Asked to comment, partners most frequently expressed the view that less is expected of males than of females in the role. Males, many stated, are expected to continue their own work outside the role and are free to skip campus participation. Those who do attend functions are praised, commenters said. Meanwhile, respondents frequently commented that females are expected to be involved with institutional life, serving as hostess, managing the home, and planning events. Some observed that when women fail to fulfill such perceived responsibilities, they are subject to subtle or indirect disapproval.

At a college or university, within a partner association group, or even between a president and her or his partner, people may debate such questions as whether or not partners should have job descriptions or receive financial compensation for their work in the role. These and other policy deliberations lie well outside the purpose and scope of this study, however, and may legitimately take into account legal, ethical, human resources, and other considerations not addressed in our survey. Nothing in this report is intended to serve as a basis for advocacy for a particular position regarding the partner role.

Rather, our contribution as researchers was to provide a vehicle for partners to share their many and various lived experiences and perspectives. A practical implication of our findings is that while no one set of practices will fit all, or even most, partners and institutions, greater clarity as to processes may better support individuals transitioning into the role. Additionally, the changing makeup of the partner community suggests that institutions may seek in the future to take a more individualized approach to partners. They may find it constructive to suspend assumptions that partners will have the ability or inclination to conform to particular traditional or gender-based expectations. Partners seemed to communicate through this study that the presidential partner role is ideally not so much a role to play as it is a set of relationships and contexts. As such, the partner role may be strengthened and supported by openness and ongoing dialogue among all concerned.

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT

The partner or spouse (hereafter *partner*) of a system, university, or college president or chancellor (hereafter *president*) is a unique and potentially consequential figure in higher education about whom little is generally known. This study sought to collect and analyze data concerning specifics of the role; to understand the individual, institutional, and societal factors that may shape it; and to provide a foundation for those interested in supporting partners in their role.

In this chapter, we situate our study in the broader context of current challenges facing higher education in the United States, and briefly describe the collaboration among the three authors. In Chapter 2, we provide an overview of previous literature on partners. In Chapter 3, we present our design and methodology. In Chapters 4 through 13, we highlight study findings. We offer discussion and conclusion in Chapter 14.

Change and Challenge for College Presidents

Higher education in the second decade of the 21st century is a scene of seismic change. Shifts include rapidly changing student demographics, new goals and models of postsecondary education, declining state support, rising tuition, and contention over the value of college (Baum, Kurose, & McPherson, 2013). Over several decades, polemics have reached a crescendo as lawmakers, among others, demand greater accountability across the field—for efficiency, affordability, student learning, and career outcomes (Burke, 2005; Zumeta, 2011). Students, meanwhile, are engaging in levels of campus activism not seen in generations (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Bates, Aragon, Suchard, & Rios-Aguilar, 2015).

At the institutional level, financial pressures can be daunting. Academic work is human capital-intensive, and the labor force and technology are increasingly expensive (Archibald & Feldman,

2011). As colleges and universities seek to trim costs, stabilize revenue, and prevail over competitors, some institutions are assailed for abandoning academic priorities (Hacker & Dreifus, 2010) or commodifying knowledge (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2009). At large universities, corporate-sponsored research (Newfield, 2003) and big-time athletics (Duderstadt, 2003; Schnell & Scupp, 2014) are particular sore points. At small, tuition-dependent private colleges with modest endowments, “near-death” experiences are increasingly common (Chabotar, 2010, p. 7). Indeed, a majority of college and university business officers surveyed in 2016 believed the sector as a whole was in financial crisis (Jaschik & Lederman, 2016).

The systemic and local changes most relevant for our study of presidential partners concern the presidency itself. Contemporary higher education leadership can be acutely stressful for some (Seltzer, 2016a). Pressures include ever-higher expectations (Kelderman, 2016), intense public scrutiny (Kambhampati, 2015), and continued high demands in the areas of fundraising, finance, and strategy (Cook, 2012). Institutional fate hangs increasingly on leaders’ talent for raising money (Nicholson, 2007; Pierce, 2012), as well as on deft management of public relations (Gardner, 2016a; Luca, Rooney, & Smith, 2016). Turnover has been rising in the presidency, with a wave of retirements (Kiley, 2012b; Stripling, 2011), and news reports of precipitous resignations and dismissals (Kiley, 2012a; Seltzer, 2016b).

A study of partners is timely for several reasons, including the changing gender make-up of the college presidency. By 2011, the proportion of female presidents of regionally accredited, degree granting U.S. higher education institutions had climbed to 26.4 percent (American Council on Education, 2012). Presidents in same-sex relationships also are more numerous (Gardner, 2016b; Woodhouse, 2016).

The broader societal context for presidential partners features robust and divergent discourse on gender, work, and family roles (Hochschild & Machung, 2003; Sandberg, 2013; Slaughter, 2015). As women increasingly assume leadership positions in professions long dominated by men, different behaviors and expectations are being observed in connection with their male partners than have been traditional with female partners. Examples include male partners of female clergy (Murphy-Geiss, 2011) and male partners of foreign-service officers (Hendry, 1998). Hillary Rodham Clinton's candidacy for President of the United States gave rise to questions about the potential role of the first male partner in the White House (Brower, 2016).

Our Collaboration

This study represents a collaboration among three University of Minnesota-affiliated individuals with complementary experiences and perspectives. Principal Investigator Darwin D. Hendel is an Associate Professor of Higher Education with a background in psychology and quantitative analysis and a teaching and publication record spanning a variety of postsecondary education topics. Karen F. Kaler, University Associate and spouse of University of Minnesota President Eric W. Kaler, serves in leadership roles in presidential partner groups within higher education associations, and has a professional background in graphic design. Gwendolyn H. Freed is a Chief Development Officer and past Ph.D. advisee of Dr. Hendel's.

Serendipity brought the three of us together in June, 2015, when Ms. Kaler and Dr. Freed met

at a University of Minnesota event. Hearing that Dr. Freed had worked a bit with presidential partners and found the role interesting, Ms. Kaler explained that she was seeking collaborators to help update a 1984 survey of partners led by one of her University of Minnesota predecessors in the partner role, Diane Skomars. Thus began our work together to design the survey content, identify how to analyze our research data, and consider how to present our findings. Our team meetings were held at Eastcliff, the official residence of the President of the University of Minnesota.

As team members, we shared an interest in knowing how the role might have evolved in recent decades. Our discussions and review of previous literature on partners led us to a series of questions: How does a person's life change when his or her partner assumes leadership of a college, university, or system? What is it like to be in the role of presidential partner? What are the implications for institutions, and partners, when expectations are clear, and when they are not? We had tentative hypotheses about how the role might be changing, or not, with more female presidents, more dual career couples, evolving gender norms, and a greater emphasis on external relations in the presidency. We were interested in presidential residences, as they are key public venues for presidential couples at many institutions. We believed that potential research findings could raise awareness and understanding of the role, and could be of use to partners, institutions, and higher education associations seeking ways to support individuals in this role.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although there is a voluminous literature addressing aspects of the role of presidents and chancellors, there is a much more limited body of literature focused on their partners, and no literature examining gender differences in roles, responsibilities, and perspectives among a large sample of partners.

The existing partners literature, while modest in size, is rich. Spanning more than four decades, it includes memoirs (Beadle, 1972; Gee, 2012; Hackerman, 1994; Kemeny, 1979); essays (DiBiaggio, 1984; Fitzhenry-Coor, 1984; O'Neil, 1984; Riesman, 1982, 1984, 1986; Winkler, 1984); institutional publications (Koehler, 1989; Moore, 2005; McRobbie, 2010; Rhatigan, 2001); guides (Appleberry, 1993; Oden, 2007); opinion (Cotton, 2003, 2014; Horner & Williams, 2013; Williams, 2013); and media coverage (Bowerman, 2015; Carlson, 2010; Farkas, 2015; Graham, 2016; Hackett, 2016; Lublin & Golden, 2006; Ng, 2011; Pettit, 2016; Pule, 2004; Stripling, 2010). Research in the partners domain includes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies (Brissette, 1982; Clodius & Skomars Magrath, 1984; Corbally, 1977; Gamez Vargas, 2011, 2014; Justice, 1991; Ostar, 1983, 1986, 1991; Reid, Cole, & Kern, 2011; Thompson, 2008).

While the higher education literature contains books and articles on campus architecture and landscaping (Gaines, 1991; Temple, 2014), old main buildings (Dober, 2006), museums (Sloan & Swinburne, 1981; MacDonald & Ashby, 2011), and football stadiums (Stewart, 2000), literature concerning presidential residences appears fairly minimal apart from books about individual residences, institutional web pages, occasional trade journal or media articles (Ezarik, 2007; Mahon, 2016; Walters, 2015), and a mention in a book about the history of campus planning in America (Turner, 1984). In our research, we included a set of questions for respondents who lived in official residences to find out more about this aspect of the partner role.

We begin our review of literature with memoirs and essays, because they provide an individual context for our study of partners.

Memoirs

Memoirs reflect unique circumstances, experiences, and viewpoints—underscoring the highly individualized nature of the role. As the following examples show, a memoir can paint a historical, social, institutional, and family backdrop against which the role plays out at a particular time and place.

Muriel Beadle

A seasoned journalist and author, Muriel Beadle drew upon her powers of observation in *Where Has All the Ivy Gone? A Memoir of University Life* (1972), a book-length narrative about her role as First Lady of the University of Chicago from 1961 to 1968. With a wide focus, she detailed significant institutional changes under President George Beadle's leadership, including the university's rapid expansion, student protests, and urban renewal efforts in Hyde Park. She interspersed discussion of institutional change with reflections on her personal experience as wife of the president.

Of her early days in the role, Beadle wrote, "One problem was very difficult indeed. What behavior was expected of the wife of the President of the University? There were no guidelines. The University of Chicago is tolerant of many life styles . . . I was never urged to carry on this tradition or engage in that activity or to make friends among a certain group. The future was wide open to shape as I wished. However, it would have taken a very dim-witted person indeed to believe that the University had spent all that money refurbishing the President's House for just the two of us. So my first project was to get as many University people as possible into it. I began with the faculty wives, nearly a thousand of them" (p. 49).

Soon, she would be entertaining some 3,000 people per year. Her strenuous schedule ranged from

mundane to thrilling; a high point was a 1962 White House state dinner, where she was seated next to the poet Robert Frost and across from President John F. Kennedy. There were challenges along with privileges for presidential couples. “This kind of existence can be borne with equanimity only if both are willing to give themselves wholly to the demands of the job,” she wrote. “A university presidency can similarly absorb all one’s time and energies, and it is an advantage if both husband and wife are equally committed to it. George and I never agreed absolutely on the degree to which we should practice nose-to-the-grindstone versus self-indulgent activity, but our attitudes were similar enough, praise be, so that we never wasted our energies arguing about how much of our time the University should command. Any university president and his wife can almost count on celebrating their wedding anniversary by eating overdone beef at a Jaycees’ Distinguished Citizens Awards Dinner instead of at a candlelit table for two in the city’s best French restaurant, and their life will be much less stressful if they don’t fight it” (pp. 62–63).

A later passage returns to an initial theme: “As I mentioned earlier, it was indeed pleasant to have had a totally free hand in shaping the style and tone that would be characteristic of the President’s House and the activities stemming from it. However, there was a penalty. This freedom was due to the reluctance of anyone on campus to criticize the President of the University or his wife, whom faculty members (at any institution) want to be proud of because they symbolize the institution itself; and one form of criticism is to offer unsought advice. Because I didn’t realize this at first, I had walked into some traps of my own making” (p. 115).

Jean Alexander Kemeny

Jean Kemeny’s memoir, *It’s Different at Dartmouth* (1979), is a colorful and candid account of life while her husband, John Kemeny, was president of Dartmouth College from 1970 to 1981. She wrote: “What prepared me for this role? Awkwardness, insecurity and terror” (p. x). She recalled her experience in a realm that was

undefined and uncertain: “I founded a new school in 1970—a school for one presidential wife. I wrote the primers, devised the curriculum and taught the courses to myself. I determined what questions to ask and mastered some of the answers” (p. 194). Ultimately, she found an approach that was relatively nonconformist and assertive—rejecting social formalities and attending faculty meetings, for example.

The Kemenys regarded themselves as a presidential team. They led the convocation processional each year, hand-in-hand, and Mr. Kemeny often stated publicly that her support made his presidency possible. Asked “how I managed to sleep at night,” he wrote in a report on his first five years in office. “I confessed that I had a simple secret: Each evening I told my wife all about my problems and then I slept very soundly—and she stayed awake” (p. 179).

At the same time, Ms. Kemeny harbored some ambivalence about the role. She disliked living in a “fishbowl” (p. 102), hearing criticism of her husband, and losing intimate friendships. On the latter, she wrote, “Old friends will still be there in times of personal crisis. But the real confiding, the uninhibited honesty, has gone” (p. 182). She felt underappreciated as an unpaid servant of the University: “The pressure to do the job without complaint is subtle but very much there” (p. 32). She described the presidential wife’s difficult choice: “Sacrifice the career, or let the husband down?” (p. 33).

“A president’s wife is under great pressure to be ‘liberated,’ ” she wrote. “There are numerous articles stressing that no wife should have to fill a role if she doesn’t feel comfortable in it, that society shouldn’t force her to, that her life, her career, her choice are paramount. Feminists . . . do not understand the unique nature of a college presidency. It is an all-consuming job. A partnership is needed to make it tolerable” (pp. 33–34). She declared, “Dartmouth needs two people, full time, at the top” (p. 34), while acknowledging the “stirrings, even rumblings, among my generation of presidents’ wives.” She wondered, “What will be the attitude of the next generation?” (p. 37).

Gene Coulbourn Hackerman

The Time Has Come: An Autobiography of a Texas Woman (Hackerman, 1994), is Gene Coulbourn Hackerman's sweeping chronicle of her life and marriage to Norman Hackerman, focusing primarily on his years as president of Rice University from 1970 to 1985. He was, as she wrote, "a major protagonist in my story—in fact, my leading man" (p. ix).

It was a drama with highs and lows. "Fifty years ago," she wrote, "when Norman Hackerman and Gene Allison Coulbourn joined hands in Holy matrimony, they began what they hoped would be a joyous scamper through the campuses of academia. It didn't turn out that way! The marriage turned out fine, but the 'joyous scamper' became an exhilarating, hilarious, ridiculous, and sometimes hazardous ride on a roller coaster" (p. 87).

Hackerman, like Beadle and Kemeny, directed major renovation work on a presidential residence, and was responsible for a packed social schedule, entertaining by her estimate more than 45,000 people during her 15 years as "official Rice hostess." In that capacity, she "found it necessary to plan all menus, make up all guest lists, have invitations printed, set up all the tables, launder linens at the house, supervise grounds and garden, [and] run an office and staff" (p. 149).

For better or worse, Ms. Hackerman had a "ring-side seat at history" (p. 95). She had the privilege of meeting and hosting U.S. presidents, foreign dignitaries, and film stars. She enjoyed traveling the world. She also experienced major stresses and tragedies in her husband's career. Notably, he was vice chancellor at the University of Texas at Austin in 1966, when, from the campus's iconic clock tower, a student perpetrated the worst mass shooting in U.S. history at the time. On a personal level, Hackerman wrote movingly of personal and family struggles with serious illness—ordeals that she faced while doing her best to maintain her highly public profile as First Lady.

Constance Bumgarner Gee

Constance Bumgarner Gee was a new faculty member at The Ohio State University in 1994 when she married its president, E. Gordon Gee.

She followed him to subsequent presidencies at Brown and Vanderbilt universities. In her attention-getting 2012 book, *Higher Education: Marijuana at the Mansion*, she aired her side of such controversies as her use of cannabis (for medical reasons) and political outspokenness as first lady, and shared her personal reflections on the role.

Becoming, at age 40, Gee's second wife was a "radical" life transition that overtook her teaching and research and was a "full-time, 24/7, very public affair" (p. 84). "The initial thrill soon wore off for me," she wrote of her heavy schedule of social events as wife of the president (p. 85). Entertaining at large functions, she believed, required her to wear a false countenance she called "The Everlasting Smile" (p. 86), and work large crowds with almost clinical efficiency.

"The object of the game," she wrote, "is to move through a sea of people, alighting briefly with small clusters or an occasional individual, without getting 'captured.' Each guest is either a current or possible donor, and each has to feel that he or she has made a personal connection with you, even if the actual contact time is less than a minute. (You lose points with each additional ten-second segment after the one-minute chat-up.) Remembering names is a key skill that master movers take very seriously. The gravest faux pas is to not remember that you have previously met the person standing expectantly before you" (p. 84). "After about 20 minutes of meet-and-greet," she continued, "I have an involuntary out-of-body experience. I find myself floating above the parade like a Bullwinkle balloon, cringing at my own superficiality and that of the entire human race" (p. 85).

The break of up of the Gee marriage in 2006 was complicated by concomitant issues with the Vanderbilt board, which sought to circumscribe Ms. Gee's role more explicitly amid negative press coverage of her conduct in it. Following the divorce, Mr. Gee returned to The Ohio State University for a second presidency there. Ms. Gee decided to stay at Vanderbilt to teach, whereupon, according to her book, her department chair told her she had been "forced down our throats" in the first place, and that, "If I were you, I'd get the hell

out of Dodge” (p. 331). At the end of it all, she felt she had been “left on the roadside like a greasy taco wrapper” (p. 328).

Essays

The essay provides a shorter form suitable for a variety of expression, from personal stories to reflections and persuasion. A dozen were collected by Clodius and Skomars Magrath in the book, *The President's Spouse: Volunteer or Volunteered* (1984). Highlights give a sense of the satisfactions, contradictions, and intellectual currents among presidential spouses at the time.

Essays from the 1980s

Beatrice Chaikind Ross Winkler, whose husband served the University of Cincinnati, wrote of the role's deep rewards: “It is the first time in my life that I have felt that I've had a full-scale impact on the community in which I live.” Later on the same page, however, she wrote, “after six years, I still feel that it would be pleasant to have someone besides my husband review the job that I have done.” She wrote, “I believe that as a group, presidents' wives must have a strong sense of self and finely-honed sense of humor, or we could easily lose ourselves in self-pity. Without such resources, how can anyone live always in the public eye yet always in the background?” (Winkler, 1984, p. 84).

Sense of self in relation to presidents and institutions was explored by several contributors. One cast the partner role as one of “reflected identity . . . a mirror image in which one is assumed to reflect the personhood of another,” noting that “the long-term effects of loss of self might not necessarily be acceptable to the wife” (Fitzhenry-Coor, 1984, p. 98). Recounting a typical day as wife of University of Wisconsin system president Robert M. O'Neil, Karen O'Neil described a hurricane of activity, tending to her children, planning university events, meeting with university constituents, and supporting her husband. Evidently feeling somewhat physically and psychologically engulfed by it all, she asked, “If we are only partners, what happens to us as people?” (O'Neil, 1984, p. 33).

A decade before these essays appeared, the sociologist Hanna Papanek had coined the term “two-person career” to describe the phenomenon

in which American women largely excluded from professional leadership positions played energetic “roles in the orbit of men's occupations” (Papanek, 1973, p. 853). In describing women's experience of the two-person career, Papanek used the term, *vicarious achievement* (Press & Whitney, 1971; Lipman-Blumen, 1972). For women married to important men, Papanek wrote, vicarious achievement was derived at the “boundary between public and private spheres.” The two-person career, she wrote, is “a three-way relationship between employer and two partners in a marriage, in which two sets of relationships are of the ‘secondary’ type and one is of the ‘primary.’ Usually, the wife of the employee is inducted into the orbit of her husband's employing institution not because of her own, or the institution's, specific choice, but because she is related to her husband through sexual, economic, and emotional bonds” (1973, p. 855).

In her essay, “Duo Careers” (1984), Carolyn Enright DiBaggio, partner to University of Connecticut president John DiBiaggio, argued that in the two-person career, a presidential partner “puts her own self-image at great risk; she may see herself as only an extension of her husband” (DiBiaggio, 1984, p. 112). She eschewed, also, what she called the “dual career,” in which, she wrote, “two married persons follow separate and independent careers” (p. 111). She proposed, instead, what she termed the “duo career,” whereby “the spouse, in effect, maintains two roles simultaneously—an independent professional career as well as her duties as the wife of the university president” (p. 111). Acknowledging the social and logistical challenges of maintaining such an arrangement, she praised duo-career wives as “intrepid” (p. 119), and called upon governing boards to do much more to support and accommodate them.

In the Clodius and Skomars Magrath (1984) collection's concluding essay, the sociologist and higher education scholar David Riesman suggested that presidential spouses' struggles, questions, and ideas concerning traditional models and possible alternatives in the 1980s were largely the result of “the women's movements of the last several decades, whose intellectual and consciousness-raising bases have often been located in major university centers” (Riesman, 1984, p. 155).

Social movements and perceived societal imperatives can push and pull partners. As Riesman wrote in Roberta Ostar's essay collection and survey report, *The Partners: A Family Perspective on the College Presidency* (1986), "The United States lacks the division of labor that is provided in the United Kingdom between the royal family, which attends to ceremonial duties, and the Prime Minister, who can stick to the usually grim business at hand. We turn our nation's presidents into at once ceremonial and functional figures, performing in dual and endlessly tiring roles. To a lesser extent, state governors and other highly visible political leaders are in the same position as college and university presidents, particularly when the latter serve in residential settings, and especially in smaller communities. We are too egalitarian to create an aristocracy to perform these tasks on behalf of the busier members of our population. In fact, just because we are egalitarian, we expect a presidential couple to behave 'just like folks' and at the same time, to rise above the level of the folks. If one doubts the importance of the ceremonial role, consider the position of the president of a leading sports power in the South or the Midwest or the Southwest who fails to show up, along with the governor and the regents, at the big football game" (Riesman, 1986, pp. 3–4).

Tradition and perceived functional requirements are not necessarily in institutions' long-term best interests, according to another essay in the Ostar volume, by University of Maine president Judith A. Sturnick. "Not since the 1930s has American higher education been in such need of the wisest, most visionary, and best leadership—the individual whose feet are firmly rooted in the ground of practical educational/political/fiscal realities but whose brain and heart draw inspiration from the stars," Sturnick wrote. "This is the leader who is capable of defining a sense of destiny for our institutions and those people who make up those institutions. . . . Such leadership is tied neither to gender nor to marital status, and we must not allow illuminating courage to be lost because search committees, trustees, and campuses fear a change in the traditional role of the male president with a partner" (Sturnick, 1986, p. 57).

Institutional Voices

Reflections and histories that come from within colleges and universities provide a campus view into the presidential partner role and how it has been idealized through various time periods.

A history of presidential partners at Wichita State University (Rhatigan, 2001) called turn-of-the-century partner Mabel Barker Stone Rollins "a woman of strong Christian beliefs and a constant helpmate to her husband" (p. 27). In the postwar era, Sally Corbin "epitomized the ideal wife and partner in her marriage to Harry Finch Corbin (p. 61) . . . Her poise and social certainty were important assets for her family and for the university at all times, yet were perhaps most vital during the political struggle in the early 1960s to gain the university's entrance into the state system" (p. 61). In the 1990s, Margaret Ann Hughes was "confidante and consultant to [President Gene Hughes] concerning many of the issues addressed by his administration, enhancing his leadership with her professional knowledge. As she performed dual roles, coordinating administration of crucial university functions, and entertaining, Margaret Ann provided the university with a visible community presence" (p. 99).

Chapter subtitles in a University of Southern California history (Moore, 2005) described presidential wives, beginning in 1880 with "Etta Jane (Jennie) Allen Bovard: A True Pioneer." The other subtitles were, chronologically: "Gifted Artist, Serious Thinker," "Faithfulness Itself and Devotion Unmeasured," "A Lady of Broad Culture and Refinement," "Queenly But Ingenious," "Gentle But Determined Spirit," "Elegant, Artistic, Intellectual, and Earthy," "Outspoken, Witty, and Gracious," "A Beautiful Hostess and a Dear Heart," and, finally, bringing the reader to 2005, "Kathryn Brunkow Sample: Understated Elegance and Independent Spirit."

University of Michigan presidential partner Vivian Shapiro and two of her predecessors gathered for a public dialogue in 1982 (Koehler, 1989). Ann Hatcher, in the role from 1951 to 1967, commented that the role is "really a public relations job: encouraging the different constituents of the

university in their interest, their support, and their understanding of the university . . . not just giving parties and dragging around after your husband to all the functions on campus. There is a real purpose in doing all these things” (p. 4).

For an article in Indiana University’s alumni magazine, presidential partner Laurie Burns McRobbie highlighted the lives and contributions of eight of her predecessors (McRobbie, 2010). “Each first lady conducted herself in the context of her time,” she wrote, “but all filled the same basic roles: advocate, ambassador, hostess, confidante, member of the community, and often parent, to name just some” (p. 46). She continued: “It’s certainly been my experience since my husband, Michael McRobbie, took office that these roles are all operating simultaneously, and thus the process of adjusting to being first lady is a process of integrating all these identities smoothly . . . a few unique themes stand out:

- It all happens in public, so you have to hope for a forgiving community;
- Success and satisfaction rest on having defined and set expectations with key stakeholder groups—trustees, donors and alumni, campus constituencies, and the community—but of course it takes time to do this;
- It comes with some authority, often more than one realizes, but there’s a fine line between taking and using what you have and not overstepping into operations of the university; It requires vigilance and perspective; and
- It comes with a level of accountability to the broader community, particularly since here at IU it’s a paid position” (p. 46).

Guides for Partners

It is common for newer partners to turn to experienced counterparts for advice. Association partner group meetings are a frequent setting for this kind of interaction, and some partners have also provided counsel in written form.

Teresa Johnston Oden

Even before her husband, Robert Oden, became president of Kenyon College, and later Carleton College, Teresa Johnston Oden was “attracted to the idea” of working with him (Oden, 2007, p. 9). Her book, *Spousework: Partners Supporting Academic Leaders* (2007), is a guide for spouses with the flavor of a memoir, interspersed with Oden’s personal recollections and reflections on the role. As someone who embraced the role, Oden recounted her own experiences and dispensed advice in a range of areas, such as the transition to the role, gaining access to campus news, being discreet, managing time, and planning parties. She devoted two chapters to presidential residences, counseling partners to be alert to the many potential pitfalls of official homes and getting used to their limited privacy, which she compared to “living on a film set” (p. 35).

Association Handbooks

Higher education association partner groups periodically have produced guides with tips and wisdom for presidential partners. One such guide, published by AASCU (Appleberry, 1992), offers suggestions for spouses in their first year of the role. Acknowledging that readers may choose their own level of involvement in the role, the guide points out, “the role of the spouse in whatever manner chosen can enhance the presidency” (p. 1). Among the suggestions: “be flexible,” “roll with the punches,” “be a positive representative,” “listen carefully and speak with both caution and wisdom” (p. 3). The guide offers a range of practical advice, from remembering thank you notes to establishing personal space within the presidential residence, “keeping a level of professional distance between yourself and the staff” (p. 7), and keeping the president apprised of “pressing concerns that may bring the attention of the media including such potentially visible events as: relocation or

discharge of staff or faculty; illness or family concerns that affect the lives of university personnel, including activities that may be scandalous if known” (p. 11).

Other occasional association manuals have been distributed among spouse or partner group members only, and were not intended for publication. Those that we have been able to review contain essays, lists, and other short pieces. Advice covers such topics as setting priorities, balancing demands, dealing with stress, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and personal growth, using time efficiently, giving and receiving gifts, staffing for the residence, handling the media, getting to know students, and being part of the community beyond the campus.

In an article noting greater diversity and career independence among contemporary presidential partners, scholar Gamez Vargas (2011) wrote that in the past, association guides had, for the most, part “been written with a traditional, heterosexual, married couple with children family [sic] and a spouse who did not work outside the home in mind. The documents were not written for the presidential partner to be a college professor, career professional, male presidential partner, same-sex presidential couple, non-married couples and/or with extended family responsibilities (i.e. elderly parents). In these respects, these documents were indicative of a patriarchal culture” (p. 431).

Opinion

Presidential partner compensation and recognition are perennial fodder for commentary:

Advocating for Compensation

In the 1980s, syndicated columnist Erma Bombeck weighed in when Diane Skomars Magrath negotiated a contract with her husband, Peter Magrath, ensuring her \$30,000 of his annual salary as president of the University of Missouri. Presidential spouses aren’t the only ones working hard in support of their husbands’ careers, Bombeck noted, suggesting that ministers, doctors, military men, and plumbers, should split their paychecks, as well. “If Ms. Magrath sets a trend,” she wrote, “don’t be surprised to find out wives are

a luxury that most men cannot possibly afford” (1985, para. 9).

On the contemporary scene, partner David G. Horner is among those who have advocated that spouses should, at least sometimes, be compensated (Horner & Williams, 2013). Higher education attorney Raymond D. Cotton champions spouses, highlighting that they do a great deal of important and valuable work that goes unheralded and uncompensated on many campuses (Cotton, 2003, 2014). He notes that written agreements for paid partners is considered a “best practice” (2014, para. 13).

Calling for More Support

In a commentary called “Spouses and Presidents Get a Job They Didn’t Apply For” (2009), Judith Ainlay wrote that partners seeking to be meaningfully involved with their presidents’ institutions “occupy a singular and ill-defined space in the campus landscape.” She recalled a difficult transition: “When I came to Union [College] I was thrust into the role of president’s sidekick, which leads to a kind of social vertigo, at first. Initially, you feel like the invisible person in the room” (para. 9). Later, she wrote of the sometimes highly public aspects of life as a partner, “When you’re not feeling invisible, you’re probably feeling overexposed” (para. 12). Ainlay’s conclusion was that partners lack sufficient resources to navigate the sometimes stressful or isolating aspects of the role. She suggested an organization exclusively for partners, as well as “more research, written materials, and online resources” (para. 20).

Advocating for Less Involvement

A contrary perspective—not only on the issue of pay but also on the broader issue of partner involvement with institutions—is offered by another attorney, the spouse of the retired, two-time college president Peggy R. Williams. David A. Williams has written, “The ‘role’ is compensated with polite applause and flowers. The ‘job’ is compensated with cold, hard cash (and benefits). Whether the presidential spouse achieves power because of institutional traditions or personal initiative, the college/university community sees the empowering of the spouse

for what it is—nepotism. . . . the spouse's sole and determinative qualifying credential is her/his relationship with the president. No one else in the world qualifies for this job/role. Other institutional employees were hired as the result of competitive job searches: not so the presidential spouse. Other employees have legitimate job descriptions, are subject to recurring evaluation and continuing supervision, and can be disciplined or discharged for poor performance: again, not so the presidential spouse" (Horner & Williams, 2013, para. 29).

In his book, *Caesar's Wife*, subtitled, *The College President's Spouse: Minister Without Portfolio or the President's Conscience?* (2013), Williams went into more depth, presenting a point-by-point argument as follows. In his view, many presidential spouses are unhappy because, like other spouses in public life, they lack recognition, privacy, and control over their lives. It can be problematic for the spouse to perform duties that have been carried out by college employees, who may resent the fact that the spouse did not apply for the role/job. The role can be rife with potential conflicts between university and marital interests. Both role and paid-job scenarios are fraught, and arguments for one or another are futile. Williams noted that trustees generally fail to recognize not only the potential harm that a spouse could visit on an institution, but also the resulting potential legal consequences. According to Williams, spouses are not necessarily as vital to fundraising as is commonly believed. Spouses who live their own life outside the college are happiest. A spouse's bad behavior can be interpreted as reflecting the institution. More males in the role may expedite the decline of the traditional-spouse model.

Media Coverage

Aside from local news coverage of presidential transitions, which frequently mentions partners, media interest accrues to partners mainly in the event of special interest or controversy.

In the former vein, partners are at times treated with profiles on their work, or are included in coverage of notable presidential residences. An article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* discussed partners who combine faculty responsibilities and volunteer service in the role. It featured Laura

Sands's involvements at Virginia Tech, where her husband is president and she divides her time between teaching and partner duties (Bowerman, 2015). Antioch College received attention when, six months into President Tom Manley's tenure, it hired seasoned fundraiser Susanne Hashim as Vice President for Advancement; Ms. Hashim is President Manley's wife (Hackett, 2016). Cindy Thomashow and her husband, Unity College President Mitchell Thomashow, were spotlighted in a story about their environmentally sustainable modular home (Carlson, 2010). On a less upbeat note, Ohio University President Roderick McDavis and his wife Deborah McDavis were in the news when they were forced from their campus home by a bat infestation (Farkas, 2015).

Scandal, however, seems to stir greatest media attention. Constance Bumgarner Gee attracted local attention when, upon President George W. Bush's re-election, she lowered the flag at Vanderbilt University's presidential residence to half-staff (Pulle, 2004). She found herself in the national spotlight when the *Wall Street Journal* reported that she had smoked marijuana for medical reasons in the presidential residence there (Lublin & Golden, 2006). In another case of public embarrassment, Arkansas University at Jonesboro chancellor Tim Hudson made headlines stepping down in the wake of his wife's resignation as director of the university's study-abroad program—an internal audit of which had uncovered administrative breaches and general disorder (Pettit, 2016).

Romantic issues attract interest. At the University of Chicago, when President Robert Zimmer, who was married, had an affair with a faculty member, questions were raised about potential conflict of interest and whether or not the new love interest could reside in the official residence (Stripling, 2010). At the University of Vermont, president Daniel Fogel resigned soon after his wife, Rachel Kahn-Fogel, was found to have been involved with the institution's assistant vice president for development, Michael Schultz. At the time, Schultz was working on his doctoral dissertation, entitled, "Elucidating the University CEO's Spouse in Development, Alumni Relations, and Fundraising" (Ng, 2011; Schultz, 2009).

College closures tend to draw media, but apparently never more so than when a former president's spouse is running for President of the United States. Bernie Sanders was covered by numerous outlets in his presidential partner capacity when Burlington College closed in May, 2016. His wife, Jane Sanders, had led the institution from 2004 to 2011, during which time the college borrowed millions in a land purchase that failed to relieve the college's enrollment and financial problems (Graham, 2016).

Research

Researchers in the presidential partner domain have undertaken a range of studies, exploring the partner experience through interviews, focus groups, observation, and surveys. Each study is unique in its purpose, design features, and characteristics of participants and their partners' institutions. The earliest studies we found date from the 1970s and 1980s, a time when the burgeoning women's movement coincided with the establishment of spouse and partner groups within several higher education associations. Interest was keen, and data collection was more feasible than it had been in the past. Below we highlight published research.

A Pioneering Survey—1977

For the first three years that her husband, John E. Corbally, was president of the University of Illinois, Marguerite Walker Corbally found herself "confused by the variety of demands," "exhausted from trying to respond to all of them," and "alone and with uncertainty" (Corbally, 1977, p. v). To help understand the role, and to assist others in it, she and a research team from The Ohio State University designed and mailed a survey to 546 wives of college and university presidents. Two hundred forty-six wives returned completed questionnaires. Of those, 73 indicated that "more was expected of them in terms of time and involvement than they had been led to believe" (p. 59). The study also found that the average amount of time spouses gave to their institutions was nearly 55 hours per week. Corbally's seminal work

laid the foundation for subsequent studies that have updated, adapted, or repeated some of her questions. Some of her key findings appear later in this report alongside our own, for comparison purposes.

Corbally presented her survey findings in a book, *The Partners* (1977), which was also informed by her own experience and additional conversations with an unspecified number of presidents, search committee members, and trustees. The book provides information on the role, identifies pervasive misperceptions about it, and gives a flavor of the traditional and feminist tensions swirling around it at the time. She wrote: "Any mention of a 'job' for the wife of the university or college president as an outgrowth of her husband's position usually triggers one of a number of emotional responses, ranging from open-mouthed disbelief that she does anything more strenuous than ring for the maid, to the outraged women's rights posture which wonders why she doesn't turn her back on history and pursue freely only activities of her choice" (p. 1).

Corbally wrote: "Most of the frustrations mentioned by respondents can be traced to two things—one is their inability to select their own activities because of the amount of time demanded by the job . . . The other is that whatever self-denial is forced on them or selected by them, it remains a source of frustration when the necessity for it stems from an inadequately defined role of questionable productivity. Most other areas of frustration can be traced to lack of privacy or the visibility of the home and office" (1977, p. 125).

Although Corbally found that "many wives express great enthusiasm for their lives" in the partner role (p. 125), much of the book wrestles with the prospect of future spouses losing commitment or interest in serving their husbands' institutions, especially as more sought to pursue their own independent careers. Survey participants, and Corbally herself, speculated as to whether the traditional spouse role would be sustained in future generations, or would, instead, "go the way of the dinosaur," as one respondent predicted (p. 7).

Comparison of Female and Male Spouse Experiences, Private Colleges—1982

Twenty-seven female and 27 male presidents of private colleges participated in Judith Brissette's (1982) survey exploring how gender may affect the roles played by female and male partners. Among the findings: female spouses were more often invited to campus during their partners' presidential interviews, but male partners were more frequently interviewed by search committees; male partners spent considerably less time with campus activities; and female spouses were much less often employed outside the partner role. Brissette recommended that search committees be clearer in discussing expectations of spouses, and that the committees learn more about the spouse role.

A Survey of Spouses Through AASCU— 1983

Roberta Ostar, wife of AASCU president Allan W. Ostar and leader of the association's spouse group, believed that periodic data collection would lead to greater understanding of the partner role.

Her AASCU surveys built upon and largely echoed Corbally's study. In 1983, she reported on completed questionnaires from 177 wives and 4 husbands and reported that 32 percent worked outside the partner role. About half of those who worked before entering the role found that their husband's presidencies resulted in work interruption, usually discontinuation. In the report, *Myths and Realities* (1983), she aimed to disabuse readers of common assumptions and misperceptions. She wrote: "The reality is that most of the presidents' spouses have a schedule of volunteer activities for the university, as well as the community that add up to a 40-hour work week plus overtime! . . . The luxurious homes in which some of them live are in many cases semi-public houses where the president, spouse and children live a fish-bowl life. And as to 'their friends,' those 2,200 or so guests that the president and spouse entertain each year are university friends, not personal ones. 'Who among us has 2,200 personal friends? Certainly not a university president!' said one spouse with vigor" (1983, p. 4).

A Survey Through NASULGC —1984

In the early 1980s, University of Minnesota presidential partner Diane Skomars Magrath teamed on a survey of 104 spouses of presidents of public institutions with Joan Clodius, whose husband was president of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC)—a precursor organization to the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU). They presented their findings in the book, *The President's Spouse: Volunteer or Volunteered* (Clodius & Skomars Magrath, 1984), together with a collection of essays, some of which are cited above.

Like Ostar, Clodius and Skomars Magrath carried forward Corbally's effort to find out who the partners were, what they did, and how they felt in the role. Ninety-nine percent of respondents were female. The majority reported spending significant time in the role—in such activities as entertaining, managing official presidential residences, supervising staff, representing the campus at association meetings, writing thank you notes, and editing presidential speeches. Ninety-eight percent were unpaid for this work and only four percent had a written job description.

Results from the Corbally (1977) and Clodius and Skomars Magrath (1984) surveys appear alongside our findings where questions were comparable. (The numerical data from the Clodius and Skomars Magrath survey were not published; Ms. Skomars shared the tabulated data with our research team.)

AASCU Survey—1986

The next in AASCU's series of surveys led by Roberta Ostar (Ostar, 1986) included 192 spouses. (The report mentions that there were then 22 female presidents/chancellors of AASCU institutions, 15 of whom were single.) Among the few notable changes since the association's 1984 survey: spouses were younger and had a higher education level, and a slightly greater proportion (34 percent) of them worked. Family challenges were reported among the critical issues for many spouses. Ostar wrote, "Working spouses and non-employed spouses understand that the institution and the community rely on their

participation in planning and hosting social events and in representing the institution at meetings or other professional functions. It is the effect of the role on the personal dimension of their lives, on themselves, their families and the president/chancellor, that is chiefly responsible for the stress they experience in the role” (p. 109).

Partner and Trustee Preferences—1991

In her survey of AAU-affiliated individuals (1991), Patricia Justice took an approach different from that used in the prior surveys associated with AASCU and APLU. She sent a questionnaire to both presidential spouses and chairs of governing boards. The spouses and trustees were asked how, ideally, they would like the role to be. Receiving completed surveys from 47 spouses and 34 trustees, Justice reported agreement among spouses and trustees that during a presidential search, trustees, the candidate, and the candidate’s spouse should informally discuss the role as part of the interview process. They also agreed that a spouse should have a clear status as either an employee or volunteer. Trustees of private institutions tended to favor the latter.

Updated Ostar Study—1991

Ostar endeavored to engage a representative sample of presidents, spouses, and staff of public and private 4-year institutions of varied size and location in an effort to continue her periodic snapshots of the domain. In the booklet, *Public Roles, Private Lives* (1991), Ostar reported the findings of a survey and interviews involving 259 institutions. Of surveys submitted, 62 percent were from spouses. Results indicated that, on average, presidential couples participated in between 100 and 170 institutional events per year, hosting between 50 and 60 of them. She found no notable change since her 1984 and 1986 surveys in the proportion of women who worked outside the role. She found that 82 percent of spouses, whether working or not, carried on significant traditional presidential spouse activities. Quoting Riesman (1986), Ostar used the phrase “living logos” to describe the partner role in relation to the higher education institution. “‘Telling the university’s story’ to students, parents, alumni, faculty, community, legislators, and donors is necessary for a successful

institution,” she wrote. “The university’s ‘living logos’—president or president and spouse—are in the best position to perform this public representational role” (p. 45).

Spouses of Private College Presidents—2008

In his doctoral dissertation, Matthew R. Thompson (2008) received surveys from 130 CIC spouse-group members (104 women, 22 men, and four who did not identify gender), and conducted in-depth interviews with six. He built on the foundation laid by Corbally, Ostar, and Clodius and Skomars Magrath surveys, but focused exclusively on partners whose presidents led private colleges. Sixty-five percent of respondents reported that the role required a considerable time commitment. More than three quarters were either not working or working only part time outside the role, and 58.7 percent reported that their prior work had been interrupted by their spouse’s presidency, most commonly because of lack of time and/or a move. Less than a quarter were paid for their work in the partner role. While most enjoyed the role, they also coped with some of the same struggles noted in earlier research. Thompson echoed David Riesman’s assertion that spouses are important “living logos” for institutions (p. 1), and recommended that trustees clarify expectations and better recognize partner contributions. Introducing a personal identity framework, he suggested that each spouse reflect on his or her “inner self,” “broader self,” and “public self,” (p. 183), and ultimately “decide for her or himself who s/he wants to be” in relation to the role (p. 184).

Role Theory—2011

University of Oklahoma Assistant Professor Juanita Gamez Vargas conducted a qualitative study using interviews, field journals, and reflexivity journals to capture the experiences and perspectives of 18 female and six male partners of public institution leaders, eight of whom were current or retired faculty members (2011, 2014). In a 2009 article, Gamez Vargas had explored both previous partner literature and her own emergent findings from the perspective of role theory, which concerns how people behave in response to social factors (Biddle & Thomas, 1966; Biddle, 1986). Some participants experienced, for example, what

Biddle called *role consensus* (1986, p. 76), whereby they agreed with expectations that were communicated to them, while others were in a state of *role conformity* (p. 78), in which they were guided or pressured into certain behaviors and activities by such parties as trustees or presidents. Still others were in *role conflict* (p. 82), which can arise from ambiguity in the role, overwhelming demands, or roles that clash. For some, a perceived need to adopt a somewhat artificial public persona led to a sense of dissonance. One said, “Many times, I felt like I was in a Federal Witness Protection program where I came to a community and had to change my identity” (2014, p. 396).

This study also revealed important differences based on gender. “The university’s role expectations of the male partner were less physically and mentally demanding than that of the female partners,” Gamez Vargas wrote (2014, p. 398). At public events, participants reported, “attendees assumed that the female presidential partner should be in attendance but the male presidential partner was to be commended. The male partner’s appearance at university functions drew comments of appreciation and admiration of his support for his partner” (Gamez Vargas, 2011, p. 438). She reported on the basis of her study that governing boards “demonstrated an arrogance and lack of support” for partners (2011, p. 439), and recommended that trustees endeavor to better appreciate, recognize, and support partners. She argued that the field needs to accommodate a needed shift in which more partners can reasonably maintain their own professional lives while also supporting a president and institution.

Wives and Well-being—2011

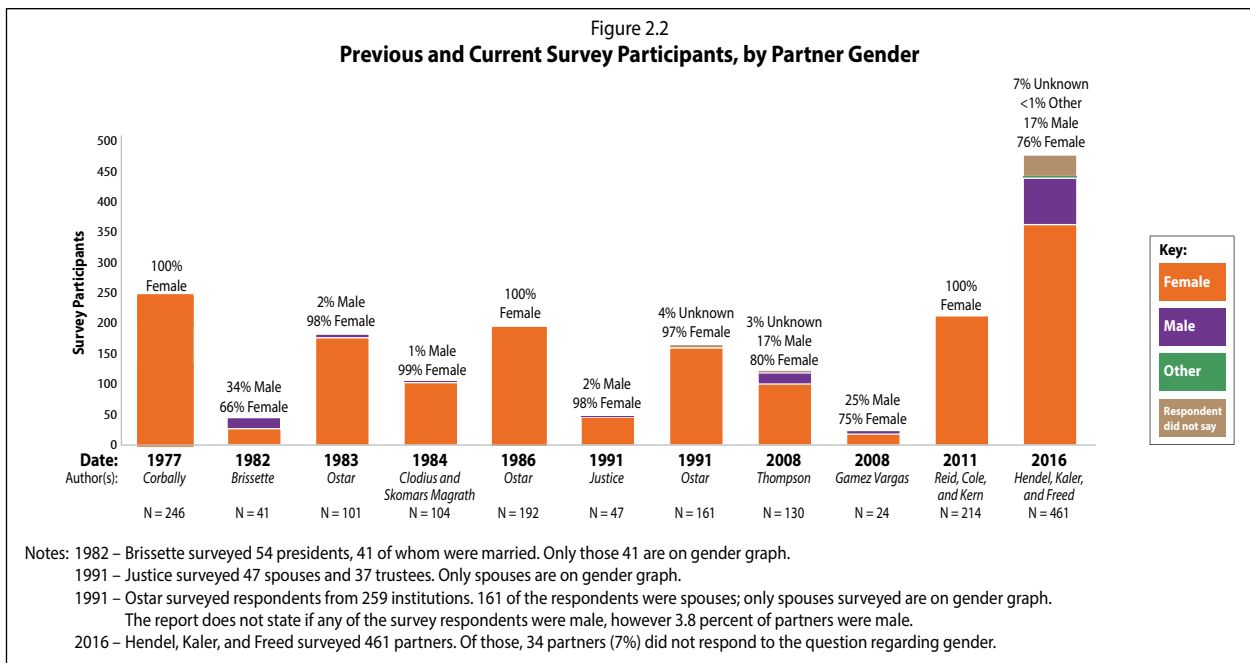
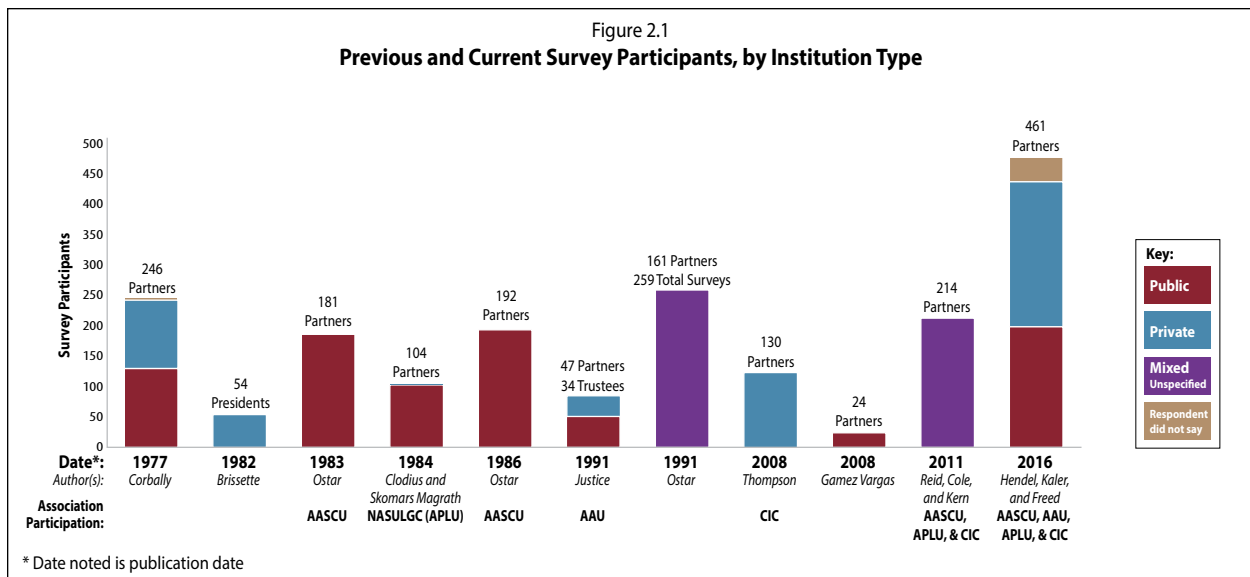
Three researchers with personal experience as presidential spouses and interest in the psychological experiences of women examined the perceptions of wives in the role (Reid, Cole, & Kern, 2011). They wondered, “How does a modern woman react to being defined by the role of wife?” (p. 548). With collaboration from NASULGC

(renamed APLU in 2009), AASCU, and CIC, they conducted focus groups and interviews. Surveys were completed by 214 wives. The researchers conducted cluster analysis of data on eight variables indicating levels of involvement (e.g. time spent in the role, amount of privacy, influence of spouse in the university and community, importance of the role), as well as measures of psychological well-being (e.g. satisfaction, feelings of mastery, locus of control, sense of self, and sense of privacy). This process yielded six clusters, or types, of wives.

The “Ordinary” wives group was the largest (N = 78), and comprised those closest to the mean on all variables; they reported satisfactions and dissatisfactions in the role in relatively comparable degrees. The “Resigned” (N = 13) was the smallest group, and contained wives who spent up to 70 percent of their time in the role and to an extent subordinated aspects of their own lives and identity to it. This group reported low levels of satisfaction and physical health, and regretted time away from family. The “Trapped” (N = 25) were younger and more conflicted about their identity in relation to the role and struggled with competing commitments in their own work and that of the partner’s institution. The “Supporters” (N = 34), like the “Resigned,” were older, but even more involved in the role. They tended to report greater well-being and derived particular satisfaction from being able to help their husbands in the role. “Adapters” (N = 34) were very involved in the role, had made it their own to the greatest degree, and had the most positive well-being and satisfaction in life. Although they reported the most challenge with privacy, they were “most content” with the role and proud of the talents they brought to it. Lastly, “Thrivers” (N = 30) were the youngest group. They spent less time in the role than other groups. Some worked outside the role and others did not, but overall they had adjusted well. They reported the importance of establishing their own identity, sense of control over their lives, and involvement in their husbands’ job change decisions.

Our Study in Context of Previous Research

Our discussion of previous research on partners suggests at least two ways in which our research differs from previous research. The first difference, noted in Figure 2.1, is that our research collected survey data from more partners in public and private institutions. The second difference, portrayed in Figure 2.2, is that our study is the first to include responses from a substantial number of males in the partner role.



CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Seeking to build upon and update prior research, we designed our study to help answer five questions:

1. What are the explicit and assumed behaviors, activities, and responsibilities of a presidential partner?
2. What are the varying levels of involvement in the partner role and associated levels of satisfaction in the role?
3. What relationships exist between the partner role and personal characteristics, such as gender, and institutional characteristics, such as public/private status?
4. How clearly defined is the partner role and how does perceived role clarity relate to partners' evaluation of the experience?
5. To what extent does an official presidential residence affect the partner role?

We aimed to collect descriptive data about the role from a large sample of partners and to capture some of the nature and flavor of participants' subjective reality and lived experience. Thus, we developed a survey comprising multiple-choice questions interspersed with questions inviting open-ended comment. This study did not directly replicate either the Corbally (1977) or the Clodius and Skomars Magrath (1984) study; with permission, however, we chose to incorporate some of the same or similar questions from the Clodius and Skomars Magrath study for comparison purposes.

Target Population

We sought a large, heterogeneous set of participants that would represent as closely as possible the population of individuals whose partners currently lead four-year, public and private (non-profit) institutions of higher education. Given the challenges of locating potential participants meeting the inclusion criteria, and seeking to minimize selection bias, we worked with four higher education associations that maintain active partner groups: AASCU, AAU, APLU, and CIC.

Our project timeline made it possible for Ms. Kaler and Dr. Freed to present study plans and elicit questions and ideas at the AAU Partners meeting in Washington, D.C., on October 20, 2015, and the APLU Presidents' and Chancellors' Spouse/Partners meeting in Indianapolis on November 16, 2015. Several current partners, affiliated with both public and private institutions, later participated in cognitive interviews to help us refine the questionnaire, and a small group then piloted the survey online. On December 23, 2015, our proposed study was approved to proceed by the University of Minnesota's Institutional Review Board.

In December 2015 and January 2016, the four associations, above, emailed their partner group members to give them advance notice of the survey and afford them the opportunity to opt out of having their names and email addresses shared with us for the study. A total of 12 partners opted out (three from AASCU, four from AAU, three from APLU, and two from CIC). The associations then sent us the remaining member names and emails. It should be noted that this method of obtaining names and email addresses of partners, while advantageous for ensuring participants met study inclusion criteria, most likely produced a list of possible survey respondents who were more involved in the partner role than were the total number of partners in the total set of institutions

that belonged to one or more of the associations. Table 3.1 indicates the number of institutions in each association together with the total number of partners for whom names and emails were provided by the respective associations. The table shows there was variation among associations as to the proportion of institutional members for whom partner contact information was available.

Data Collection

After removing duplicate emails (for partners whose presidents' institutions belonged to more than one of the associations), we sent a survey invitation to 852 individuals on January 20, 2016. Twelve emails bounced back as bad addresses, and the survey platform, Qualtrics, caught three additional duplicate addresses. The remaining 837 survey invitations left the Qualtrics server en route to their intended recipient mailboxes. It was not possible for Qualtrics to determine the degree to which any were blocked by recipient spam filters. Eleven people from our original email list later asked to be re-sent the survey, so we emailed the anonymous link to them individually while the survey was still active.

On February 20, 2016, following three reminders, the survey closed. By this point, 477 partners had opened the survey; 462 had answered at least some questions; and 440 had reached the end of the survey. One person responded to the survey's first

question that he or she had never been the partner of a president or chancellor, decreasing our total sample of qualifying potential participants to 836 and our total responses to 461.

Anonymity

Recognizing that partners are visible public figures, and appreciating the potential sensitivity of some questions, we employed the anonymization feature in the survey platform, such that all names and emails were stripped from responses. We had no access to any data in connection with any specific participant. We analyzed only aggregate data rather than reviewing individual surveys. Even so, we heard from several reluctant or unwilling potential participants that concern about privacy was a significant barrier to their participation. Such concerns are understandable, and the researchers are grateful to those who chose to participate.

Survey Design

Survey items were organized into four main sections: *Your Role as Spouse/Partner*, *The Official Residence of the President/Chancellor*, *The Institution/System*, and *About Yourself*. Participants were asked about employment status, compensation, clarity or ambiguity of the role, adjustment to the role, level of involvement in the role, specific activities, time allocation, satisfaction, and advice to new partners. They were asked

Table 3.1

Number of Institutions and Number of Partners Identified by Associations

| Association | Number of Institutional Members at Time of Survey | Number of Identified Partners Provided by Association | Percentage of Member Institutions for which Partner Contacts Were Provided [‡] |
|---|---|---|---|
| American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) | 413 | 279 | 66.6 |
| Association of American Universities (AAU) | 62 | 56 | 90.3 |
| Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) | 238 | 116 | 48.7 |
| Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) | 648 | 449 | 69.3 |

[‡] Percent refers to the percent as a fraction of total number of member institutions. Note: Not all presidents have partners/spouses.

about themselves, including employment on and off campus, demographics, and views on the role. They were asked if their campuses had official presidential residences; if so, they were asked about the house's age, size, function and level of use, and importance in the life of the institution. Participants were asked about their partners' institution type, degrees granted, size, setting, governance, region, higher education association membership, intercollegiate athletic association status, and about the presidents' experience and demographics. They were asked whether they believed the role is changing, and whether from their perspective institutional and societal expectations are different for men than for women in the role.

In addition to the sets of questions pertaining to participants' current partner role, those who had been a presidential partner at a previous institution were given the option of responding to a second set of questions pertaining to their most recent experience; 81 answered at least some of those questions. Additionally, five participants indicated they are no longer in the role and answered questions about their most immediate prior experience. These responses did not vary significantly from the answers of the partners currently in the role.

The survey contained a total of 269 possible response options, including many open-ended text boxes. There is considerable variation in response counts among questions because, aside from the forced-choice first question (confirming eligibility), respondents were able to skip questions. Also, some sets of questions were shown only to participants who met specific conditions. For example, respondents whose campuses had presidential residences were asked questions pertaining to an official residence; others were not. Only respondents who indicated that they were somewhat involved or very involved with their partners' institutions were asked more detailed questions about activities.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data was done concurrently.

Quantitative Data

The software package SPSS was used for the analysis of quantitative data. For each of the items on the survey, response frequencies and percentages were obtained. For questions that provided at least interval data, measures of central tendency (mean and median) and variability (standard deviations) were obtained. For certain sets of items, inferential statistics were calculated to examine relationships between variables and to compare the means for particular groups. The current study included responses from 77 males, which enabled us to do statistical comparisons between responses of males and females. The study included partners from 240 private institutions and 197 public institutions, which enabled us to do statistical comparisons by institutional control.

Given that the data set included enough males and females to warrant making comparisons, chi-square statistics were obtained for nominal data (e.g., gender differences in how being partner changed partners' employment), and independent samples *t*-tests or one-way Analysis of Variance were performed for interval level data (e.g., level of involvement on campus, role clarity, and overall satisfaction in the role). To analyze relationships between clarity and satisfaction, the seven items focused on role clarity were used to construct a role clarity scale. To analyze relationships between concerns and involvement, the 14 items relating to potential frustration in the role were combined into a concern/frustration scale.

Qualitative Data

We analyzed the qualitative data for responses to 26 open-ended questions on the survey. We coded responses to specific questions by placing similar responses in categories to quantify answers by theme. The number of total respondents for each question is noted in the figures. In cases where responses to a question included comments fitting multiple themes, each part was categorized accordingly. Thus, figures reporting frequencies sum to more than the total responses to the question.

To enable partner voices to emerge, we present specific comments, striving to quote in representative proportion to the frequency of types of comments shared. We corrected typographical errors where applicable. In a very few cases, we removed details that might have made it possible to identify the respondent.

Group Differences

The researchers conducted extensive analysis to identify group differences among respondents. Gender differences, some striking, appeared across numerous questions.

Aside from gender, few significant group differences emerged when other types of comparisons were made. For example, one of the very few differences between public and private institutions was that partners at private institutions believed they were more positively perceived by governing boards, whereas at public institutions, partners believed they were perceived more positively by alumni. The lack of other significant differences between partners at public and private institutions suggests that institutional type has little direct bearing on the partner role. Analysis by

institutional size, location, and other variables yielded few findings of significant difference.

We intended to portray responses of partners within and among the higher education associations that assisted us with this study, but analysis of partners' identification of their institution's association membership revealed a high degree of apparent uncertainty about organizations to which their institutions belonged. We surmised that this response error could have stemmed from unfamiliarity with association names, and perhaps confusion among like-sounding organizations, such as the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which was not a partner in this survey.

Occasionally, results presented in Chapters 4–13 highlight current findings alongside data from previous partner surveys (Corbally, 1977; Clodius & Skomars Magrath, 1984) discussed in Chapter 2. These earlier studies, while similar, had different types of samples and methods and thus should not be regarded as highly comparable to results of the present study.

CHAPTER 4

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTNERS, PRESIDENTS, AND INSTITUTIONS

“People filling the role are changing. They are more diverse with respect to gender, race, and sexual identity, and they are more likely to have careers of their own.”

– 2016 Survey Respondent

Chapter Overview

The 2016 survey began with questions about many aspects of the role and about the official residence, followed by demographic questions about the survey respondents’ institutions and the presidents, and then, finally, themselves. We begin our set of results chapters with a description of our respondents. This chapter details the partners’ genders, ages, educational attainment, and years in the role of presidential partner. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 contain partner responses to demographic questions. In the following sections we highlight the four characteristics included in those tables, including some characteristics of the survey participants’ partners (the presidents and chancellors, hereafter referred to as *presidents*), followed by a brief description of their institutions.

The most notable change from earlier surveys is the increase in males in the partner role.

Table 4.2

Race and Education of Survey Respondents, Overall and by Gender

| | Total | | Female | | Male | |
|------------------------|-------|------|--------|------|------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Race/Ethnicity | 425 | | 347 | | 77 | |
| American Indian | 2 | 0.5 | 2 | 0.6 | 0 | – |
| Black/African American | 25 | 5.9 | 23 | 6.6 | 2 | 2.6 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 12 | 2.8 | 10 | 2.9 | 2 | 2.6 |
| Hispanic | 8 | 1.9 | 7 | 2.0 | 1 | 1.3 |
| White | 371 | 87.3 | 299 | 86.2 | 72 | 93.5 |
| Mixed | 7 | 1.6 | 6 | 1.7 | 0 | — |
| Education | 431 | | 348 | | 76 | |
| High School Diploma | 1 | 0.2 | 1 | 0.3 | 0 | — |
| Some College | 20 | 4.6 | 16 | 4.6 | 4 | 5.3 |
| Associate’s Degree | 6 | 1.4 | 5 | 1.4 | 1 | 1.3 |
| Bachelor’s Degree | 86 | 20.0 | 77 | 22.1 | 8 | 10.5 |
| Some Graduate School | 37 | 8.6 | 31 | 8.9 | 6 | 7.9 |
| Master’s Degree | 157 | 36.4 | 134 | 38.5 | 19 | 25.0 |
| Ph.D., Law, Medical | 121 | 28.1 | 81 | 23.3 | 38 | 50.0 |
| Other Terminal Degree | 3 | 0.7 | 3 | 0.9 | 0 | — |

Table 4.1

Gender and Age of Survey Respondents

| | N | % | \bar{x} | SD |
|-------------|-----|------|-----------|------|
| Gender | 427 | | | |
| Female | 349 | 81.9 | | |
| Male | 77 | 17.8 | | |
| Transgender | 0 | — | | |
| Other | 1 | 0.2 | | |
| Age – All | 407 | | 58.8 | 7.62 |
| Female | 332 | | 57.9 | 7.50 |
| Male | 73 | | 62.8 | 7.01 |

Please note: In all tables, N = number, \bar{x} = mean, SD = standard deviation

More Males in the Role, Still a Distinct Minority

Respondents could proceed through the survey and were not required to answer all questions. While more than 450 participants answered almost all questions, only 427 stated their genders and only 407 stated their ages.

This was the first survey of presidential partners to include enough male partners to make statistically reliable comparisons by gender; those comparisons are based on the 426 survey respondents who stated they were male or female.

The Corbally (1977) survey included completed questionnaires from 246 women. The 1984 Survey of Spouses of Presidents/Chancellors (Clodius & Skomars Magrath, 1984) included 104 spouses, one of whom was male. The most notable change since the 1977 and 1984 studies is the increase in the number of males in the partner role.

In the present survey, 349 (82%) selected the gender option of female, 77 participants (18%) selected male, and one selected other, as shown in Figure 4.1. At public institutions, 20 percent of partners were male, compared to 16 percent of partners at private institutions. When asked the president's gender, 84 (19%) responded female, and one responded other, as shown in Table 4.3. The highest percentage of

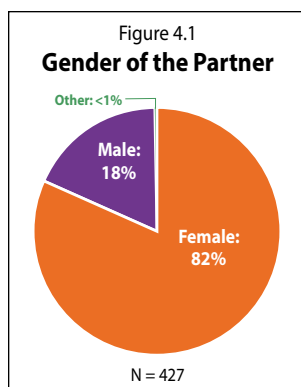


Table 4.3

Descriptive Characteristics of Presidents

| | N | % | \bar{x} | SD |
|---|-----|------|-----------|------|
| Gender | 431 | | | |
| Female | 84 | 19.5 | | |
| Male | 346 | 80.3 | | |
| Transgender | 0 | — | | |
| Other | 1 | 0.2 | | |
| Age | 405 | | 59.9 | 7.00 |
| Race/Ethnicity | 426 | | | |
| American Indian | 1 | 0.2 | | |
| Black/African American | 26 | 6.1 | | |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 10 | 2.4 | | |
| Hispanic | 9 | 2.1 | | |
| White | 375 | 88.0 | | |
| Mixed | 5 | 1.2 | | |
| Role | 435 | | | |
| Head of single campus | 268 | 61.6 | | |
| Head of single campus of multicampus system | 67 | 15.4 | | |
| Head of multicampus system not single campus | 22 | 5.1 | | |
| Head of single campus plus multicampus system | 78 | 17.9 | | |

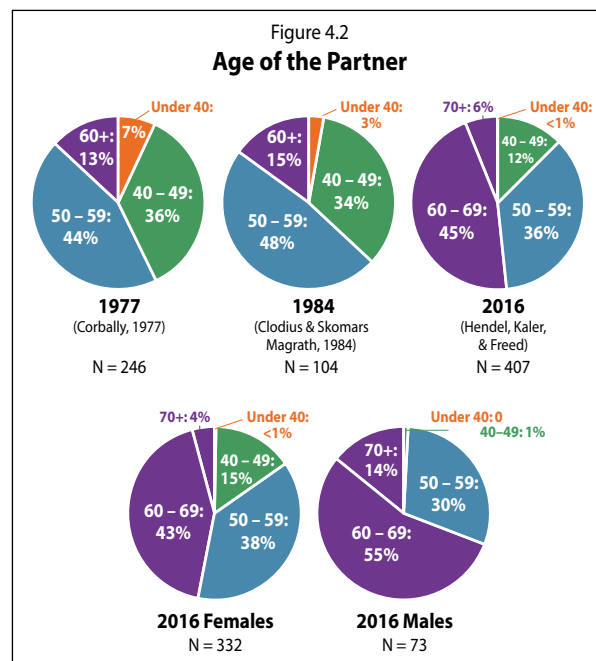
female presidents (39%) was reported in the Northeast, compared to the lowest (13%) in the South.

The American Council on Education (ACE) 2011 survey of college and university presidents reported 22 percent of presidents are female at bachelors-and-higher institutions; ACE also reported that 72 percent of female presidents are currently married, compared to 90 percent of male presidents (ACE, 2012).

In the present study, 12 partners (nine females and three males) reported that the president's gender was the same as their own.

Partners (and Presidents) Older than in the Past

The mean age of partners in our study was 58.8 years old. Figure 4.2 shows a higher percentage of partners 60 years of age or older than was reported in past partner surveys, which parallels an aging-presidents trend in higher education (Lederman, 2012). Besides having more partners at the higher end of the age range, our results show a smaller percentage of partners at the lowest category of the age range. The 1977 and 1984 studies asked respondents to indicate only the age category into which they fell, so no direct comparison for mean age is possible.

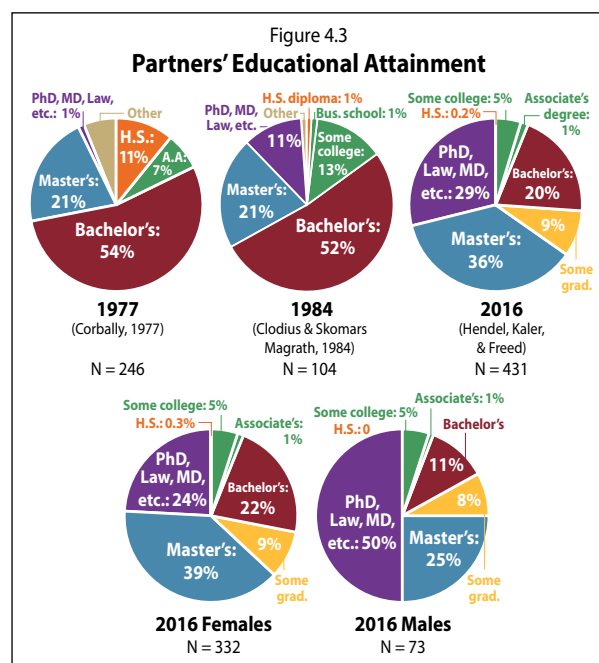


Although there was no statistically significant difference in the mean age of partners in public institutions (59.5) versus private institutions (58.2), presidents in public institutions were slightly, but significantly, older than those in private institutions (means = 61.1 and 58.9, respectively). An explanation for this difference may be that the private institutions in the survey are, on average, smaller than the public institutions. The mean age of presidents at institutions with student enrollments of fewer than 1,000 students (all private institutions) was 56.4. At institutions of 1,000 to 5,000 students, the mean age of presidents was 58.9. In each of the three categories of institutions over 5,000 students, the mean age of the presidents was 61.3.

The mean age of male partners (62.8) is significantly higher than that of female partners (57.9), however, the mean age of male presidents (60.0) is not significantly different from that of female presidents (59.6).

Partners More Educated than in the Past

Figure 4.3 shows that a majority of 2016 respondents have attended graduate school, a much higher level of educational attainment than that of



their counterparts in the past surveys by Corbally (1977) and Clodius and Skomars Magrath (1984). Our respondents commented

"As female spouses, we are now expected to be highly educated as well as filling the support role. In the past I don't believe the spouse's education level was as important."

"I have been successful in life without ever having earned a college degree. It has never been (or seldom has it been) a negative factor in my personal life, yet I feel that secret is best kept to myself (because I fear it could reflect negatively on my spouse, me and the university.)"

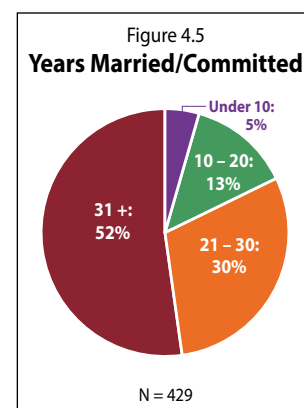
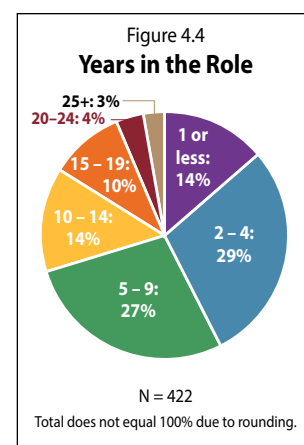
Race and Ethnicity

Eighty-seven percent of the partners surveyed are white, and partners indicated that 88 percent of the presidents are white (92% private, 82% public). In recent decades colleges and universities have made only modest progress in hiring racial minorities into top positions (ACE 2006, 2012; Azzis, 2014).

Years in Role and Years in Relationship

Figure 4.4 shows the number of years partners have been in the role. The median was 6 years.

Figure 4.5 shows the number of years the surveyed partners have been married, or in a committed relationship, with their presidents. The median number of years married/committed was just over 30 years.



Presidents' Roles

Most of the presidents (76%) are serving in their first presidencies.

A survey question asked which type of leadership position the president held. The most frequent response was head of a single campus, followed in order by head of a single campus plus a multi-campus system, head of a single campus of multi-campus system, and head of a multi-campus system. We used the four categories to see if partners differed in their overall evaluation of their partner role as a function of president's title. We found many similarities and no statistically significant differences.

Presidents' Institutions

We asked participants about the institutions their partners led. Table 4.4 summarizes descriptive characteristics of the institutions. Because the survey participant sample contacts came from partner groups of AASCU, AAU, APLU, and CIC, all of the respondents' partners led institutions that grant bachelor's degrees or higher; nearly half were universities granting doctorates.

A little over half of the institutions were not-for-profit private, and the rest were public. The institutions represent a wide range in terms of enrollment, location, and size of city or town. All 33 institutions represented with fewer than 1,000 students were private; all 26 of the institutions represented with more than 40,000 students were public.

In the upcoming chapters we describe many aspects of the role of presidential partner in higher education. We have analyzed the data to make comparisons based on the demographic information described in this chapter. It is noteworthy that we found very few differences in the lived experiences of the partners based on institutional control (public/private status) of the colleges and universities.

Table 4.4

Descriptive Characteristics of the Colleges/Universities of Survey Respondents' Partners

| | Total | | Control | | | |
|--|-------|-------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | N | % | Public | | Private | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Control | 437 | 100.0 | 197 | 45.1 | 240 | 54.9 |
| Highest Degree Offered | 437 | | 197 | | 240 | |
| Bachelor's | 51 | 11.7 | 4 | 2.0 | 47 | 19.6 |
| Master's | 145 | 33.2 | 52 | 26.4 | 93 | 38.8 |
| Professional | 24 | 5.5 | 11 | 5.6 | 13 | 5.4 |
| Doctorate | 211 | 49.4 | 129 | 65.5 | 87 | 36.3 |
| Other | 1 | <0.1 | 1 | 0.5 | 0 | — |
| Region | 437 | | 197 | | 240 | |
| Northeast | 84 | 19.2 | 33 | 16.8 | 51 | 21.3 |
| Midwest | 150 | 34.3 | 56 | 28.4 | 94 | 39.2 |
| South | 128 | 29.3 | 63 | 32.0 | 65 | 27.1 |
| West | 68 | 14.3 | 41 | 20.8 | 27 | 11.3 |
| Outside U.S. | 7 | 1.5 | 4 | 2.0 | 3 | 1.3 |
| Approximate Student Enrollment | 435 | | 196 | | 239 | |
| Under 1,000 | 33 | 7.6 | 0 | — | 33 | 13.8 |
| 1,000–5,000 | 201 | 46.2 | 30 | 15.3 | 171 | 71.6 |
| 5,001–20,000 | 121 | 27.8 | 88 | 44.9 | 33 | 13.8 |
| 20,001–40,000 | 54 | 12.4 | 52 | 26.5 | 2 | 0.8 |
| 40,001 or more | 26 | 6.0 | 26 | 13.3 | 0 | — |
| Age of Institution | 435 | | 196 | | 239 | |
| 1–50 years | 26 | 6.0 | 18 | 19.2 | 8 | 3.4 |
| 51–99 years | 90 | 20.7 | 43 | 21.9 | 47 | 19.7 |
| 100–150 years | 189 | 43.4 | 92 | 46.4 | 97 | 40.6 |
| 151 or more | 130 | 29.9 | 43 | 21.9 | 87 | 36.4 |
| Intercollegiate Athletics Association | 427 | | 191 | | 236 | |
| NCAA—Division I | 107 | 25.1 | 85 | 44.5 | 22 | 9.3 |
| NCAA—Division II | 90 | 21.1 | 53 | 27.8 | 37 | 15.7 |
| NCAA—Division III | 132 | 30.9 | 23 | 12.0 | 109 | 46.2 |
| NAIA | 62 | 14.5 | 14 | 7.3 | 48 | 20.3 |
| Other | 17 | 4.0 | 6 | 3.1 | 11 | 4.7 |
| Does not apply | 19 | 4.5 | 10 | 5.2 | 9 | 3.8 |
| Approximate Population of Town or City | 433 | | 194 | | 239 | |
| Under 5,000 | 20 | 4.6 | 5 | 2.6 | 15 | 6.3 |
| 5,001–25,000 | 100 | 23.1 | 38 | 19.6 | 62 | 25.9 |
| 25,001–100,000 | 136 | 31.4 | 67 | 34.5 | 69 | 28.9 |
| 100,001–500,000 | 98 | 22.6 | 47 | 24.2 | 51 | 21.3 |
| 500,000–1 million | 35 | 8.1 | 18 | 9.3 | 17 | 7.1 |
| More than 1 million | 44 | 10.2 | 19 | 9.8 | 25 | 10.5 |

CHAPTER 5

TRANSITION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PARTNER ROLE

"I just never anticipated that this move and our new roles would put me into such an identity crisis. I really overestimated my ability to adapt to the losses inherent in him taking this presidency (the move from our friends, from our house, the familiar places and activities of our old community, me closing my practice . . . our kids finishing college and not coming 'home'—to where?—anymore, even our dog dying!, as well as to adapt to all of the new people and experiences, while also feeling somewhat in the public eye. Although I have tried to clarify expectations for my role, they remain rather murky. And, even though that's stressful, I do know that it's a position of privilege and some influence, and I'm also grateful for the opportunity to be involved (to whatever extent) in such an important endeavor."

– 2016 Survey Respondent

The presidential partner has a highly visible role described by respondents as demanding and "24/7." There is typically no preparation prior to entering the role, no formal interview, no job description, and no statement of expectations.

Some spouses express feelings of loss, such as

"I had to give up everything I loved in order for my wife to take the role. We sold land and property, left the mountains and I was unemployed for months. After two years I'm still struggling."

Most partners' statements, however, express satisfaction and echo those who wrote

"It's tougher, more challenging, and more rewarding than I ever imagined it to be," and,

"It is a role I never thought I'd ever have. It has been a wonderful experience."

How does the transition occur?

Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the frequency and nature of partner involvement in the presidential search, challenges in the first year, changes in employment, and advice that respondents would give to institutions to make the partner transition easier.

The Presidential Search, Past

A 1915 article in *Educational Review* stated, "On at least two occasions that come to my knowledge, when the presidency of an institution hung in the balance, the Board of Trustees discuss [sic] very gravely the fine characteristics of two prospective presidents' wives. Understanding social functions . . . leave us in no doubt about the nature of a symphony in which two voices lead" (Morris, 1915, p. 465).

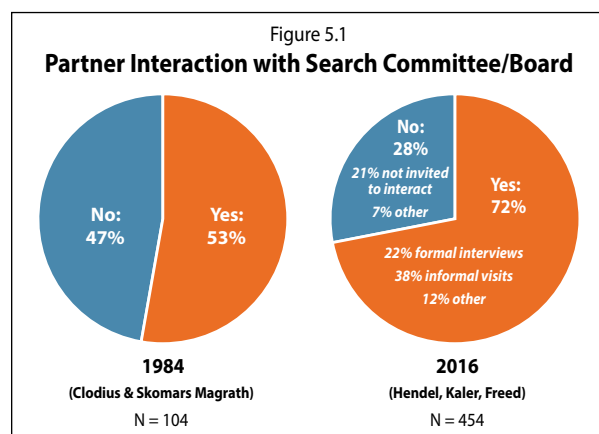
In 1944, Ray Lyman Wilbur, former president of Stanford University (1916–1943), wrote, "Something must be said, too, for the wife of a university president. She is called upon to play

silent partner, without remuneration but with plenty of hard work, in social and other lines. She can do much to make or break her husband. Selection committees now look her over when a new president is sought” (Eells, 1961, p. 401).

While a potential president’s wife was considered important in generations past, and committees might “look her over,” partners evidently were not part of the formal interview process. Our survey investigated the interview process with regard to the president’s partner today.

The Presidential Search, Present

Partners who responded to our survey were more likely to interact with search committee and/or board members during the interview process than were participants in the 1984 survey. As shown in Figure 5.1, 72 percent of partners interacted with the search committee or board in some way. There was a statistically significant gender difference: 76 percent for female partners versus 56 percent for male partners. In our current study, we found that 19 percent of partners at public institutions and 25 percent of partners at private institutions (22 percent overall) took part in formal interviews.

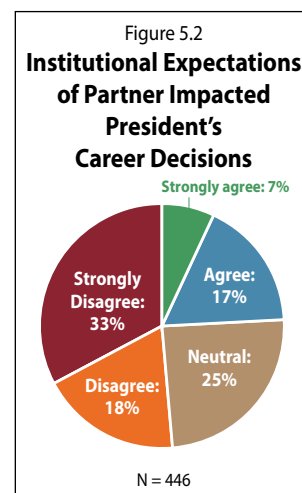


A respondent commented on the complications of interviewing partners:

“I suspect that, during the interview stage, most people shy away from personal conversations with the prospective president’s partner because they don’t want to venture into possibly illegal lines of questioning. Others, because of the unpaid nature of the role, likely don’t want to raise the specter of designing to benefit from skills that would, in the partner’s usual life, be paid. The result has been a sense of being known only as the partner, and not as an individual whose professional skills and experience are a significant part of my identity.”

Our survey asked partners if the president’s contract or employment letter mentioned the partner role. While only 17 percent of participants responded that it did (19 percent in private institutions and 14 percent in public institutions), it is clear that some presidents weigh the partner role when considering presidencies.

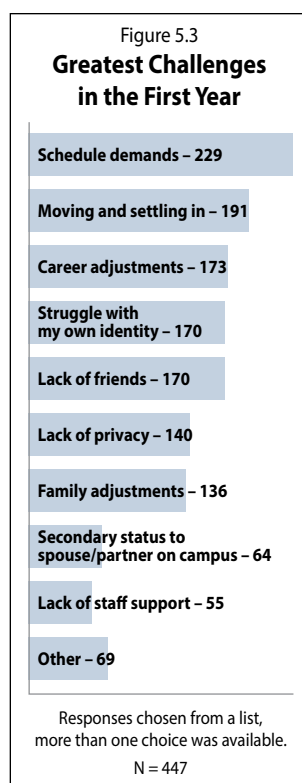
Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement, “I believe that on at least one occasion, an institution’s expectations regarding my role as spouse/partner have been a significant factor in my spouse/partner’s decision to accept, decline, or step down from a president/chancellor position.” As shown in Figure 5.2, almost one fourth of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. There was a statistically significant gender difference: females were more likely than males to agree with the statement.



Adjustment to the Role

The survey asked partners to identify their greatest challenges during the first year in the role, using the same list as used in 1984 with the addition of one response:

“Secondary status to spouse/partner on campus.” The results are shown in Figure 5.3. The frequency of challenges was quite similar to the 1984 survey; “schedule demands” was the top answer and “moving and settling in” the second answer in both surveys. The 1984 survey showed “family adjustments” as the third response, higher than in the current survey, perhaps because the partners then were younger and therefore had younger children.



While challenges have remained consistent over time, they do vary by gender and by change in

employment but not by institution type, as shown in Tables 5.1. Female partners more frequently reported challenges in all areas in the first year than males did, most significantly in “struggle with my own identity,” “family adjustments,” and “lack of staff support.”

Partners who made changes in their employment status more frequently reported challenges in “career adjustments” and “struggle with my own identity.”

First-year challenges are quite similar among partners in public and private institutions. The only notable difference was that partners in public institutions more frequently reported that “lack of privacy” was a challenge (40 percent for public and 26 percent for private), perhaps due to media scrutiny.

Challenges varied somewhat by length of marriage/committed relationship, as shown in Table 5.2. Partners who had been with the president for more than 30 years reported challenges less frequently in all areas except “schedule demands” than did their counterparts in relationships of shorter duration. Partners married/committed less than 10 years reported challenges with “career adjustments” and “secondary status to spouse/partner on campus” much more frequently than did those with relationships of longer duration.

Table 5.1

Challenges in the First Year, by Gender, Change in Employment, and Institution Type

| Challenges | Gender | | | | Employment Change | | | | Institution Type | | | |
|--|--------|------|------|------|-------------------|------|-----|------|------------------|------|---------|------|
| | Female | | Male | | Yes | | No | | Public | | Private | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| | 346 | | 77 | | 217 | | 214 | | 194 | | 240 | |
| Moving and settling in | 152 | 43.9 | 28 | 36.4 | 93 | 42.9 | 92 | 43.0 | 87 | 44.9 | 98 | 40.8 |
| Family adjustments | 115 | 33.2 | 14 | 18.2 | 63 | 29.0 | 68 | 31.8 | 54 | 27.8 | 77 | 32.1 |
| Career adjustments | 135 | 39.0 | 26 | 33.8 | 111 | 51.2 | 53 | 24.8 | 78 | 40.2 | 88 | 36.7 |
| Schedule demands | 188 | 54.3 | 30 | 39.0 | 111 | 51.2 | 111 | 51.9 | 107 | 55.2 | 116 | 48.3 |
| Struggle with my own identity | 150 | 43.4 | 14 | 18.2 | 104 | 47.9 | 62 | 29.0 | 72 | 37.1 | 95 | 30.6 |
| Lack of friends | 141 | 40.8 | 22 | 28.6 | 97 | 44.7 | 70 | 32.7 | 76 | 39.2 | 92 | 38.3 |
| Lack of staff support | 48 | 13.9 | 3 | 3.9 | 28 | 12.9 | 25 | 11.7 | 27 | 13.9 | 26 | 10.8 |
| Lack of privacy | 116 | 33.5 | 18 | 23.4 | 82 | 37.8 | 57 | 26.6 | 77 | 39.7 | 62 | 25.8 |
| Secondary status to spouse/partner on campus | 56 | 16.2 | 6 | 7.8 | 50 | 23.0 | 14 | 6.5 | 28 | 14.4 | 36 | 15.0 |

Table 5.2

Challenges in the First Year, by Length of Marriage/Committed Relationship

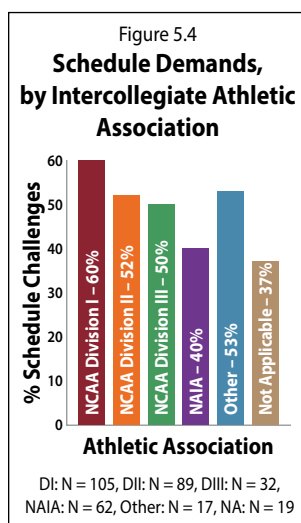
| Challenges | Length of Time Married/in a Committed Relationship with the President | | | | | | | |
|--|---|------|----------------|------|----------------|------|------------------|------|
| | Under 10 Years | | 10 to 20 Years | | 21 to 30 Years | | 31 or More Years | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| | 20 | | 55 | | 129 | | 222 | |
| Moving and settling in | 11 | 55.0 | 22 | 40.0 | 58 | 45.0 | 90 | 40.5 |
| Family adjustments | 8 | 40.0 | 26 | 47.3 | 49 | 38.0 | 47 | 21.2 |
| Career adjustments | 14 | 70.0 | 22 | 40.0 | 52 | 40.3 | 74 | 33.3 |
| Schedule demands | 12 | 60.0 | 27 | 49.1 | 60 | 46.5 | 120 | 54.1 |
| Struggle with my own identity | 10 | 50.0 | 27 | 49.1 | 54 | 41.9 | 74 | 33.3 |
| Lack of friends | 9 | 45.0 | 28 | 50.9 | 61 | 47.3 | 67 | 30.2 |
| Lack of staff support | 3 | 15.0 | 8 | 14.6 | 21 | 16.3 | 19 | 8.6 |
| Lack of privacy | 6 | 20.0 | 19 | 34.6 | 48 | 37.2 | 63 | 28.4 |
| Secondary status to spouse/partner on campus | 7 | 35.0 | 9 | 16.4 | 22 | 17.1 | 24 | 10.8 |

One partner noted

“My situation may be unique to others in the survey since we were married during his presidency. That has presented its own set of challenges and opportunities.”

While athletics plays a big part of campus life at some institutions and not at others, we wondered if the institution’s athletics association would lead to different challenges in the first year. We found that partners at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I schools more frequently reported challenges with schedule demands than did other partners, as shown in Figure 5.4. Partners in NCAA Division I schools also most frequently reported challenges with lack of privacy. Partners in National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) schools were the most likely to report challenges with identity struggles.

Differences in challenges also varied by existence of an official residence. Those differences are discussed in Chapter 10 “Official Residences.”



Partners Discuss Adjustment Challenges

In response to open-ended questions later in the survey, partners made comments that addressed the challenges of adjustment to the role.

Schedule Demands

“Lack of ability to truly get away and when we do get home from a trip, it immediately becomes busy on nights, weekends. Little true rest time is available and this starts to take a toll physically and mentally.”

“It is a 24/7 job for the person in it and it is very hard to carve out personal time.”

Moving and Settling in

“I have been struggling a lot with too much change too fast—moving . . . having to give up my job at another institution and realizing that I really don’t have the time or energy now to pick it up again here (and deal with the effort involved in once again restarting my career at another institution as a result of yet another move needed to allow my spouse to have this job). Frankly, I think I would be evaluated as being ‘depressed’ as a result of all this change, and that has really impacted my satisfaction in my current position.”

Career Adjustments

"This role has caused a tremendous drain on my professional life—firewalled from employment with university and/or any entity that does business with university has boxed me in—there's no role in state government or federal government that I can pursue."

Lack of Privacy

"It's a small town, we don't have much privacy. We've even heard some negative comments about our choice of restaurant on a 'date night'—too expensive!"

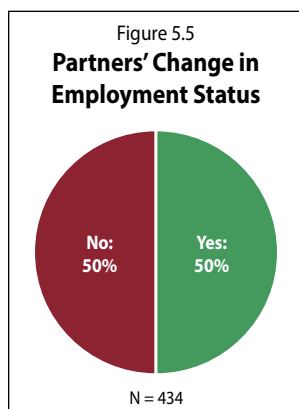
Lack of Friends

"People have been very kind here, and I have social engagements and people I like to hang out with, but they aren't friends in the truest sense of the word."

Career Changes

We asked spouses, "As a result of your spouse/partner becoming a president/chancellor, did you choose to make any change in your employment status?" Figure 5.5 indicates an even split between "yes" and "no" answers. Of those whose employment changed, results in Figure 5.6 show that most of those partners (75%) are now unemployed. Some went from full-time to part-time work, and a very few increased their employment.

We also found a statistically significant gender difference: More than half the females (53%) but only one-third of the males (34%) reported that their employment changed as a result of their spouse/partner becoming president. Gender differences



vis-à-vis changes in employment are discussed more fully in Chapter 6 "The Partner Role."

We wondered about partners, both males and females, who had gone from part-time or full-time work to being unemployed outside the partner role. Many wrote of satisfaction:

"It's the best job I've never gotten paid for."

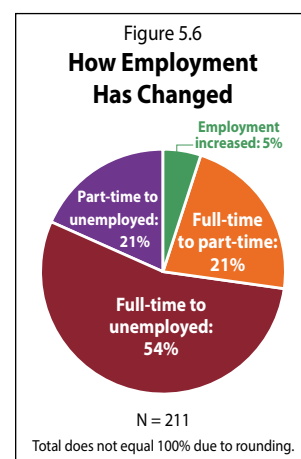
While others wrote about missing their careers:

"I had to leave a good paying job in another community and was unable to find a comparable position in this community. Having some retirement benefits or frankly benefits of any kind would have been nice."

"I have found the spouse role to be very stressful, mostly because the demands of my husband's job are such that it has been impossible for me to pursue my own professional and personal goals in the way I had hoped to."

One partner noted

"It is expected that male partners will work. It is questioned when female partners work."



Half of surveyed partners changed employment status as a result of the role. Female partners changed employment significantly more than male partners.

Partners' Advice for Institutions

Respondents were asked the open-ended question, "What could the institution have done to make the transition into the role of spouse/partner of the president/chancellor easier for you?" A total of 317 partners made comments. The responses were categorized and are listed in order of frequency in Figure 5.7. Partners' quotes that represent the six most frequently mentioned categories are presented below.

Nothing

More than a third of the respondents said they had no advice:

"Nothing. They were very supportive."

"My transition issues were ones I had to work through by and for myself."

"I think it's just a difficult transition. I'm not sure if anything else could have or needed to be done by them."

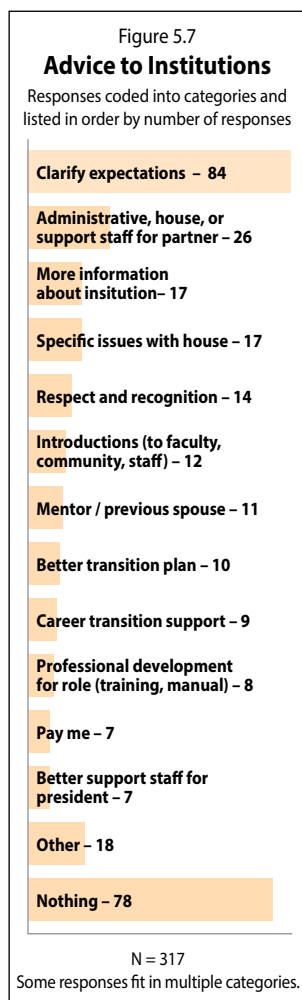
Clarify Expectations

Of those who responded with suggestions, the most common theme was that institutions should clarify expectations. Numerous comments stated this in different ways:

"Clearly outlined expectations would help."

"Provide me with guidelines of their expectations."

"Outlined expectations, shared activities the former president's spouse was involved in and then allowed me to chose how/if I would continue in that role."



"Acknowledge that the spouse does have a role and attempt to identify the ways in which he/she can be included. Communicate with the spouse to determine how they perceive their role and ways in which he/she will be supported in the role."

The most common theme was that institutions should clarify expectations.

"Have a more clearly articulated expectation for the role of presidential spouse."

Support Staff

Regarding the need for support staff, one partner wrote of needing an

"Advancement Officer assigned to work with me before and during events, providing background information and connections to board members and donors."

Another advised the institution should have

"Staff support: administrative support, development orientation to university community, notes from predecessor about their role/responsibilities, a 'handler' from development to help navigate events."

A partner cautioned institutions not to make assumptions:

"Instead of assuming I wanted the same help as the prior spouse/partner, it would have been helpful to ask me about my needs. Actually it would be helpful to do this upon starting but again a year later. It takes that long to understand the role and responsibilities."

More Information about the Institution

Suggestions regarding more information about the institution ranged from

"Some kind of manual highlighting the previous first lady's duties, event responsibilities, and explanation of the major university boards"

and

"Create a photo directory of key people I should be interacting with"

to

"At least given me a campus tour."

Specific Issues with the House

Several partners commented that the official residences were not be ready on their arrival, and expressed related frustrations:

“The facilities people who handle the president’s home could have asked my opinion about various decorating and purchasing decisions. Instead they made decisions.”

Respect and Recognition

In writing about the need for respect and recognition, a partner wrote about being in a role rather than a job:

“[They could have] given me a paid position so that I had responsibilities to fulfill and by extension the authority to act in an administrative capacity and demand that things be done—I have no perceived authority here. The expectations of staff toward me also needed to be made clear to the staff, who treat me like fluff and don’t respect the position because I have no authority, and I mean with everything from getting another recycling garbage can to choosing appropriate food for receptions . . . the hot water disappears for a week or the roof leaks or thousands of ants invade the house. Very frustrating to have to call the Chancellor and have him call someone to tell him to act.”

A partner wrote about experience in the role at a previous institution:

“Exit interview would have been helpful and appreciated. Role as former president and First Lady recognized and honored would be appropriate and appreciated. Very displeased with this board and the transition leaving the university.”

Summarizing

Some respondents proposed the specific types of clarity that they desired:

“There is so much that is ‘unsaid’ about this role—by necessity, I guess, because it is unpaid, and yet there are expectations that you will be there supporting your spouse as much as possible. . . . If institutions want modern spouses to be able to do this successfully, to reduce the stress, they should (1) clearly list the expectations in the role, (2) provide resources and staff support, (3) be sure that the spouse is always kept in the loop about plans, changes of plans, etc., rather than ‘forgotten’ in the crush of events and yet expected to somehow always be there, being supportive and positive, even though it’s clear that the system has neglected you, your ‘role,’ and your contributions (current and past).”

While only eight percent of partners said their institutions had specific policies related to the responsibilities of the partner and only a quarter said responsibilities were clarified prior to taking the role (see Chapter 7 “Role Clarity”), many partners seemed to adjust over time:

“At the outset, it would have been helpful to have a discussion (with knowledgeable university staff) about what the expectations were for me, in a spouse’s role. Perhaps knowing what prior spouses’ roles were, what roles and attitudes other spouses had and were found to have gone over better with the university staff, etc. Over time of course, you tend to learn about what works, at least for yourself.”

“Choice” seems to be what some prescribe as the key to a successful transition to the role:

“I love what I do. The joy is that I am able to choose my work. This is a choice.”

CHAPTER 6: THE PARTNER ROLE

“It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role . . . it is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves.”

– Park (1950, p. 249)

The above quote serves as a starting point for our examination of the role of presidential partner. Findings concerning ambiguity inherent in the presidential partner role, as well as direct quotes from respondents, suggest there is no single best way to be a presidential partner. When a person assumes the role, he or she typically makes choices, negotiates responsibilities, and is subject to myriad decisions, large and small, made by others. People around the partner, too, must make sense of where the partner fits in the institutional and community context in which the partner role is enacted.

Chapter Overview

We begin this chapter by briefly situating our study of presidential partners in the theoretical and empirical literature in the field of psychology. We then illustrate how in one way or another, the role takes shape for partners. We present results for the total group of partner respondents, and we point to gender differences in how the role of partner is enacted and how partners believe they are viewed by various constituencies. This chapter presents findings on the following topics

- titles preferred by partners
- specific partner responsibilities
- other employment
- benefits associated with the role
- levels of partner involvement
- partners’ participation in particular activities and their enjoyment of those activities

- partners’ assessment of how their involvement benefits the president
- compensation for the partner role
- how partners are featured in institutional public relations,
- how partners believe they are perceived by others

Situating the Partner Role in the Psychological Literature

We approached our research on the experiences of partners of university presidents in the context of the psychological theory and research related to social norms, identity, and roles. The partner role was our basis for describing partner behaviors that are considered to be typical, functional, desirable, appropriate, or acceptable for a person who is the partner of a college or university president. As in most roles assumed in life by individuals, the overall meaning of a particular role changes over time as a result of complex changes in societies. Expectations for someone in the role also change over time, as do the actual behaviors of individuals in those roles.

Social norms (i.e., defined acceptable behavior) are of two types: those that all members of a group are expected to obey and those that vary across groups and settings. In contrast to the more clearly articulated social norms, roles refer to shared expectations about how individuals in a particular group should behave. As Aronson, Wilson, and Akert wrote, “Most groups have a number of well-defined social roles, which are shared

expectations in a group about how particular individuals are expected to behave. Whereas norms specify how all group members should act, roles specify how people in particular groups should behave. . . . Like social norms, roles can be very helpful because, people know what to expect from each other. When members of a group follow a set of clearly defined roles, they tend to be satisfied and perform well” (2013, p. 239).

In his book *Childhood and Society*, Erikson (1963) proposed an eight-stage model of human development, one stage of which is termed “Identity versus Role Confusion” and presents the fundamental question to be resolved during adolescence. Identity is defined as “our sense of who we are as well as our life goals or priorities” (Lilienfeld, Lynn, Namy, & Woolf, 2014, p. 399).

Whereas identity carries with it a more internal perspective, role refers more to the external manifestation of an identity at different points in the life cycle. Although Erikson theorized that questions about identity are typically addressed during adolescence, it is also the case that issues of “identity versus role confusion” emerge again when an individual takes on a new role. Such is the case when a woman or man takes on the role of presidential partner. Quotes from partners throughout this report regarding the ambiguity of the role of presidential partner and associated issues point to how becoming a presidential partner affects the identities of presidential partners.

In his classic book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) commented as follows: “A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated. Performed with ease or clumsiness, awareness or not, guile or good faith, it is none the less something that must be enacted and portrayed, something that must be realized” (p. 75).

Research has examined roles in many contexts, including gender and race. Later in his career, Goffman (1976) examined gender differences in the content of advertisements. In work that predated Goffman’s 1959 book, Park (1950) examined roles in the context of race and culture

and provided an especially illuminating commentary about roles. We repeat here the quote used to introduce this chapter: “It is probably no mere historical accident that the word *person*, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role . . . it is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves” (p. 249).

There is extensive literature on gender roles. One peer-reviewed research journal, *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, published by Springer, is devoted entirely to research articles on gender issues in a wide variety of contexts including employment, work environments, and family life. In their discussion of gender roles, Aronson, Wilson, and Akert (2013) noted that: “All societies, for example, have expectations about how people who occupy the roles of women and men should behave. In many countries, women are expected to assume the role of wife and mother and have limited opportunities to pursue other careers. . . . Conflict can result, however, when expectations change for some roles but not for others assumed by the same person” (p. 240).

The concept of *performativity* helps to situate the presidential partner role in the context of changing ideas, expressions, and enactments of gender in contemporary life. This is particularly timely, given the growing numbers of males in the role.

Gender performativity theory postulates that gender is neither innate nor essentialist, but is rather socially constructed and enacted (Butler, 1988, 1990; Bell, 1999; Brady & Shirato, 2012). Building on the notion that human beings come to embody external cultural expectations (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), performativity connotes role-playing in connection with gender. Performativity and related theories have been applied to gender difference for various groups in higher education: faculty (Lester, 2008; Wallace & Wallin, 2015), administrators (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Wallace, 2002), fundraisers (Titus-Becker, 2007), women’s college community members (Hart & Lester, 2011).

Performativity helps higher education scholars shed light on gender-based norms, expectations, and assumptions. In colleges and universities, gender can be enacted, for example, by female faculty who do more people-centered work, nurture others, and promote relationships in academic departments (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Lester, 2008; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Using these and other lenses, feminist theory can help scholars identify and understand gendered aspects of the postsecondary field (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011).

Words Used to Refer to Partner

In a role sometimes characterized by ambiguity, the initial, seemingly straightforward, question of how to be addressed can give pause to both the introducer and the introduced. As the results displayed in Figure 6.1 show, the largest proportion, 41 percent, prefer to be introduced as the partner/spouse of the president. Slightly more than one-third (34 percent)

prefer to be referred to by only their name, without the moniker of spouse/partner.

First Lady is preferred by 13 percent of the total set of partners in our study; First Gentleman is preferred by one percent of the respondents;

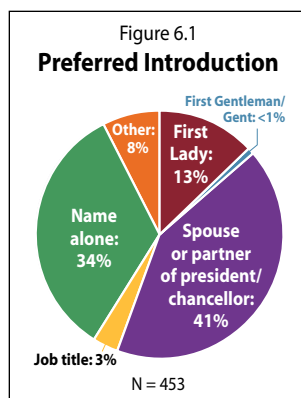
First Lady is preferred by 16 percent of females and First Gentleman is preferred by three percent of males. Of the 38 who selected “other,” many specified a combination of those on the list (i.e., name plus spouse) or job title, with 12 specifying that their professional title be included (e.g. doctor or professor). Several noted more specific titles. “First Dude” was listed by two partners.

Other responses included

“Mother of the campus”

“First Husband”

“The Ambassador”



“I call myself the most cost effective human resource on campus.”

“I am uncomfortable with First Lady but accept that title.”

There were variations by location of the institution: Introduction as “First Lady” or “First Gentleman” was preferred by a high of 20 percent of respondents whose partners led institutions in the southern U.S., and a low of seven percent of respondents in the northeastern U.S. (In the Midwest, 12% preferred First Lady/Gentleman; in the West 16% did. None of the seven respondents outside the U.S. preferred to be introduced as “First Lady” or “First Gentleman.”)

Perhaps, how partners wish to be introduced gives a clue to the salience of the partner role in their lives.

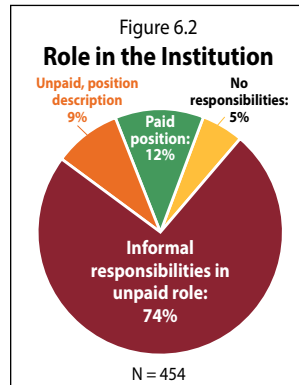
We compared levels of involvement (described later in this chapter) in the role for those who said “First Lady” with those who said “spouse/partner” and those who said “by name only.” We found a statistically significant difference (mean involvement scores of 4.20, 3.37, and 3.49, respectively) such that those who preferred “First Lady” were among the most heavily involved in the role. Partners who preferred the term “First Lady” also reported the highest level of overall satisfaction with the role (a mean of 5.6, compared to 5.3 for “spouse/partner” and 5.4 for “by name only”), but these differences were not statistically significant.

“First Lady” is the preferred introduction for 16 percent of the females in the study.

Specific Partner Responsibilities

One of the many complex issues in examining the role of presidential partner is the lack of definitions of what the role entails. Results portrayed in Figure 6.2 show that nearly three quarters of partners indicated they carry out informal responsibilities in an unpaid role. Nine percent have a job description for an unpaid role. Twelve percent are paid for their work in the role, and five percent have no responsibilities in connection with the partner role. The fact that so many partners have “informal responsibilities in an unpaid role” contributes to the ambiguity inherent in the role; as comments from presidential partners suggest, however, the lack of clarity “up front” enables some partners to shape their roles and tailor their activities to fit their interests.

Further analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between gender and position status. As the results in Figure 6.3 indicate, males more frequently than females indicated they have no responsibilities in the role (14 percent versus three percent, respectively). Whereas 13 percent of females had a paid position, eight percent of males reported that they had a paid position in their role as partner. Females more frequently than males reported that they assume informal responsibilities



in an unpaid role (75 percent versus 68 percent, respectively).

Employment Outside the Role

Understanding the life of a partner necessitates considering the partner role as one of other possible roles assumed by the partner, especially employment outside the role. The results in Figure 6.4 indicate the percentages of partners in several “employment” categories. More than half of the partners were not employed outside the role; 22 percent were employed full time. The results in Figure 6.4 indicate the percentages of partners in several “employment” categories. More than half of the partners were not employed outside the role; 22 percent were employed full time.

We found a large and statistically significant association between gender and employment, as shown in Figure 6.5 and Table 6.1.

Whereas 61 percent of females were not employed outside the role, 22 percent of males were not employed outside the role. In Chapter 8 “Satisfaction in the Role” we discuss differences in levels of satisfaction in the partner role as a function of their other employment.

Significantly more females changed employment as a result of assuming the presidential partner role. As mentioned in Chapter 5 “Transitioning into the Presidential Partner Role,” half of partners reported changing employment as a result of their

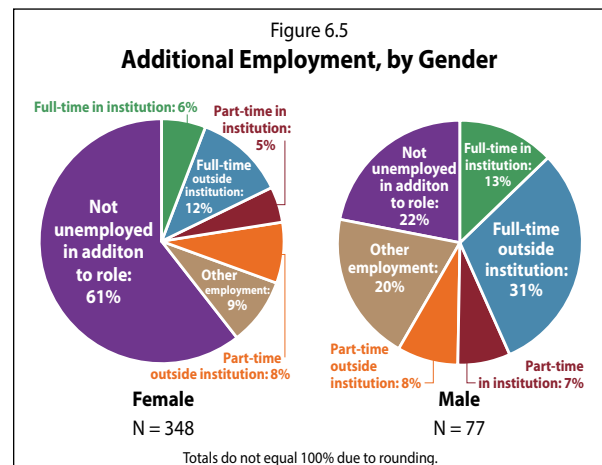
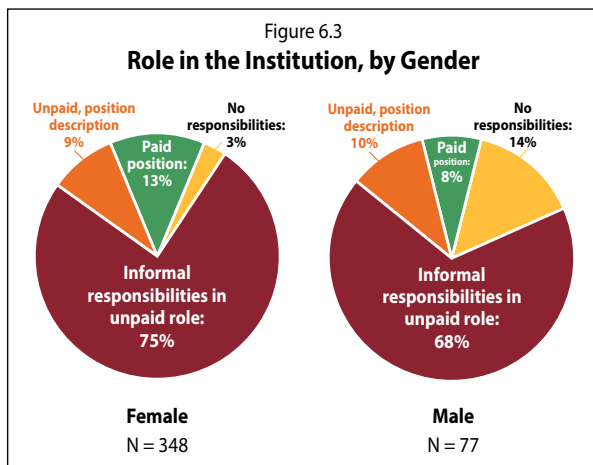
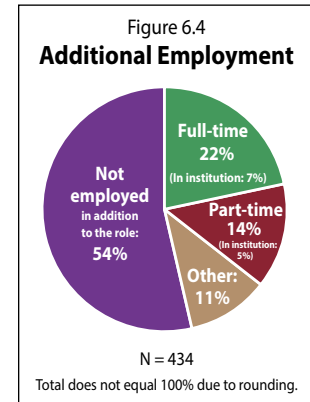


Table 6.1

Employment Status of Partners, by Gender

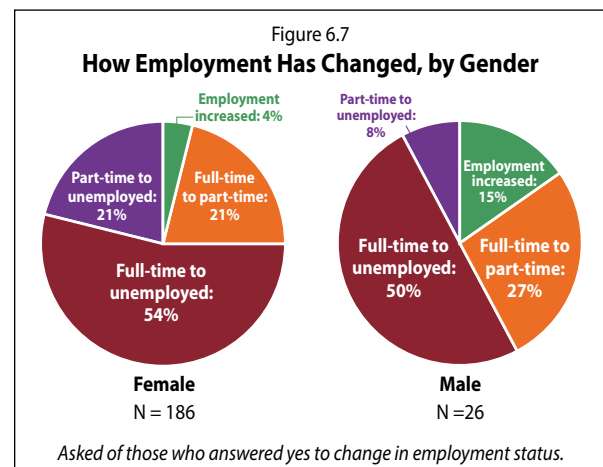
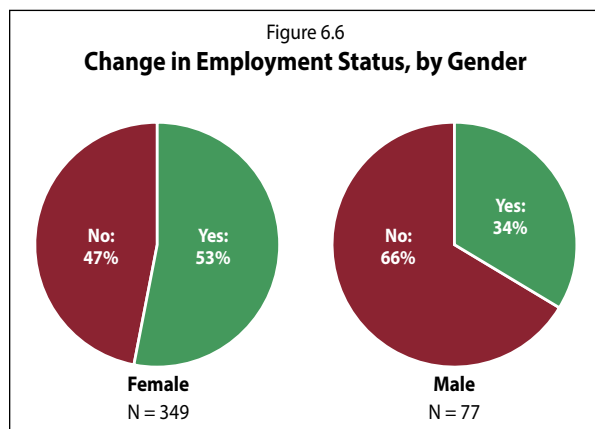
| Employment Status | Response, by Gender | | | | Chi-square |
|--|---------------------|------|------|------|----------------|
| | Female | | Male | | |
| | N | % | N | % | |
| Status | 348 | | 77 | | 45.37*** (5df) |
| Not employed in addition to partner role | 212 | 60.9 | 17 | 22.1 | |
| Paid full-time position elsewhere in institution | 20 | 5.7 | 10 | 13.0 | |
| Paid part-time position elsewhere in institution | 17 | 4.9 | 5 | 6.5 | |
| Paid full-time position outside institution | 40 | 11.5 | 24 | 31.2 | |
| Paid part-time position outside institution | 28 | 8.0 | 6 | 7.8 | |
| Other employment | 31 | 8.9 | 15 | 19.5 | |
| Change in Employment since Partner Role | 212 | | 77 | | 9.62** (1df) |
| Yes | 186 | 53.3 | 26 | 33.8 | |
| No | 163 | 46.7 | 51 | 66.2 | |
| Type of Change since Partner Role | 181 | | 26 | | 8.04*(3df) |
| Employment increased | 7 | 3.9 | 4 | 15.4 | |
| Full-time to part-time | 38 | 21.1 | 7 | 26.9 | |
| Full-time to unemployed | 99 | 54.4 | 13 | 50.0 | |
| Part-time to unemployed | 37 | 20.6 | 2 | 7.7 | |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

partner taking on the presidency. For females, 53 percent changed employment, compared with 34 percent of males, as shown in Figure 6.6. Of those changing employment, more females became unemployed than males (75% compared with 58%) and more males increased employment than females (15% compared with 4%), as shown in Figure 6.7. Given these gender differences in other employment, the issue of compensation for the partner role becomes more salient for females

in the partner role. A partner commented on leaving paid employment:

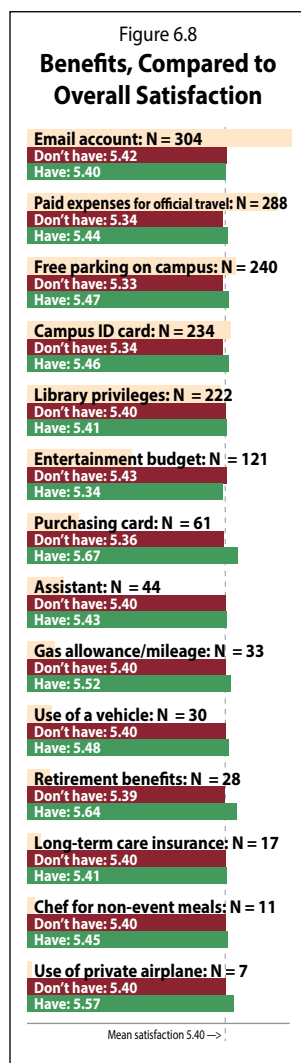
"I personally am enjoying it very much because I'm respected and appreciated by more people than ever. Ironically, I can help and influence more people in this unpaid capacity than I could in my previous paid employment. This job/role has psychic income, you might say."



Associated Benefits

In the literature on employee compensation, it is typical to consider compensation in terms of a basic salary as well as to consider the monetary value of benefits associated with the employment. Here we describe the associated benefits of being a presidential partner, but we do not assign specific monetary value to any of them.

Figure 6.8 shows the number of partners who reported having a benefit, and overall satisfaction in the role comparing those partners who do have the benefit with those who do not. The most common benefits to accompany the role (paid or unpaid) were email account, paid expenses for official travel, free campus parking, campus ID card, and library privileges; relatively few reported having retirement benefits or dedicated staff. We examined differences between those who had a particular benefit and their overall satisfaction with the partner role. While satisfaction was higher with almost all benefits, differences between those who had and did not have a particular benefit were small; for those items for which a test of statistical significance was possible, none of the comparisons yielded statistically significant differences.



Involvement in Partner Role

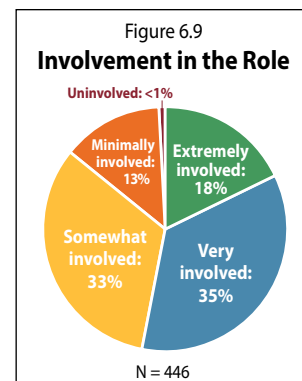
The survey asked partners to give an overall estimate of their involvement as a presidential partner: “To what extent are you involved in campus/institution life, participating in various activities in your capacity as spouse/partner of the president chancellor?” Five responses were possible: uninvolved (spending virtually no time in the role), minimally involved (spending a very small amount of time in the role), somewhat involved (spending a moderate amount of time in the role), very involved (spending a considerable amount of time in the role), and extremely involved (spending an immense amount of time in the role). Responses, portrayed in Figure 6.9, indicate that a large majority (86%) were somewhat, very or extremely involved; another 13 percent indicated they were minimally involved and less than one percent indicated they were uninvolved.

A list of nine possible reasons for the 26 individuals who said they were uninvolved or minimally involved (one of which was “other”) indicated the following frequencies:

“career demands” (N = 19), “personal preference for little visibility” (N = 17), “would not be helpful for me to be involved” (N = 4), “partner prefers that I not be involved” (N = 3), “personal pursuits” (N = 1), and “other” (N = 12). No partners selected “mostly negative experiences in previous institution” or “role complicates my relationship with my partner.”

For some partners, career demands leave very little time for the partner role. Partners commented:

“As a presidential spouse with a full-time job, I have chosen to develop a life that is separate from his university where I am recognized for my talents and skills.”



“My students and faculty colleagues see me as a faculty member, not as a presidential spouse, although trustees and alumni may see me otherwise. My contact with these groups is minor, however, so it does not hinder my career activities.”

Some partners have a personal preference to not be very involved.

“I spend my time volunteering in the community.”

There was a statistically significant gender difference in involvement as shown in Figure 6.10 and detailed in Table 6.2. The gender differences in level of involvement appear to be related to gender differences in whether or not they are employed elsewhere and the nature of their partner positions status within the institution.

The typical male was somewhat involved, and the typical female was more than somewhat

involved. The survey specified somewhat involved as “spending a moderate amount of time in the role.” We wondered how male and female partners defined “a moderate amount of time.” Another survey question asked, “Please estimate how many hours each week you give to the institution and its constituencies in your role as spouse/partner.” We compared hours spent per week by both females and males who reported being somewhat involved. Figure 6.11 shows that even by the same reported level of involvement, females spent more time in the role.

We compared mean involvement levels by partner demographic data detailed in Chapter 4 “Characteristics of Partners, Presidents, and Institutions.” No other factor was related to as much variation in involvement as was gender, as shown in Figure 6.12.

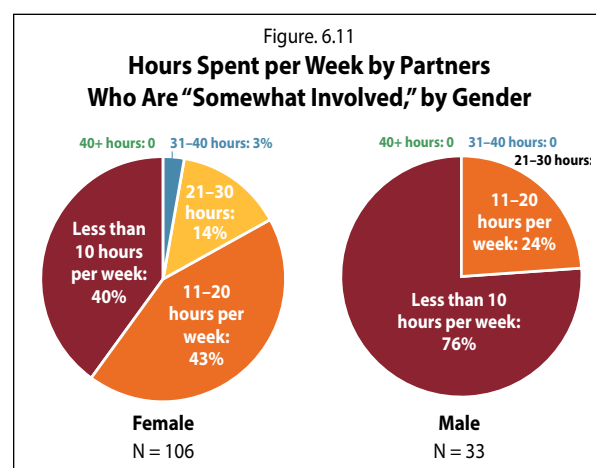
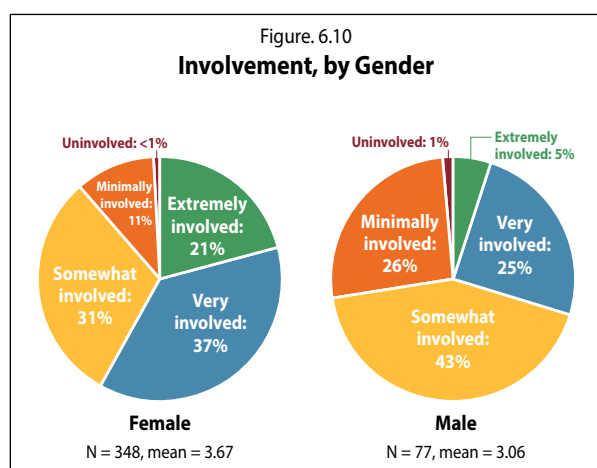


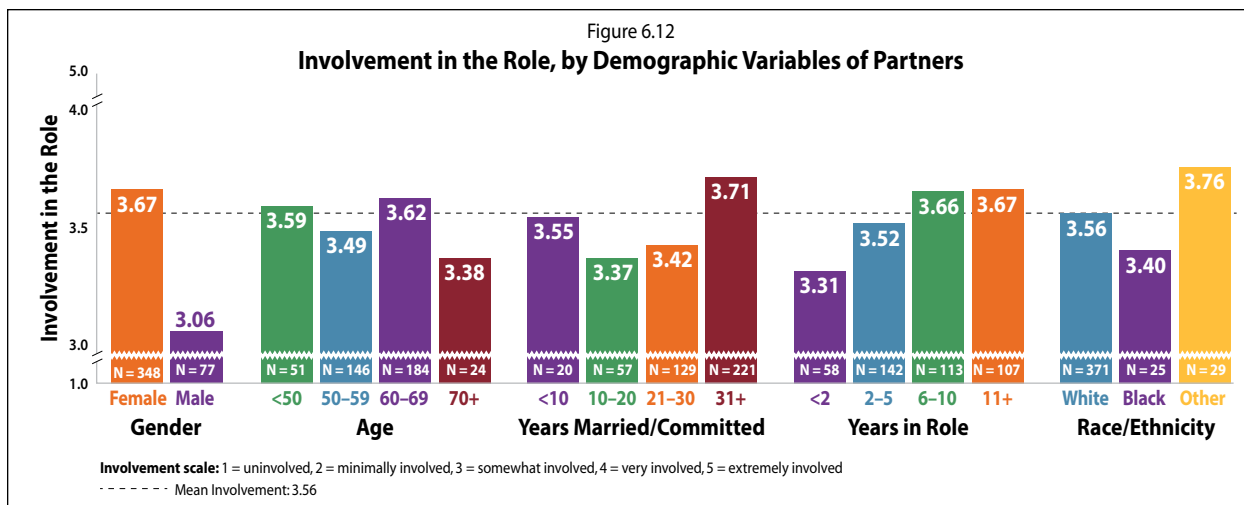
Table 6.2

Level of Involvement in the Role of Partner, by Gender

| Level of Involvement ‡ | Gender | | | | | | | | t (1,422) |
|------------------------|--------|------|-----------|------|------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| | Female | | | | Male | | | | |
| | N | % | \bar{x} | SD | N | % | \bar{x} | SD | |
| Level of Involvement ‡ | 347 | | 3.67 | 0.94 | 77 | | 3.06 | 0.88 | 5.19*** |
| Uninvolved | 2 | 0.6 | | | 1 | 1.3 | | | |
| Minimally involved | 37 | 10.7 | | | 20 | 26.0 | | | |
| Somewhat involved | 106 | 30.5 | | | 33 | 42.9 | | | |
| Very involved | 129 | 37.2 | | | 19 | 24.7 | | | |
| Extremely involved | 73 | 21.0 | | | 4 | 5.2 | | | |

[‡] Responses were coded on the following five-point scale: 1=uninvolved (spending virtually no time in the role), 2=minimally involved (spending a very small amount of time in the role), 3=somewhat involved (spending a moderate amount of time in the role), 4=very involved (spending a considerable amount of time in the role), and 5=extremely involved (spending an immense amount of time in the role).

*** $p < .001$



Mean involvement for male partners under 50 and ages 50–59 was functionally the same (3.00 and 3.05); likewise for female partners (3.60 and 3.57). Female partner ages 60–69 had the highest overall mean at 3.76, while male partners over 70 had the highest mean for males at 3.10.

Partners married, or in a committed relationship, for more than 30 years were the most involved. Partner involvement increased as years in the role increased.

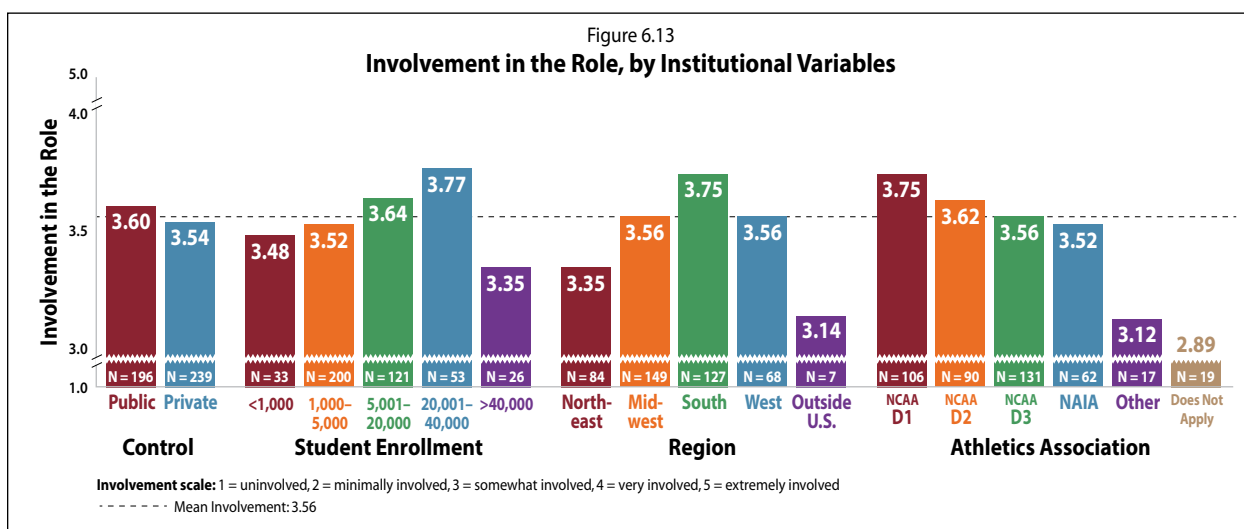
There were not enough partners in the American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Mixed race/ethnicity categories to make separate comparisons, so those categories were combined as “Other.” The combined category had a higher mean involvement than White or Black.

We also compared partner involvement by characteristics of institutions as shown in Figure 6.13. Mean involvement was not significantly different for public and private institutions. For public institutions the mean was 3.60 (3.03 for males and 3.73 for females); for private institutions it was 3.54 (3.11 for males and 3.63 for females).

By institution size, involvement means were highest for institutions with student enrollment between 20,000 and 40,000.

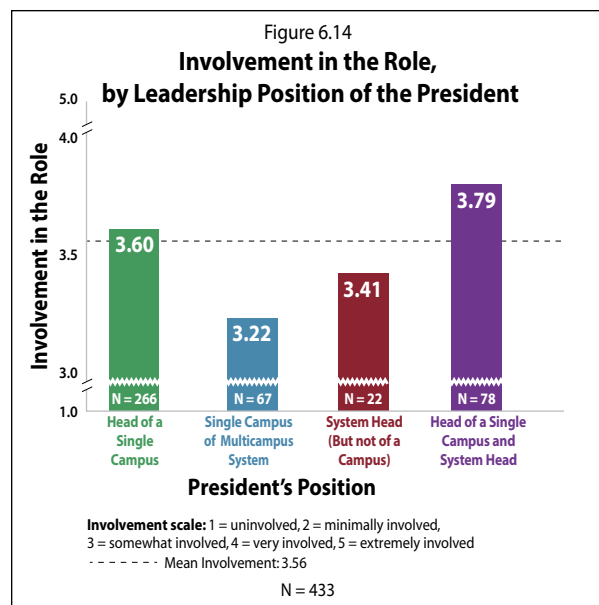
By region, partners in institutions in the South had the highest mean involvement (3.75) and institutions outside the U.S. had the lowest (3.14).

Partner involvement increased with increased competitiveness of the institution’s athletics association, although this relationship may be related to



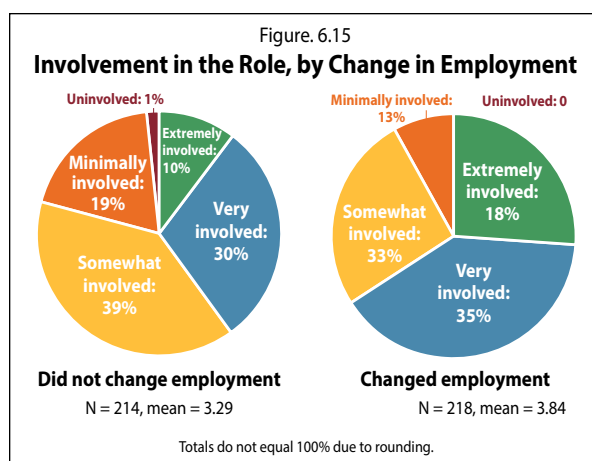
other factors. None of the institutions outside the United States participate in NCAA or NAIA.

The president's leadership position was related to the partner's level of involvement. Figure 6.14 shows that partners of presidents who were head of both a single campus and a system had the highest level of involvement. Those partners also reported a higher frequency of fundraising activity. Fundraising will be discussed later in this chapter.

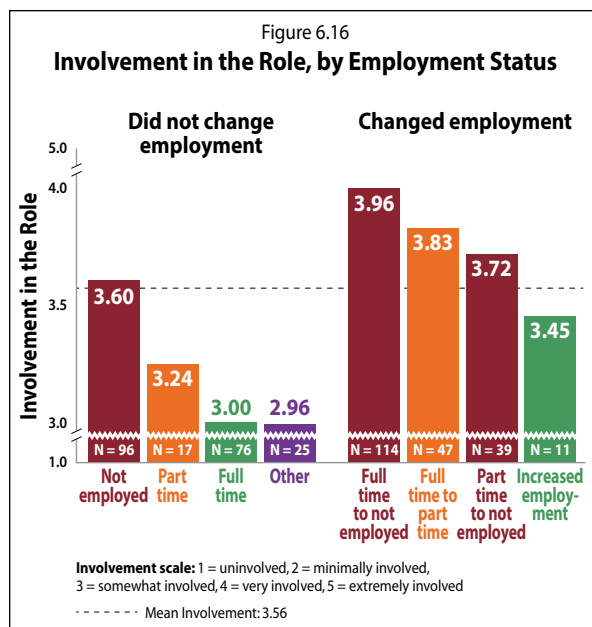


An institution's having an official residence was related to a statistically significant higher level of partner involvement (3.70 for institutions with residences, compared to 3.24 for those without). Official residences are discussed in Chapter 10 "Official Residences."

As discussed earlier in the chapter, half of partners changed employment status as a result of the role. We regret not asking them to specify why. We wondered if the partners who changed employment were more involved in the role. Figure 6.15 shows that 53 percent of partners who changed employment are very involved or extremely involved in the role, with a mean involvement level of 3.84, compared to 40 percent very or extremely involved and mean involvement of 3.29 for partners who did not change employment.

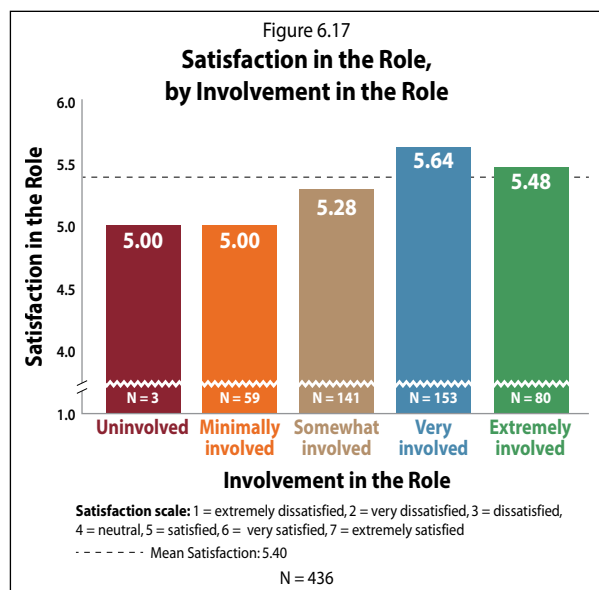


Partners who went from full-time work to unemployed (outside the role) had the highest level of involvement by employment status as shown in Figure 6.16. Their mean involvement was notably higher than those who were unemployed but did not change their employment.



We were curious to know if there was a difference in overall satisfaction in the role as a function of partners' level of involvement in it. We asked partners, "Overall, how satisfied are you with your current role and responsibilities associated with being the president/chancellor's spouse/partner?" Partners answered on a seven-point scale as shown in Figure 6.17. There was a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$) among the five levels of involvement and their overall satisfaction.

Satisfaction generally increased with level of involvement, but not always; those who said there were extremely involved were less satisfied than those who said they were very involved.



Activities Assumed in the Role

“Typical” partners—those somewhat involved and very involved partners (but not those uninvolved, minimally involved, or extremely involved)—were asked about the extent to which they engaged in specific activities associated with the role. Given our interest in gender differences in behaviors associated with the role, we report on differences in percentages who assumed the role by gender, as well as by partners’ enjoyment levels for those activities in which they engaged. Table 6.3 details the percentage of females versus males who engaged in a particular activity, as well as their enjoyment level. For example, 74 percent of females indicated they had the responsibility to coordinate entertainment, versus 23 percent for males. For all of the 16 specific activities, females more frequently than males took on the particular activity; for those activities for which a statistical test of differences in level of enjoyment was possible, females reported higher levels of enjoyment

Table 6.3

Roles and Responsibilities Assumed by Partners and Associated Levels of Enjoyment, by Gender

| Role/Responsibility | Participation in Activity | | | Level of Enjoyment [‡] | | | | | | t-value |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------|---------------|---------------------------------|-----------|------|------|-----------|------|---------|
| | Female | Male | Chi-square(1) | Female | | | Male | | | |
| | % | % | | N | \bar{x} | SD | N | \bar{x} | SD | |
| Coordinate entertainment | 73.6 | 23.1 | 47.47*** | 173 | 2.82 | 0.41 | 12 | 2.58 | 0.70 | 1.90 |
| Supervise support staff | 28.8 | 11.5 | 6.61 | 67 | 2.35 | 0.73 | 6 | 2.33 | 0.82 | – |
| Informal public relations | 69.1 | 54.9 | 3.79 | 160 | 2.65 | 0.48 | 27 | 2.85 | 0.36 | –2.09* |
| Create holiday cards, etc. | 34.3 | 1.9 | 21.95*** | 79 | 2.63 | 0.58 | 1 | 1.00 | | – |
| Manage purchases budget | 8.7 | 1.9 | 2.80 | 20 | 2.10 | 0.55 | 1 | 3.00 | | – |
| Attend association meetings | 94.4 | 92.3 | 0.33 | 219 | 2.85 | 0.39 | 47 | 2.81 | 0.40 | 0.72 |
| Participate in donor relations | 91.8 | 96.2 | 1.16 | 213 | 2.82 | 0.43 | 49 | 2.78 | 0.47 | 0.67 |
| Meet with governing board | 78.0 | 60.8 | 6.61** | 181 | 2.81 | 0.45 | 31 | 2.84 | 0.37 | –0.40 |
| Provide reports to board | 12.1 | 2.0 | 4.65* | 28 | 2.32 | 0.55 | 1 | 3.00 | | – |
| Host events | 97.4 | 75.0 | 34.70*** | 229 | 2.86 | 0.38 | 38 | 2.68 | 0.47 | 2.53* |
| Give remarks at public events | 48.5 | 25.0 | 9.52** | 113 | 2.50 | 0.63 | 13 | 2.38 | 0.85 | 0.65 |
| Institutional special projects | 36.2 | 7.8 | 15.70*** | 81 | 2.84 | 0.37 | 4 | 2.75 | 0.50 | – |
| Write thank-you notes, etc. | 72.4 | 15.7 | 57.22*** | 168 | 2.47 | 0.63 | 8 | 2.25 | 0.71 | – |
| Community leadership roles | 67.9 | 40.4 | 13.86*** | 159 | 2.79 | 0.47 | 21 | 2.86 | 0.36 | –0.99 |
| Purchase official gifts | 30.4 | 1.9 | 18.30*** | 69 | 2.62 | 0.62 | 1 | 2.00 | | – |
| Edit speeches for president | 36.2 | 30.0 | 0.70 | 84 | 2.82 | 0.44 | 15 | 2.87 | 0.35 | –0.37 |

[‡] Responses were obtained on the following three-point scale: 1 = do not enjoy, 2 = neutral, and 3 = enjoy.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Note: Independent samples t-tests were not conducted if the number of females or males was fewer than 10.

Note: Data includes somewhat involved and very involved partners (but not those uninvolved, minimally involved, or extremely involved)

Table 6.4

Frequency of Participation in Activities Associated with Role, by Gender

| Activities | Frequency of Participation [‡] | | | | | | t (1,286) |
|---|---|-----------|-----|------|-----------|-----|-----------|
| | Female | | | Male | | | |
| | N | \bar{x} | SD | N | \bar{x} | SD | |
| Fundraising, either directly or indirectly | 234 | 2.34 | .63 | 51 | 2.18 | .59 | 1.69 |
| Consulting with president on institutional issues | 235 | 2.20 | .69 | 52 | 2.13 | .74 | 0.57 |
| Coordinating events and projects with staff | 235 | 2.31 | .64 | 52 | 1.60 | .60 | 7.34*** |
| Entertaining guests at official events | 235 | 2.69 | .49 | 50 | 2.44 | .50 | 3.32*** |
| Volunteering at events and offices | 234 | 2.07 | .63 | 52 | 1.75 | .52 | 3.45*** |
| Institutional representative in the community | 234 | 2.06 | .71 | 52 | 1.60 | .63 | 4.40*** |
| Running the house | 232 | 2.77 | .56 | 51 | 2.25 | .82 | 32.10*** |

[‡] Responses were obtained on the following three-point scale: 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, and 3 = frequently.

*** $p < .001$

Note: Data includes somewhat involved and very involved partners (but not those uninvolved, minimally involved, or extremely involved)

for “coordinate events” and “host events,” whereas males had a higher enjoyment level for “informal public relations.”

In addition to asking partners if they assumed a particular responsibility, we asked somewhat involved and very involved partners to indicate the frequency with which they participated in a shortened list of seven activities (on a three-point response scale of 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, and 3 = frequently). Running the house, entertaining, and fundraising were the three behaviors on the list with the highest frequency of participation. As results in Table 6.4 indicate, males engaged less frequently than females in all of the activities; the differences were statistically significant for five of the seven activities.

“Running the house” is discussed in Chapter 10 “Official Residences.” A partner wrote that the most satisfying aspect of the role was

“Events/fundraisers held in the president’s residence.”

Entertaining and fundraising are the next two most frequent activities, and often entertaining is fundraising. Matthew Thompson wrote, “A main function of today’s presidential team is fund raising. They must cultivate the donors who are able to endow scholarships or build buildings. The mechanisms for developing these relationships are receptions, dinners, and alumni events” (2008, p. 30). He continued, “The first step in fundraising is

friend-raising. The spouse allows the president to more naturally build relationships with donors” (p. 32), a role many spouses take “very seriously” (p. 34).

The emphasis on partners’ involvement in fund-raising is not new. In 1984 Deborah Toll, wife of University of Maryland President John Toll, wrote in *Volunteer or Volunteered*, “in the 20 top universities that raised the most money in 1981-82, only four presidents’ spouses worked full time. Five spouses worked part time for pay but spend the majority of their time on the university” (Toll, 1984, p. 46).

We asked only partners who reported being somewhat or very involved about participation in fundraising. While over 92 percent of those partners participated in donor relations, results varied on the frequency of fundraising activities. As seen in other questions about involvement, the largest discrepancy was when analyzed by gender: The 234 females had a mean frequency of 2.34, while the 51 males had a mean frequency of 2.18. As in most analysis throughout the survey, partners in public and private institutions were very similar (public = 2.32, private = 2.29). Regarding the leadership role of the president, partners of presidents who were head of both a single campus and a system had the highest frequency of involvement in fundraising (2.43), while partners of presidents who were heads of a single campus of a multi-campus system had the lowest frequency (2.21).

As we discuss in Chapter 10 “Official Residences,” fundraising as a percentage of activities in the official residence has increased since the 1980s. While on average half of the events at official residences involve fundraising, moderately involved partners with official residences had nearly identical frequency of fundraising (the overall mean of 2.30) as those who did not. (It bears noting that 80% of the extremely involved partners have official residences, and those partners were not asked about the frequency of fundraising.)

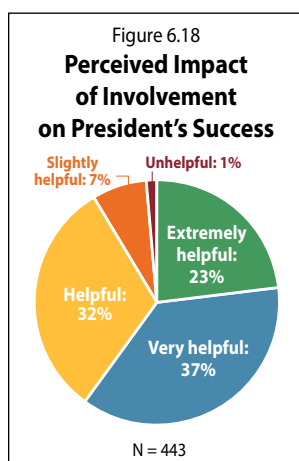
Partners commented

“I enjoy working in advancement and planning those kinds of events, meeting with donors.”

“We get to meet some amazing, kind, ‘high quality’ people in conjunction with institutional development/advancement.”

Partners’ Perception of Helpfulness to Presidents

One dimension that may contribute to overall satisfaction is partners’ perception of whether they have been helpful to the president in his or her role. Results contained in Figure 6.18 show that 92 percent of partners believe that they have been helpful, very helpful, or extremely helpful to the president. On the five-point scale coded from 1 = unhelpful to 5 = extremely helpful, females had a statistically significantly higher perceived helpfulness rating than males (females = 3.83 versus males = 3.37, $t(420) = 3.95$, $p < .001$).



Partners wrote of being helpful as the most satisfying aspect of the role:

“Helping my spouse be successful especially in development and alumni relations”

“Love the university and enjoy helping my spouse in any way to make students successful and build the school.”

“Having a positive impact on the institution she is president of.”

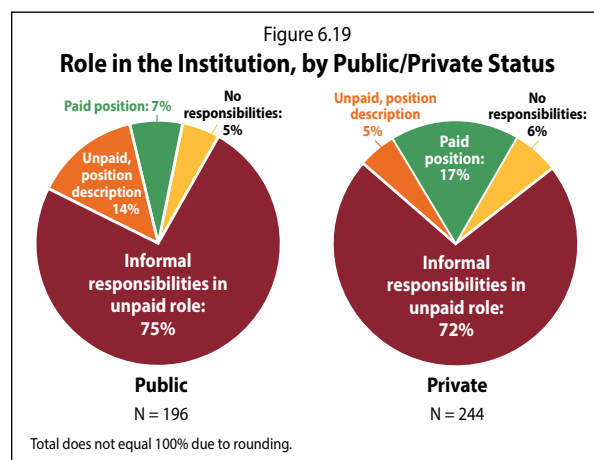
“Supporting the mission of the institution; We believe this work is a partnership, and our community recognizes that and respects that.”

“To contribute to my partner’s success as President and her overall wellbeing in this very stressful role.”

“To make a positive impact on an institution that I am beginning to love.”

Compensation for Partner Role

Of those partners who responded to the question concerning compensation for the partner role, 12 percent (N = 54) said they were compensated financially for the role; 13 percent of females were compensated for the role, versus eight percent for males, as shown in Table 6.5. Of the partners in private institutions, 17 percent received compensation compared to seven percent in public institutions, as shown in Figure 6.19. Partners in the Midwest and West had the highest percentage of being compensated (13.6% and 13.4%, respectively), while partners in the Northeast had the lowest (7.4%).



As results in Figure 6.20 indicate, of those partners who were paid specifically for their work as partners, most (75%) received \$50,000 or less; two individuals noted compensation in the \$151,000–\$200,000 response category. (One paid partner did not respond to this question.) There were too few partners in each of the compensation categories to enable a reliable comparison between

Table 6.5

Descriptions of the Partner Role and Time Spent in Role, by Gender

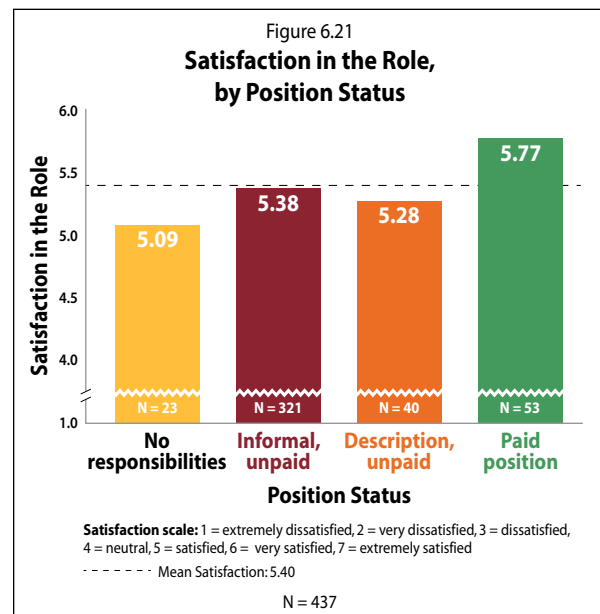
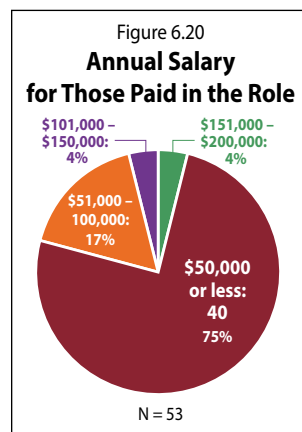
| Position | Gender | | | | Chi-square |
|--|--------|------|------|------|----------------|
| | Female | | Male | | |
| | N | % | N | % | |
| Position Status | 348 | | 77 | | 18.58***(3df) |
| No Specific Responsibilities | 10 | 2.9 | 11 | 14.3 | |
| Informal Responsibilities in Unpaid Role | 263 | 75.6 | 52 | 67.5 | |
| Responsibilities Outlined in Unpaid Position Description | 31 | 8.9 | 8 | 10.4 | |
| Responsibilities Outlined in Paid Position Description | 44 | 12.6 | 6 | 7.8 | |
| Position Time (Asked of those with unpaid and paid position descriptions) | 75 | | 14 | | .09 (1df) |
| Part-time | 45 | 60.0 | 9 | 64.3 | |
| Full-time | 30 | 40.0 | 5 | 35.7 | |
| Weekly Hours Devoted to the Role [‡] | 235 | | 52 | | 19.96*** (4df) |
| Less than 10 | 50 | 25.1 | 28 | 53.8 | |
| 11–20 | 102 | 43.4 | 19 | 36.5 | |
| 21–30 | 54 | 23.0 | 3 | 5.8 | |
| 31–40 | 15 | 6.4 | 1 | 1.9 | |
| more than 40 | 5 | 2.1 | 1 | 1.9 | |

[‡] Asked only of partners who were somewhat involved and moderately involved, but not uninvolved, minimally involved, or extremely involved.

*** $p < .001$

compensation-amount differences of partners in public versus private institutions. Also, there were too few males compensated for the role to warrant an examination of possible gender differences in compensation amounts. No questions in the survey asked partners to estimate salaries of others in the institution who perform responsibilities traditionally provided by female partners.

We compared position status to overall satisfaction in the role. There was a statistically significant difference in overall satisfaction level as a function of the specificity of the responsibilities and associated compensation. Results portrayed in Figure 6.21 indicate that the most satisfied partners were those whose service in the role was formalized with a job description and financial compensation.



When comparing involvement by position status, those with no responsibilities had, as expected, the lowest level of involvement (2.25), followed by those with informal responsibilities (3.50). It was surprising to discover that partners with unpaid position descriptions had a similar level of

involvement (4.05) as those with a paid position (4.15). That those partners were often very to extremely involved without financial compensation may explain why they were less satisfied than those who have no position description, and perhaps more flexibility, in the role.

The issue of pay seemed to strike a nerve for partners, as it came up in multiple places in the survey where respondents provided comments about compensation. The comments fell into six broad categories as noted below.

The most satisfied partners were those whose service in the role was formalized with a job description and financial compensation.

Symbolic Meaning of Compensation

“Compensation is a ‘token of appreciation’ for taking on a role that can be extremely difficult and demanding in times of crisis (which every university faces, sooner or later). And it helps to ensure loyalty and a positive attitude, two features that are essential to the spouse.”

“While I wouldn’t want additional salary, I do think a portion of my spouse’s salary could/should be put into my name as recognition for the time, work and effort I put into the role.”

Ethically Unacceptable to Not Pay Partners

“It is not morally acceptable to work so hard for no pay and no appreciation. I am not alone in this. It puts a huge burden on the presidential couple.”

“I learned from a former trustee that the spouse/partner role used to be a paid position, and then that disappeared. To learn that, after so many years of ‘neglect,’ was demoralizing.”

“... it is discrimination on the basis of marital status.”

Gender Inequity Issues

“It’s outrageous that wives (and most of the presidents’ spouses are indeed wives) tend to occupy unpaid positions. Absolutely outrageous!”

“PAY ME!!!!!! This job is the one of the last bastions of male chauvinism.”

“Especially for women, do not take on roles and responsibilities that you are not compensated for. Expectations should not be that you will volunteer to do tasks that a single President would have to hire someone to do.”

Complications of a Paid Role

“This role will always be challenging because spouses are differently skilled and interested in contributing to the institution. Some spouses are very skilled and some marginally or negatively impact the institution. Any guidelines for recognition should always include the reality of individuality in spouses’ contributions. However, whether recognized or not, the spouse does have some level of impact on an institution.”

“I appreciate the value of my contributions that the Trustees’ acknowledge through my salary; I am working to change my position to report directly to the Board rather than to the VP for Institutional Advancement because my role extends beyond that department. I also think it places the VP in an awkward position, vis-à-vis the president. I often feel as if I’m making it up as I go along.”

“More spouses are receiving remuneration for institutional tasks, but [there is] a long way to go. I think the language of ‘spouse’ undercuts the role—I would prefer something like Presidential Ambassador—something to designate the work, not the relationship.”

Some partners would like financial compensation, others prefer the flexibility of an unpaid role.

Partners Forgo Paid Employment to Take on Partner Responsibilities

Given that half of partners changed their paid employment as a result of the partner role, and that females were more likely than males to make such changes, it is not surprising that partners made specific comments such as the following:

“I love the privilege of being in this position. I receive a stipend, but no salary or pension, etc.”

I gave up a full-time job as a professor to do this. I don't regret doing so but feel I should be rewarded monetarily."

"No pay and loss of own retirement!"

"I do not have an income and feel working outside the home would make me unavailable for important responsibilities on campus."

"When we decided that I would give up what I was doing and we would have me dedicate my skills to also help make this institution successful, I anticipated a more welcoming implementation of this. . . . I do believe that university Boards should be educated about the various relationships they may have with spouses, including contracts as consultants to the Board. Many couples contemplating moving so one spouse can become a university president are likely spouses with two professionals who would be devoted to the success of the university. Working to welcome the spouse and discussing what role the presidential spouse might play would be helpful. Respect in the community might be more forthcoming to the spouse if the Board showed its respect by acknowledging that contribution—possibly with compensation which can also be a justice issue."

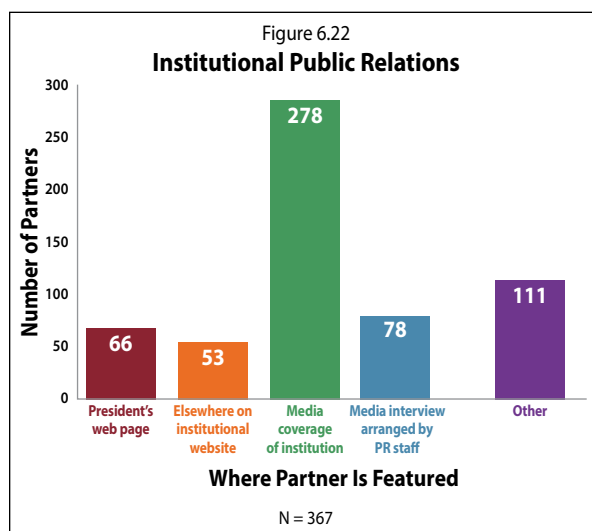
Absence of Compensation Enables Flexibility

It is important to note that a number of partners argued against compensation for the partner role.

"I view my role as a partnership. I'm support staff—unpaid—but I get perks. I don't want to get paid because that way I can say no any time."

Institutional Public Relations

We asked respondents, "In what ways are you featured in institutional public relations in your spouse/partner capacity? Please choose all that apply," with four choices plus "other." Figure 6.22 shows that the most frequent response was "I have appeared in media coverage of the institution." The second most frequent category was "other" with 111 responses. Seven of those mentioned holiday cards, and eight said they were featured in another capacity, such as



"I am a faculty/administrator at the same institution and I am listed on my department/college website."

Another 18 said that they hosted or were seen at events, and 45 said none, including

"None—but I wish I was."

"Nothing focused on my first husband role."

"Institutional public relations does not make any attempt to feature me."

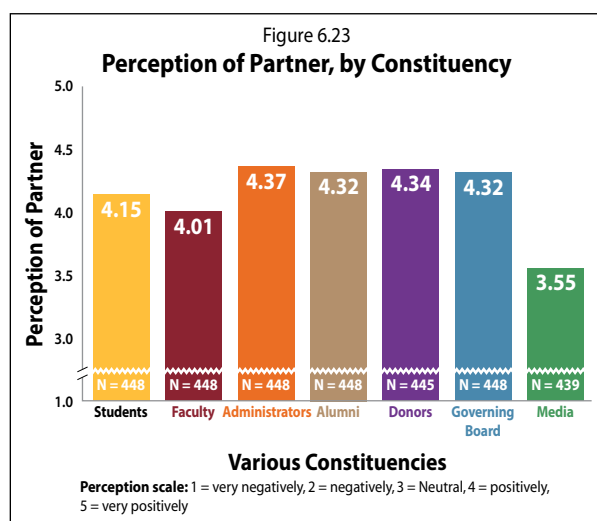
"None of these . . . My son, who is an alum, and our dog have been featured in publications."

We did not include "none" as a category. While 367 partners responded to this question, 454 responded to the next question, so we wondered if the missing responses might be "none," along with many of the "other" responses. We compared the 290 partners who answered yes to one of the four specified categories to the 151 who did not answer yes to any of those categories. The partners who said they were featured in institutional public relations were both more satisfied (5.47 compared with 5.26) and more involved (a mean of 3.78 compared with 3.27) in the role than those who did not say they were recognized in this way.

Perceptions Attributed to Others

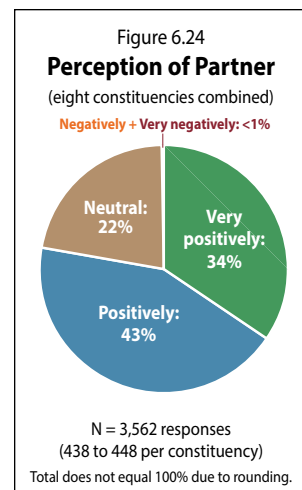
Whenever a person assumes a particular role, she/he is subject to the evaluations of others. Since partners may interact with several different groups, both on- and off-campus, we asked, “How do you feel you are perceived by various constituencies, in terms of your role as spouse/partner of the president/chancellor?”

Figure 6.23 shows the mean level for each of seven constituencies. While media was the constituency with the lowest mean level of positive perception, it is important to note that 266 partners selected “neutral” for that response, and none selected “negatively” or “very negatively.” In fact, of all 3,562 responses to the parts of this question, there



was only one response of “very negatively,” and three total responses of “negatively” (all of these for administrators and faculty).

Figure 6.23 shows the overwhelmingly positive combined responses for eight constituencies (including “other”). Partners wrote of these perceptions, describing the most satisfying aspect of the role as



“Being a positive role model for students, being seen as a positive ‘addition’ to the institution

“Community respect”

“Demonstrating to the community that a same-sex partner has both an independent career, but still can have a clear and public role on campus”

“Opportunities to meet interesting people, and making people’s day by showing up”

“Feeling ‘special’ in this role”

“My role with my presidential spouse in friend-raising for the college. Have met some of the most amazing people. I enjoy the travel to see them all too. I enjoy the relationships

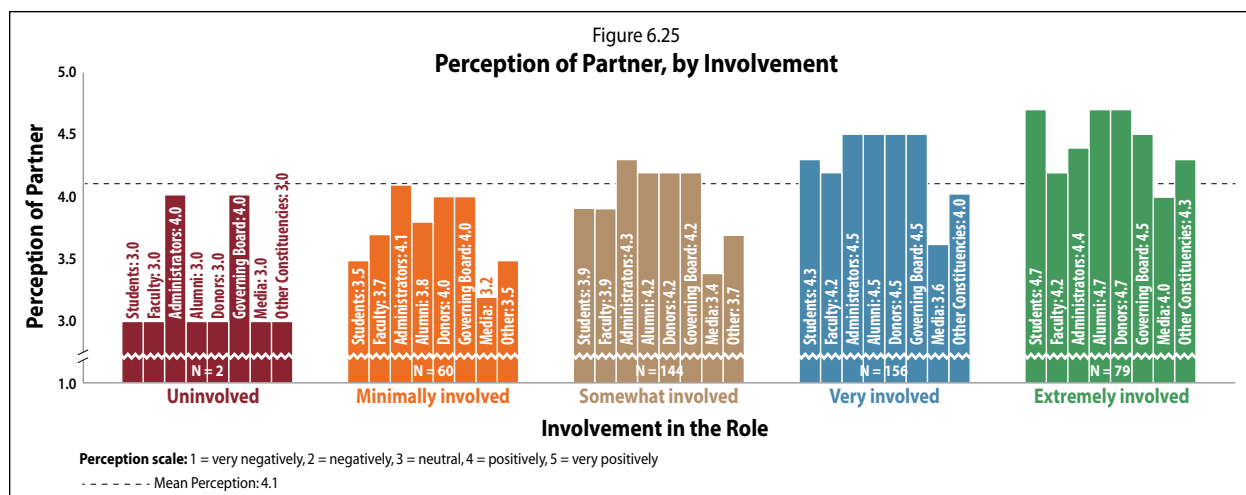
Table 6.6

Partners’ Opinions on How They are Perceived by Others, by Gender

| Constituency | Perception Level [‡] | | | | | | t (1,419) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|-----|------|-----------|-----|-----------|
| | Female | | | Male | | | |
| | N | \bar{x} | SD | N | \bar{x} | SD | |
| Students | 344 | 4.21 | .73 | 76 | 3.89 | .78 | 3.40** |
| Faculty | 344 | 4.05 | .64 | 76 | 3.88 | .71 | 1.99* |
| Administrators | 344 | 4.38 | .64 | 76 | 4.41 | .57 | – 0.34 |
| Alumni | 344 | 4.36 | .66 | 76 | 4.18 | .71 | 2.11* |
| Donors | 342 | 4.38 | .65 | 76 | 4.24 | .65 | 1.70 |
| Governing board | 344 | 4.38 | .69 | 76 | 4.14 | .71 | 2.65** |
| Media | 339 | 3.61 | .76 | 75 | 3.29 | .61 | 3.34*** |
| Other external constituencies | 339 | 3.96 | .74 | 73 | 3.64 | .70 | 3.17*** |

[‡] Responses were obtained on the following five-point scale: 1 = very negatively, 2 = negatively, 3 = neutral, 4 = positively, and 5 = very positively.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$



with the current students. These I find the most rewarding—the relationships!”

Table 6.6 lists the constituencies and details the ascribed degree of positive versus negative perception by each of eight groups by gender. Females reported more positive evaluations from students, alumni, faculty, governing boards, media, and other external constituencies.

Given the differing dynamics for individuals in public versus private institutions, we compared mean ascribed ratings of partners in those two types of institutions. We found statistically significant differences for two groups: alumni and the governing board. Partners in public institutions believed they were more positively perceived by alumni than partners in private institutions (means of 4.42 versus 4.26, respectively); partners in private institutions believed they were more positively perceived by the governing board than partners in public institutions (means of 4.44 versus 4.21, respectively).

As mentioned in Chapter 5 “Transition to the Partner Role,” partners value choice in their level of involvement in the role, but we wondered if there was a “price-to-pay,” by the partner or the president for a choice of low involvement. In our analysis of the findings concerning perceptions by others, we calculated mean ratings for each of the five level-of-involvement groups and found statistically significant differences for all eight

of the groups. As the results in Figure 6.25 and Table 6.7 (on the following page) indicate, in all cases, as level of involvement increased, so too did partners’ ascribed positive evaluations by others. These differences were most significant for those with whom the more involved partners interact most: students, alumni, and donors. Interaction with these groups was mentioned by partners as the most satisfying aspect of the role, as will be discussed in Chapter 8 “Satisfaction in the Role.”

As involvement in the role increases, so do perceived positive evaluations by others.

Table 6.7

*Partners' Opinions on How They are Perceived by Others
as a Function of Their Level of Involvement in Partner Roles, by Group*

| Level of Involvement [€] | Group [‡] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-----|-----------|-----|----------------|------|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------------|------|-----------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| | Students | | Faculty | | Administrators | | Alumni | | Donors | | Governing Board | | Media | | Other Constituencies | |
| | \bar{x} | SD | \bar{x} | SD | \bar{x} | SD | \bar{x} | SD | \bar{x} | SD | \bar{x} | SD | \bar{x} | SD | \bar{x} | SD |
| Uninvolved | 3.00 | -- | 3.00 | -- | 4.00 | 1.41 | 3.00 | -- | 3.00 | -- | 4.00 | 1.41 | 3.00 | -- | 3.00 | -- |
| Minimally Involved | 3.53 | .70 | 3.67 | .63 | 4.10 | .63 | 3.75 | .70 | 3.95 | .66 | 3.98 | .66 | 3.24 | .51 | 3.54 | .63 |
| Somewhat Involved | 3.92 | .67 | 3.88 | .60 | 4.30 | .63 | 4.19 | .61 | 4.16 | .65 | 4.17 | .73 | 3.36 | .60 | 3.69 | .67 |
| Very Involved | 4.34 | .68 | 4.15 | .61 | 4.49 | .57 | 4.50 | .61 | 4.53 | .60 | 4.50 | .66 | 3.59 | .78 | 4.01 | .74 |
| Extremely Involved | 4.68 | .52 | 4.24 | .66 | 4.37 | .64 | 4.67 | .50 | 4.65 | .51 | 4.53 | .66 | 4.03 | .51 | 4.33 | .65 |
| F-ratio (4.436) | 36.27*** | | 12.04*** | | 5.59*** | | 27.51*** | | 20.51*** | | 10.16*** | | 14.86*** | | 16.49*** | |

‡ Responses were coded on following five-point scale: 1 = very negatively, 2 = negatively, 3 = neutral, 4 = positively, and 5 = very positively.

€ Uninvolved (spending virtually no time in the role): N = 2

Minimally involved (spending a very small amount of time in the role): N = 60

Somewhat involved (spending a moderate amount of time in the role): N = 144

Very involved (spending a considerable amount of time in the role): N = 156

Extremely involved (spending an immense amount of time in the role): N = 79

*** $p < .001$

CHAPTER 7

ROLE CLARITY

“Where do I begin? This has been the hardest thing I/we have ever done, in large part because I feel chronically inadequate relative to my role/non-role, even though I consider myself to have healthy self-esteem/self-confidence. I was a pretty good student, and I’d like to feel that I’m doing “A” work in this role — but it feels like I don’t even know what subject I’m taking, let alone what it would take to perform well, and my husband suggests I just pretend that it’s a class I have no interest in, and do my own thing—but I DO have interest in the whole endeavor of higher education, and I’d like to be involved with it—but also not intrusive. . . . It’s very uncomfortable. I also dislike social posturing, so can get irritable (to my husband) about going to events that seem mainly for “being seen.” I personally believe that life is way too short for that, but I go, when he says he’d appreciate me going/that it’d make his job easier, etc. (I often feel like I’m in a Jane Austen novel—which has its pros and cons!)”

– 2016 Survey Respondent

The challenge of role ambiguity has been a persistent theme in partners’ literature since the first major studies in the 1970s and 1980s (Clodius & Skomars Magrath, 1984; Corbally, 1977; Ostar 1983, 1986). Our survey asked multiple types of questions in an effort to shed light on the extent and nature of perceived role clarity today. Role ambiguity remains a significant issue for many partners, regardless of their gender or characteristics of the institutions in which they are situated.

Chapter Overview

This chapter first describes how partners responded to a series of questions about different aspects of role clarity. We then describe how we used the responses to those questions to develop an overall measure of role clarity. We next examine how overall role clarity relates to how partners answered other questions in the survey. We conclude with an overview of partners’ comments concerning role clarity.

Aspects of Role Clarity

Given our assumption that role clarity—or its opposite, role ambiguity—would be an issue for many partners, we developed a series of seven statements (e.g.,

“The responsibilities I would have were clarified for me prior to my partner accepting the position”) dealing with various aspects of role clarity. As the results in Table 8.1 indicate, partners’ responses to the seven statements varied from

a lowest mean agreement of 1.92 (“My university has specific policies related to the responsibilities of the partner”) to a highest mean agreement of 4.33 (“My spouse and I have a common understanding of my role and responsibilities as presidential partner”).

Role ambiguity remains a significant issue for many partners, regardless of their gender or characteristics of the institutions in which they are situated.

Table 7.1

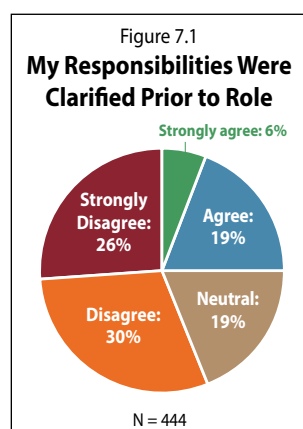
Partners' Opinions on Clarity about Aspects of the Partner Role

| Item | Response [‡] | | | | | | | | | | \bar{x} | SD |
|--|-----------------------|------|----------|------|---------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|-----------|------|
| | Strongly disagree | | Disagree | | Neutral | | Agree | | Strongly Agree | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| The responsibilities I would have were clarified for me prior to my partner accepting the position. | 113 | 25.5 | 134 | 30.2 | 86 | 19.4 | 85 | 19.2 | 25 | 5.6 | 2.49 | 1.22 |
| My university has specific policies related to the responsibilities of the partner. | 167 | 37.4 | 190 | 42.6 | 55 | 12.3 | 27 | 6.1 | 7 | 1.6 | 1.92 | .94 |
| Currently, my role and responsibilities as presidential partner are clear to me. | 14 | 3.1 | 57 | 12.8 | 87 | 19.5 | 203 | 45.4 | 86 | 19.2 | 3.65 | 1.03 |
| My spouse and I have a common understanding of my role and responsibilities as presidential partner. | 5 | 1.1 | 9 | 2.0 | 23 | 5.1 | 205 | 45.9 | 205 | 45.9 | 4.33 | .76 |
| I am clear about the ways and contexts in which I interact with the college/university/system's governing board. | 4 | .9 | 19 | 4.3 | 49 | 11.0 | 215 | 48.2 | 159 | 35.7 | 4.13 | .84 |
| I am clear about my role in relation to the institution's staff who support me in my role as a partner. | 4 | .9 | 25 | 5.6 | 56 | 12.6 | 210 | 47.2 | 150 | 33.7 | 4.07 | .88 |
| I am clear about my role in relation to the president/chancellor's staff. | 4 | .9 | 11 | 2.5 | 30 | 6.7 | 218 | 48.8 | 184 | 41.2 | 4.27 | .77 |

‡ Responses were obtained on the following five-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Note: Clarity Scale used in Figure 7.5 is based on all items combined

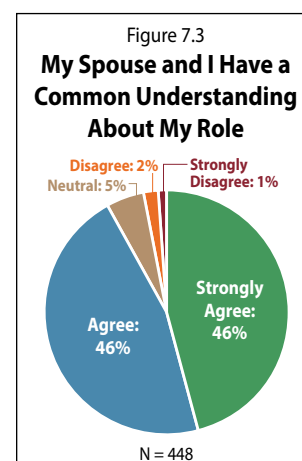
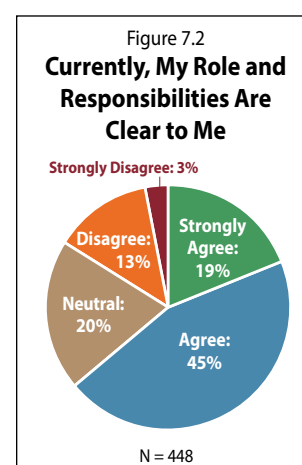
Results described previously in Chapter 5 “Transition to the Presidential Partner Role” suggested that lack of clarity about the partner role is an issue when partners move into it. Results presented in Figure 7.1 indicate that only about one-fourth of partners agreed or strongly agreed that partner responsibilities were clarified prior to their partners accepting their presidencies. When asked to provide advice as to how institutions could improve individuals’ transition to the partner role, partners called for greater clarity, earlier on. (See Chapter 5.)



Even though partner responsibilities are seldom clarified prior to entering the institution and are seldom articulated in specific university policies, over time the partner role and responsibilities may become clearer, as the results in Figure 7.2 suggest.

Perhaps most important is that presidents and their partners have a common understanding of the partner’s role and responsibilities, as the results in Figure 7.3 indicate.

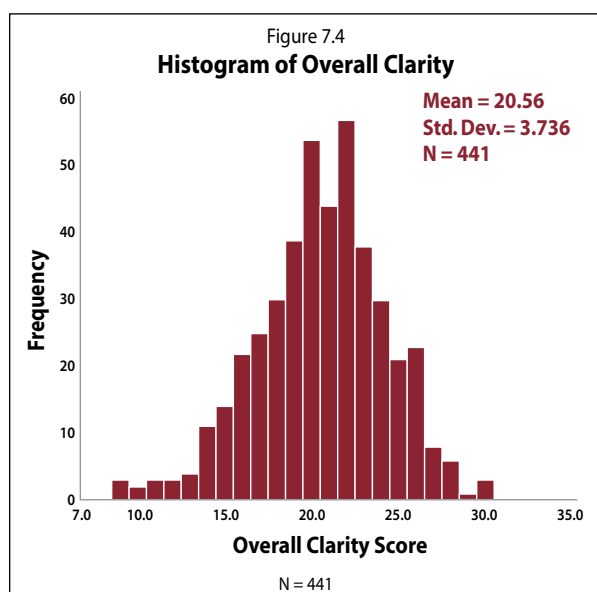
Clarity seems to play a potentially consequential role for presidents and institutions. A quarter of respondents indicated that on at least one occasion, an institution’s expectations of the partner played a role in the partner’s decision to decline or step down from a presidency as was shown in Figure 5.2 in Chapter 5.



Overall Measure of Role Clarity

In our analysis, we wanted to have an overall index of clarity to use in analyzing the relationship between role clarity and various other questions on the survey, such as overall satisfaction, gender, and control of the president's institution (public or private). To accomplish this, we developed a seven-item scale consisting of responses on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. If partners answered "strongly disagree" to all seven items they would have an overall score of 7; if partners answered "strongly agree" to all seven items, they would have a score of 35.

As shown in Figure 7.4, for the total group of 441 partners who answered all of the set of questions, the mean overall score was 20.56.



Of particular interest in the results in Figure 7.4 is the relatively high variability in the overall score from a low of nine to a high of 30 (three partners each). Given the variation on the overall score it was possible to identify relationships between the overall clarity score and other questions on the survey. These analysis are discussed later in this chapter.

We wondered if prior experience in the partner role made a difference in partners' perception of role clarity in their current institutional context. The 98 partners with prior experience had a higher role clarity score (mean of 21.39) than the 342 partners without prior experience (mean of 20.39). The difference, while small, was statistically significant ($t(1,439) = -2.48, p < .05$).

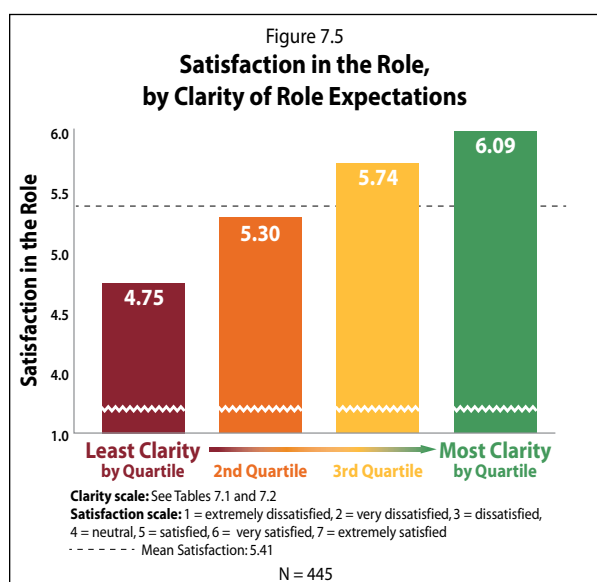
We examined clarity as a function of how long the partner had been in the role and found a statistically significant difference. Clarity increased with time spent in the role, from a low of 19.5 for partners in the role less than a year to a high of 21.62 for partners in the role 10 years or more.

Role clarity increased with time spent in the role.

We also wondered if what partners said about the people or resources (e.g., mentor, predecessor, higher education associations) they had used to help them in their partner role made any difference in their levels of perceived role clarity. We found no difference in clarity between spouses who had reported using a particular resource and those who had not.

Relationship between Perceived Role Clarity and Overall Satisfaction

Clarity matters. Respondents who reported higher clarity in their role were also found to report higher satisfaction in the role, as shown in Figure 7.5. We found that the correlation of $r = .45$ between perceived role clarity and overall satisfaction was statistically significant ($p < .001$), but it is also important to note that the role clarity score accounted for only 20 percent of the variation in partners' overall satisfaction. The degree of perceived role clarity is but one of the aspects of the partner experience that contribute to their overall satisfaction in the role. Nevertheless, the difference in mean overall satisfaction scores as a function of levels of perceived role clarity does suggest that perceived role clarity is an important component of overall satisfaction.



We wondered if the moderate correlation between perceived role clarity and overall satisfaction might also be true for other overall items on the survey. We found a few statistically significant correlations (such as the correlation of $r = .10$ between perceived role clarity and overall involvement in the role) but the correlations were much lower and not as highly statistically significant (all at the $p < .05$ level).

Gender Differences in Perceived Role Clarity

Given that our data set included enough male partners to compare overall clarity scores of male and female partners, we wondered if we would find gender differences. Instead, as the results in Table 7.2 indicate, we found virtually identical mean perceived clarity scores for female and male partners.

Differences in Perceived Clarity as a Function of Institution Characteristics

We examined differences in perceived role clarity as a function of institutional characteristics. We found no differences in perceived role clarity as function of institutional characteristics. We found that the mean clarity scores were virtually identical for public versus private institutions (20.61 versus 20.59, respectively). We found no regional differences, no age-of-institution differences, and no highest-degree-level-offered-by-the-institution differences in perceived role clarity. We found no difference in perceived role clarity as a function of whether or not the institution had an official residence (20.71 versus 20.28, respectively).

Table 7.2

Clarity in the Role of Partner, by Gender

| | Gender | | | | t (1,422) |
|---------------------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| | Female | | Male | | |
| | \bar{x} | SD | \bar{x} | SD | |
| Role Clarity [‡] | 20.57 | 3.73 | 20.55 | 3.53 | .06 |

[‡] The Role Clarity scale consisted of combined scores for seven items (e.g., "The responsibilities I would have a spouse/partner were clarified for me prior to my spouse/partner accepting the position of president/chancellor") each of which had the following five-point response scale:
1 = strongly disagree,
2 = disagree,
3 = neutral,
4 = agree, and
5 = strongly agree.
Scale scores could range from a low of 7 to a high of 35.

Partners' Comments Regarding Role Clarity

We did not include a specific open-ended question regarding partners' perspectives and experiences regarding role clarity, but partners frequently mentioned the topic in their open-ended comments in response to other questions. Clarity emerged as a pervasive issue for partners.

Most Satisfying Aspects of the Role

Chapter 8 "Satisfaction in the Role" includes partner responses to open-ended questions asking, "Which aspects of your current spouse/partner role do you find most satisfying?" and "Which aspects of your current spouse/partner role do you find least satisfying?" Eighteen partners made comments about role flexibility in describing the most satisfying aspects of the role. Ten specifically mentioned the lack of set expectations as an asset.

"It is up to me/us to define my role. That's the best part. At this college, there really are no preconceived expectations."

"I get to pick and choose where and when I get involved—mostly. No one tells me what to do. We have children at home so they are often 'an excuse' to say no to something on campus. But the biggest upside is the students—they are terrific."

"I have basic expectations (welcome weekend, homecoming, board meetings, graduation) that my spouse and I have set but freedom to do more depending on my time, availability and desire. That gives me the freedom to play to my strengths, organizing events that interest me and the donors and board members that I invite."

Least Satisfying Aspects of the Role

Ten partners made comments about role clarity in describing least satisfying aspects of the role.

"The role is largely undefined so it's hard to tell if I'm doing a good job or not."

"Lack of interest in defining expectations of my role by governing board. This is a personal challenge to create a role that is impactful to campus constituencies."

"I find unspoken expectations for what I am supposed to do and it's frustrating. I notice that these

expectations are not extended to my male friends who are presidential spouses."

"I wish the institution had a more defined description/set of expectations for the role, and I wish it was noticed and supported."

Partners' Advice to Others in the Partner Role

In a question that asked partners to give advice to other partners, the largest category of comments concerned role clarity. (See Chapter 13 "Support, Advice, and Last Words from Partners.") We sorted clarity comments into the following eight categories: Establish clarity early (N = 23); take charge of defining role (N = 11); establish agreement with spouse on partner role (N = 10); identify institutional expectations (N = 8); seek clarification from board and others (N = 6); consider compensation (N = 6); get it in writing (N = 5); and miscellaneous (N = 9). Representative comments are below.

Establish Clarity Early

"Try to define your role before you begin/accept your position and don't be afraid to ask questions."

"Get the lines of authority straight from the beginning, so that you can make yourself heard if you have an issue without appearing to be a whining spouse. As a spouse, it is common not to have a defined place in the chain of command. If that is so, make sure your spouse (the President) understands that you have no authority over most people and he/she will have to help solve the issue that is confronting you. Make sure the terms of the house and expectations pertaining to it are clear. It took me some time before I had a budget and didn't have to beg for things that were necessary to the mission of the President's House. My experience is that people at the college want to be supportive and have things go right. Hopefully that will be your experience as well."

"Be very clear beforehand how you want the partnership to operate—particularly, if the spouse has had an independent career."

“Find out ahead of time from board and spouse what is expected of your role. Also, to avoid confusion, determine for yourself and express to both parties what you are willing to do in the role. Over time, circumstances may change and the role maybe expanded. If so, make sure both parties understand what is changing and why.”

Take Charge of Defining Role

“Think deeply about what you want to do and seek clear expectations.”

“Do a lot of intentional values clarification about the role with your spouse and others you trust. Ask ‘what do I like to do best?’ And ‘what is most useful to the institution?’”

“Determine the role you want to play and do what makes you happy. Discuss with your spouse what are must-attend events and skip the rest, unless you enjoy them.”

Establish Agreement with Spouse on Role

“Develop with your spouse/partner how best you can fulfill this role based on what is most important in your life, your life together and with other family members.”

“Communicate with your spouse/partner often about expectations.”

“Please be sure that your spouse/partner has shared his/her expectations of you in your new role. Also, if there are institutional and/or system expectations for your role, please be sure that they are clearly stated—if possible, before your spouse/partner accepts employment.”

Identify Institutional Expectations

“It is useful to determine what the institution expects from you but you have to decide what works for you. Just because the former spouse at your institution baked cookies for the students doesn’t mean that you have to as well.”

“Determine expectations and clarify those you are not comfortable with.”

“Know the expectations of your role; set the boundaries you need for you and your family.”

Consider Compensation

“Know your role and request compensation.”

“If the job has already been agreed to, it’s too late to advise the team to negotiate a reimbursement budget for school related travel. It does bother me that we spend between five and ten thousand dollars a year for me to go on trips with my wife. Trips to AASCU, NCAA playoffs and national championships every year. If this isn’t negotiated before accepting the position, it will never be done after the fact. Give all provosts a heads up before they negotiate their contracts.”

Get It in Writing

“Get a contract for your services — working as a consultant to the Board to eliminate conflicts of interest. Have your role clarified from the beginning regarding your role, your office etc. without sharing details of your compensation. Report to a Board member.”

Seek Clarification from Board and Others

“Ask the oversight board for their expectations.”

“Request meetings with President’s staff to gain insight into their expectations.”

“Speak with board about their expectations as well as with development staff.”

“Understand expectations and how the former spouse was involved.”

Miscellaneous

“Talk about expectations, talk about impact to family and marriage.”

“If I were to do this again at another institution, I would ask what the expectations were of the spouse. I would also ask for a contact staff person whose responsibility it was to keep me informed of campus goings on. In addition, I would ask how they organize travel and letting the spouse know if and when they are wanted! Furthermore, I would definitely ask about the house and how repairs/maintenance/decorating is handled.”

Anything Else to Add?

The final open-ended question on the survey asked partners if they had anything else to add. (See Chapter 13 “Support, Advice, and Last Words from Partners.”) Twenty six respondents provided comments regarding clarity. Of the 26, 13 fell into the category of “I have defined my role;” 11 addressed issues relative to “expectations of the partner role;” and two expressed “concerns about role clarity.”

I Have Defined my Role

“This is a time of great change for private liberal arts colleges and the role of president is also in flux. It makes sense that the role of the spouse/partner is undergoing redefinition, too. I have found that I can take advantage of the gray areas to develop an agenda that suits me and the institution. I am not bound by traditions nor am I expected to be.”

“I feel that the role the previous spouse had on the campus greatly influences the expectations for new spouses of the president. You have to be confident in your right to redefine the role and not be pressured into being something you are not.”

“Most expectations are my own. Early on, I said yes to everything. Now, I am more judicious and it works just fine. The biggest challenge is being an all-in partner to the president to help him succeed while managing job, family and a private life.”

Expectations of the Partner Role

“It has been a unique privilege to be the spouse of a university president . . . Sometimes wish I had a ‘written list of responsibilities,’ other times thankful that I don’t.”

“Although it is obvious that the spouse has a role to fulfill by accompanying the President at social events and hosting a considerable amount of dinners/fundraisers at the official residence, I don’t think there should be a contract with specific functions spouses must engage in within the institution. I think the spouse’s involvement should be left to his or her discretion. It should be left for the president and his or her spouse to decide. Some spouses have been heavily criticized for meddling too much.”

“Over the years we have been at seven different colleges and universities and the roles of the spouses/partners of the president/chancellor were different at each place. It is very important for the institutions to be specific in outlining what the institution’s expectations are to the president/chancellor and their spouse/partner. The president/chancellor and their spouse/partner need to then communicate with each other to make decisions on how to work to best serve the institution.”

Concerns about Role Clarity

“It needs to be made clear to board members that the spouse isn’t someone who is to be used by them. My husband wouldn’t have gotten his last job if I had gone back to work, which had been my plan. It was made clear they wanted a traditional role for the spouse.”

CHAPTER 8

SATISFACTION IN THE ROLE

“Having been in this role for the past 10 years, I can say that it has been a wonderful experience. While I had to figure out on my own what my role would be, while at the same time raising my children, I have learned a lot about the institution, the community at large and more importantly about myself. I have set the pace for this discovery, which I think is key to enjoying the journey. I am looking forward to what is ahead for me in this role.”

“Most rewarding experience of my lifetime and I am so thankful for the opportunity.”

“I am lucky to be married to the Best University President in the World. I help out when she needs me and I stay out of the way when she doesn’t.”

“Best. Job. Ever.”

– 2016 Survey Respondents

Each of the above quotes came from the last question on the survey: “Is there anything else you would like to add, regarding your role?” The comments are representative of the 80 partners who used the opportunity to make an additional comment about enjoying the role. (See Chapter 13 “Support, Advice, and a Final Word” for the full list of topics.) The word “privilege” was specifically used by 14 partners, as in

“It has been a privilege to serve in the role of a partner of the president/chancellor.”

Chapter Overview

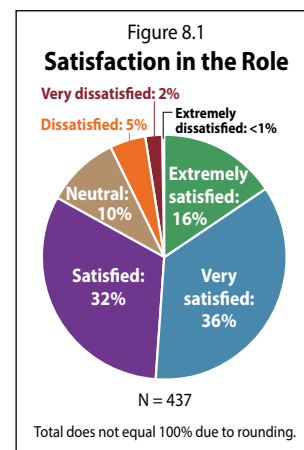
We included multiple types of questions and conducted data analysis to identify variables most strongly associated with overall satisfaction, as well as to identify most and least satisfying aspects and activities of the role. This chapter describes those results and indicates relationships between overall satisfaction and other questions on the survey. We asked partners to comment on their most and least satisfying aspects of the role and present those results in this chapter.

Overall Satisfaction

Partners sent an unmistakable message about satisfaction in this study. Figure 8.1 illustrates the response to the question, “Overall, how satisfied are you with your current role and responsibilities associated with being the president/chancellor’s spouse/partner?” Partners overwhelmingly (84%)

stated they were satisfied, very satisfied, or extremely satisfied. Most like the role; many love it. Despite the fact that they can, and often do, struggle with the role’s ambiguity and high demands, partners voiced a high level of overall satisfaction.

As the current study included enough responses from males (18%, N = 77), we were able to do statistical comparisons between responses of females versus males in the role. We found no statistically



**Partners,
both female
and male,
overwhelmingly
stated they
were satisfied,
very satisfied,
or extremely
satisfied.**

significant difference by gender, as shown in Table 8.1. The mean satisfaction for females was 5.37 on a one-to-seven scale, and was 5.57 for males.

We likewise found no statistically significant difference in satisfaction between partners at the 240 private institutions (mean of 5.44) and 197 public institutions (mean of 5.37).

Satisfaction and Role Clarity

As was shown in Chapter 7 “Role Clarity,” partners who reported higher clarity in their role were found to report higher satisfaction in the role (see Figure 7.5). The correlation between perceived role clarity and overall satisfaction was statistically significant and clarity accounted for 20 percent of the variation in partners’ overall satisfaction.

Satisfaction and Involvement

In addition to role clarity, campus involvement was associated with overall satisfaction. Chapter 6 “The Partner Role” described partners’ levels of involvement in institutional life and discussed how satisfaction rose with level of involvement, but up to a point (see Figure 6.17).

While there is not a significant difference in male and female overall satisfaction in the role, we wondered if we would find a gender difference if we considered differing levels of involvement of females and males in the analysis of possible gender differences in overall satisfaction. The results of a two-way analysis of variance did not indicate a statistically significant gender difference in satisfaction when considering the possible effects of gender difference in involvement. As is noted in Figure 8.2, the numbers of both females and males in the lowest category, and males in the highest category were very small; only the “somewhat involved” category showed meaningful differences in mean satisfaction by gender: Males are more satisfied at the somewhat involved level (5.67) than are females (5.15).

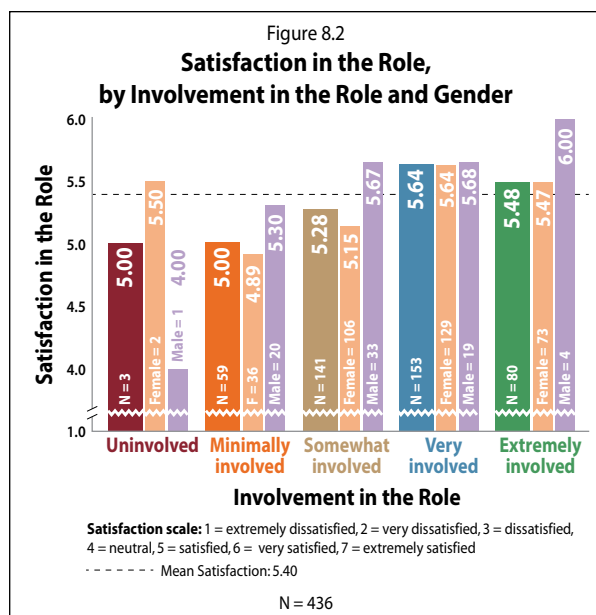
When analyzing that data, we looked at partners’ level of involvement on a five-point scale and compared their mean levels of satisfaction on a seven-point scale. We found these results intriguing, and looked again at the data, this time starting

Table 8.1
Overall Satisfaction in the Role of Partner, by Gender

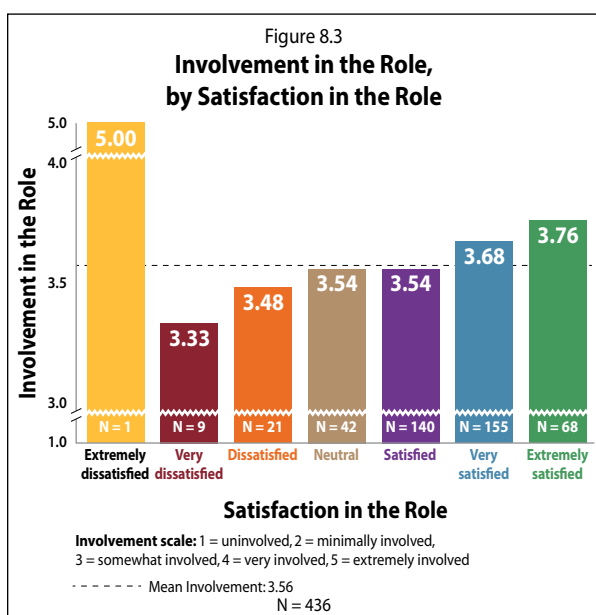
| | Gender | | | | | | | | t (1,422) |
|------------------------|--------|------|-----------|------|------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| | Female | | | | Male | | | | |
| | N | % | \bar{x} | SD | N | % | \bar{x} | SD | |
| Response ‡ | | | 5.37 | 1.17 | | | 5.57 | 1.08 | – 1.35 |
| Extremely dissatisfied | 1 | 0.3 | | | 0 | — | | | |
| Very dissatisfied | 8 | 2.3 | | | 1 | 1.3 | | | |
| Dissatisfied | 18 | 5.2 | | | 2 | 2.6 | | | |
| Neutral | 32 | 9.2 | | | 8 | 10.4 | | | |
| Satisfied | 114 | 32.9 | | | 22 | 28.6 | | | |
| Very satisfied | 122 | 35.2 | | | 29 | 37.7 | | | |
| Extremely satisfied | 52 | 15.0 | | | 15 | 19.5 | | | |

[‡] Responses were offered on the following seven-point scale: 1 = extremely dissatisfied, 2 = very dissatisfied, 3 = dissatisfied, 4 = neutral, 5 = satisfied, 6 = very satisfied, and 7 = extremely satisfied.

*** $p < .001$

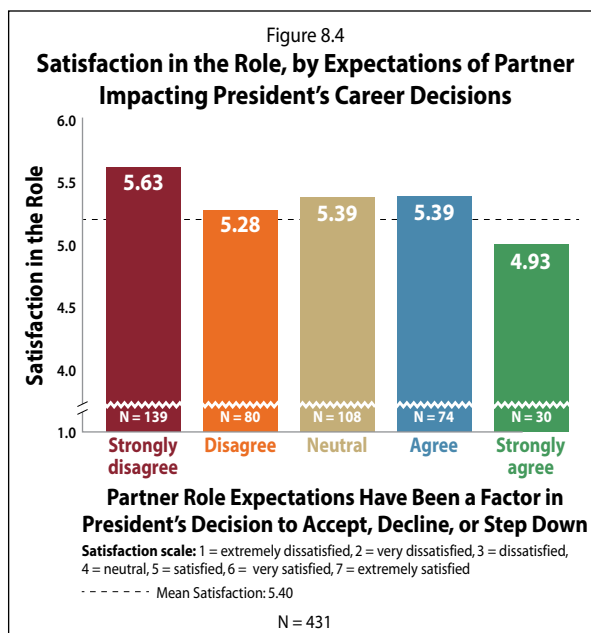


with the level of satisfaction, and then comparing levels of involvement. (It should be noted that of 446 partners who responded to the involvement question, only three reported being uninvolved. Of the 437 partners who answered the satisfaction question, only one reported being extremely dissatisfied. Both questions were answered by 436 partners.) As shown in Figure 8.3, with the exception of the one outlier, not only did satisfaction increase with increased involvement, involvement increased with increased satisfaction.



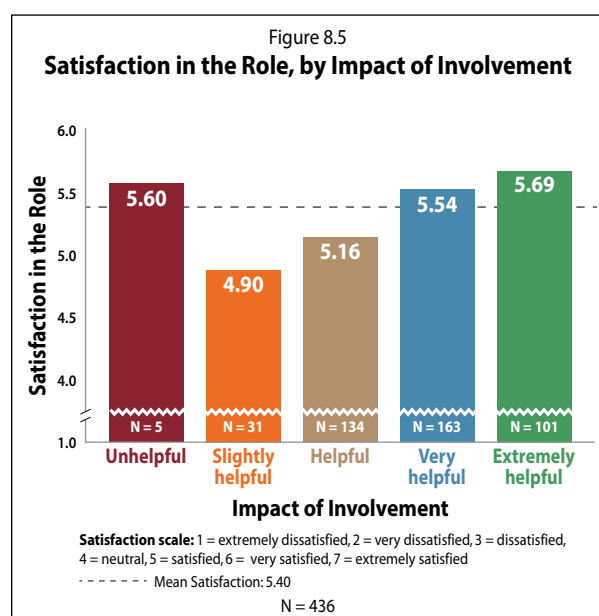
Satisfaction Related to Impact on President's Decisions and Perceived Success

In Chapter 5 “Transition to the Presidential Partner Role” we showed in Figure 5.2 that one fourth of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I believe that on at least one occasion, an institution’s expectations regarding my role as spouse/partner have been a significant factor in my spouse/partner’s decision to accept, decline, or step down from a president/chancellor position.” We wondered if partners’ responses to that question related to their overall satisfaction in their current partner role and found a statistically significant difference in levels of partner satisfaction. Figure 8.4 indicates mean overall satisfaction as a function of the level of disagreement or agreement: those who strongly disagreed had the highest mean satisfaction of 5.63, while those who strongly agreed had the lowest mean satisfaction of 4.93.



In Chapter 6 “The Partner Role” we showed in Figure 6.18 that an overwhelming majority of partners (92%) rated “the impact of your level of campus/institution involvement on your spouse/partner’s success as president/chancellor” as helpful (32%), very helpful (37%), or extremely helpful (23%). (Only 1% said unhelpful and 7% said slightly helpful.) Knowing that partners might

see their low involvement as helpful and their high involvement as unhelpful, and vice versa, we wondered how their perception of helpfulness would relate to their satisfaction. We found a statistically significant difference in overall satisfaction as a function of partners' perception of the helpfulness of their level of campus/institution involvement. Figure 8.5 shows that while the five partners who viewed their involvement as unhelpful are nonetheless satisfied overall (5.60, which is above the overall mean of 5.41), for the other 99 percent of partners, satisfaction increased as impact of helpful involvement increased.



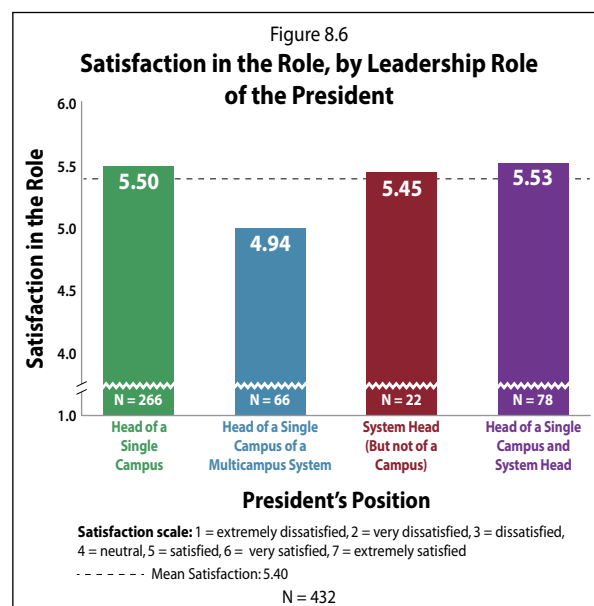
Satisfaction Related to Other Variables

In this section we consider the possible differences in overall partner satisfaction related to several variables including the leadership role of the president, athletic association membership, and employment.

Leadership Role of the President

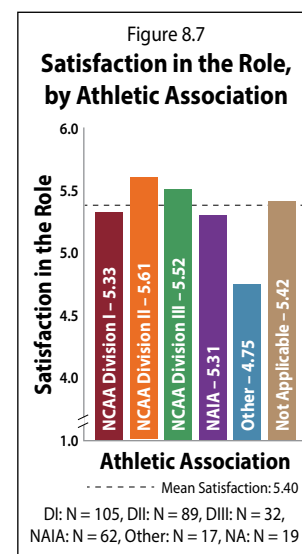
Chapter 6 “The Partner Role” discussed variables as related to partner involvement. Comparing leadership role of the president to partner involvement, Figure 6.14 showed that partners of presidents who were both system head and head of a single campus were the most involved, followed by partners of heads of single campuses, then system heads, then heads of a single campus of a system.

We also found a statistically significant difference in level of partner satisfaction among the four leadership roles of the president. As shown in Figure 8.6, the level of satisfaction follows the same order as the level of involvement. Partners of presidents who were both head of a single campus and system head were the most satisfied at a mean of 5.53 and partners of heads of a single campus of a system least satisfied at 4.94.



Intercollegiate Athletic Association Membership

Intercollegiate athletic association membership related to partner involvement (mentioned in Chapter 6 and shown in Figure 6.13) with the most involved being NCAA Division I (mean involvement 3.75 of a 1–5 scale) and involvement decreasing in order to NCAA Division II (3.62), NCAA Division III (3.56), NAIA (3.52), Other (3.12), and Does not apply (2.89). The difference in overall satisfaction among the six responses to

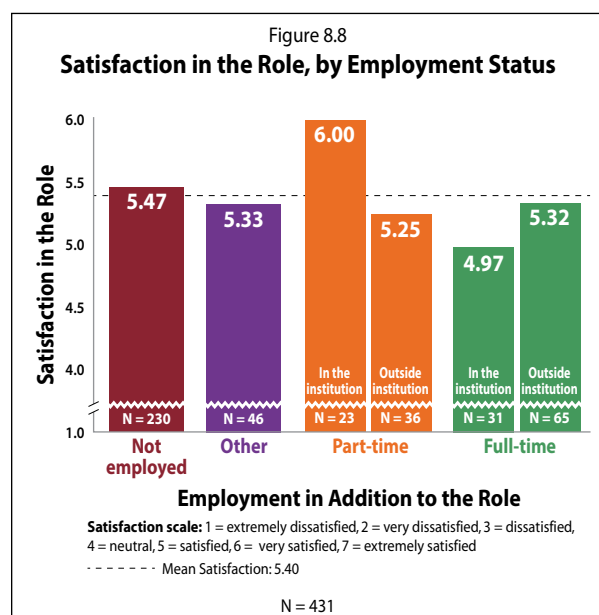


the question about athletic association membership, portrayed in Figure 8.7, was *not* statistically significant.

In Chapter 5 “Transition to the Presidential Partner Role” we noted that partners at NCAA Division I schools most frequently reported challenges with schedule demands in the first year. We wondered if athletic association membership related to levels of frustration. We did not find differences in “Worry about the effects of pressure on spouse/partner” nor in responses to “How frequently does your spouse/partner share her or his thoughts and feelings about work-related problems and stresses with you?”

Employment

In Chapter 5 we showed (Figure 5.5) that half of partners changed employment; 75 percent of those partners became unemployed outside the role and 21 percent reduced work to part-time. We compared current employment status to overall satisfaction and found a statistically significant difference among the six possible responses to the question about partners’ employment status. As shown in Figure 8.8, the level of overall satisfaction varied from a high of 6.0 for those employed part-time in the institution to a low of 4.97 for those who were employed full-time in the institution.



We did not ask the partners who quit or reduced employment why or when they did so. From comments it seems that some changed employment as the result of moving for the President’s job and some reduced employment when the responsibilities of the role became too time consuming to continue working at the same level.

Partner satisfaction increased with involvement, and involvement increased with satisfaction

Region

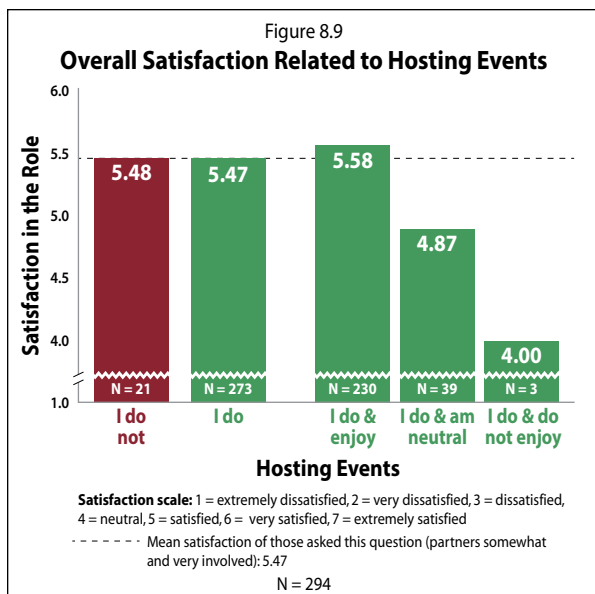
We examined possible regional differences in overall partner satisfaction. We did not find a statistically significant difference, but rather variability by region. Partners, both male and female, in the South are the most involved (a mean of 3.75 out of 5) and the most satisfied (5.56 out of 7), whereas partners outside the U.S. are both least involved (3.14) and least satisfied (5.0). These results, however, are not statistically significant.

Hosting Events

In Chapter 6 “The Partner Role” we describe activities associated with roles and responsibilities assumed by partners and associated levels of enjoyment (Table 6.3). The most frequent responsibility that is assumed by partners is hosting events. While 85 percent of partners who host events say they enjoy it, and many partners responded to open-ended questions with comments saying that they enjoy entertaining, a few made comments such as

“Don’t live in on-campus housing with entertainment expectations!”

Given the large percentage of partners who assume the role of hosting events, we wondered if there was a difference in satisfaction between those who host events and those who do not. As the results in the left section of Figure 8.9 indicate, mean satisfaction levels were virtually identical for those who do versus those who do not host events, but as the results in the right section of Figure 8.9 indicate, how partners who host events feel about doing so relates to their overall satisfaction in the



partner role. Partners who host events and do not enjoy doing so were notably less satisfied overall. There were only three partners in this category. The 30 partners who hosted and were neutral were also much less satisfied than those who enjoyed hosting events.

Most Satisfying Aspects of the Role

Partners responded to open-ended questions asking, “Which aspects of your current spouse/partner role do you find most satisfying?” and “Which aspects of your current spouse/partner role do you find least satisfying?” The responses were categorized and are listed in order of frequency. (Some respondents gave multiple responses, or responses that fit more than one category.)

Figure 8.10 shows the categories of the 361 partner responses to the most satisfying aspect of the role. Quotes from the 13 categories with 15 or more responses are included below. Partners most frequently mentioned working with students as the most satisfying aspect of the role.

Students

“I enjoy engaging with the students immensely.”

“Interaction with students and witnessing growth and development of students”

“Being on campus and relating to students”

“I love student interaction.”

“I enjoy mentoring and inspiring students.”

Meeting Interesting People

“Meeting and socializing with some incredible people—alumni, philanthropists, academics, students”

“Enjoying special experiences with remarkable and gifted personalities who have a profound impact on society or culture, meeting talented alumni who are changing the world/their part of the world”

“Ability to meet and interact with amazing people, both on the campuses/system and externally”

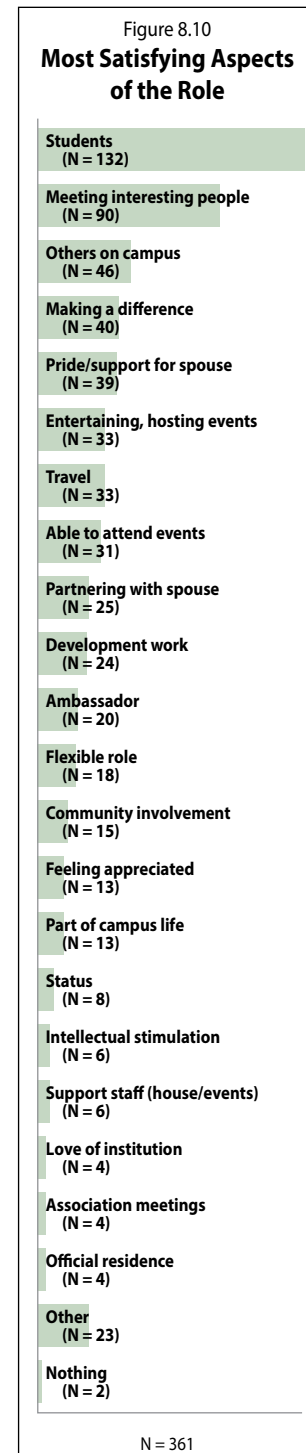
“I have the opportunity to meet with wonderful, generous servant leaders and bright, talented individuals from many walks of life. These opportunities are directly related to spouse’s role.”

Others on Campus

“Getting to know people associated with the college: trustees, faculty, alums”

“Interaction with faculty, staff and students. Involvement with campus life. Acceptance and respect from faculty and staff.”

“Celebrating the accomplishments of faculty and staff”



"Relational aspects with faculty/staff/students/alumni/friends"

"Entertaining and spending time with the faculty and staff and trustees of the university"

Making a Difference

"Supporting the noble work of education"

"The ability to have a positive impact on the students, alumni and community we serve"

"Contributing to something that makes a huge difference"

"Ability of both of our roles to make a positive difference in future of university"

Pride/Support for Spouse

"Seeing my partner be so satisfied with the position and her success in that position"

"I feel genuinely helpful to my partner in three ways: (1) Relieving stress, because I am often the only one with whom my partner can confide the challenges and frustrations of the day. (2) Helping to cement and promote relationships, particularly with donors, by being an informal social conversation partner when traveling or attending social events with donors. Over time, I have developed warm acquaintances with several key donors, and feel as welcome as my partner in their presence. (3) Attending a large percentage of student events, athletic competitions, performances, and the like, where my presence shows support for the students and underscores the connection between the president and the student body."

"Being able to contribute to my partner's success as President and her overall well being in this very stressful role"

Entertaining, Hosting Events

"Entertaining at the house and making people feel welcomed"

"I enjoy bringing people together from the different constituencies of students, faculty, staff, board of trustees and donors, and community members to the President's house for various events."

"Hosting small dinners for lots of interesting people"

Travel

"Being able to travel with spouse for institutional visits/donor visits/events"

"Getting to travel with him, including international travel"

"Due to the increase in my husband's salary from previous employment in combination with the many travel opportunities, I get to travel with him frequently and I enjoy that. (Some travel is paid by the University if I am 'working'—attending meetings, etc. But sometimes we pay my own expenses personally and just get to be a tourist/have free time in some destinations.)"

Able to Attend Events

"Participating in events where I meet interesting people and find out about the work being done at the university. City/university events that I'm able to attend."

"Attending and participating in a multitude of lectures, visual and performing arts and sporting events"

"... I also LOVE attending student events and other events on campus!"

Partnering with Spouse

"Getting to share time/activities with my spouse"

"Sharing the same goals, working together"

"We believe this work is a partnership, and our community recognizes and respects that."

Development Work

"I truly enjoy meeting donors and hearing their stories. I have always found people to be fascinating. Most people are just nice people."

"Positive relationship with development staff who appreciate facts that I share with them."

Ambassador

"The ability to support the president and represent the institution"

"Being an ambassador for the college in the community"

"Ability to 'sub' for President in some social and athletic events. Prestige of position, especially for someone retired from prior occupational position outside of institution."

Flexible Role

"I have no job description, no one reports to me and I report to no one. I can do whatever I want for the university as long as it is uplifting to our university community. So I engage in efforts that are a vocation to me."

"Having the freedom to pick and choose which activities at the institution I can participate in."

"The college understands for the most part I am a professor and they love my classes and my extremely active citizenship in that role on campus."

Community Involvement

"Volunteering in the community while representing the university"

"I like being able to connect some of the resources of the institution to people and organizations in the local community."

"Being involved in significant community events and helping to build an improved town-gown relationship"

Least Satisfying Aspects of the Role

Figure 8.11 shows the categories of the 332 partners' responses concerning the least satisfying aspect of the role. The immense time commitment was the most frequent response category, with more than twice as many responses as the second category, lack of privacy.

Quotes from the nine categories with 15 or more responses are included below. Additionally, several of the quotes for the least satisfying aspects are included in the subsequent chapter on challenges.

It is noteworthy that 29 fewer partners responded with a least satisfying aspect than most satisfying aspect (332 compared to 361) and 23 of the responding partners wrote that there was nothing that was least satisfying about the role.

24/7/365

Commitment

"Having constraints on my ability to control my time, having to cancel or reschedule personal commitments or not participate in personal activities because of official duties."

"Being very busy"

"24-7 nature of our roles"

Lack of Privacy

"Lack of privacy, lack of ability to drop official identity at any time. Even when traveling, we are often recognized."

"Living in a fishbowl . . . always having to be guarded in what I do and say."

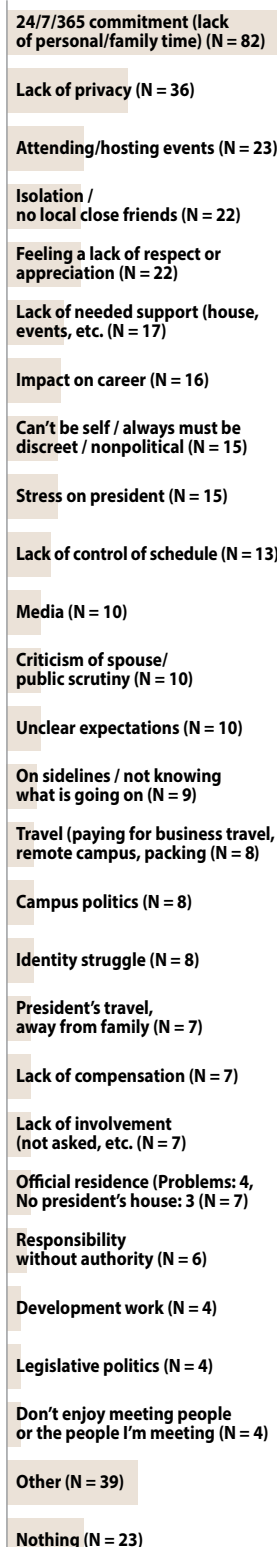
Attending/Hosting Events

"The occasional event I have to attend with friends of the university who are strangers to me. I am not a schmoozer."

"Attending galas where dinners are done over music that is so loud you cannot hear others or have meaningful conversations."

Figure 8.11

Least Satisfying Aspects of the Role



N = 332

Isolation/No Local Close Friends

"Isolation and lack of deep friendships at current location"

"The lack of close friends (their agenda, being on guard about what we say, etc.)"

Feeling a Lack of Respect or Appreciation

"I would enjoy all of the tasks if there were more appreciation for my role."

"No one has ever asked what I do for a living. From the start, I have felt my role to be wholly defined by my partnership with the president, and the entire burden of my effectiveness has rested on that superficial fact and not what I myself could bring, with my skill set and competencies, to the role. I have used my skills and experience in the context of community board memberships, but I had to make my resume known in every circumstance because it was never a point of interest or inquiry."

Lack of Staff Support

"Cleaning, prepping residence for events"

"Event planning"

"Lack of office staff support"

Impact on Career

"Losing my professional positional authority I have enjoyed in the past"

"Balancing my personal life, including a full time job, with university responsibilities"

"Difficult to put on a vita—'presidential spouse' "

Can't Be Self / Always Must Be Discreet / Nonpolitical

"Having constraints on my ability to be fully open with my political opinions"

"The constant need to be discreet is draining."

"Always being up and positive even when you don't feel that way"

Stress on President

"Dealing with the amount of pressure and stress my spouse is under. The demands on him are immense and oftentimes it feels as though he is walking the journey alone (without adequate board support)."

"The stress she experiences in her role"

"The stress on my spouse and his lack of downtime to do fun things/get away"

Looking for Clues to Dissatisfaction

We were curious to see if partners' comments could help explain overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Seven percent of the respondents stated that they were dissatisfied overall. (On the seven-point scale, one partner selected extremely dissatisfied, nine selected very dissatisfied, and 21 selected dissatisfied.) We examined comments from the 31 dissatisfied partners and compared them to comments from extremely satisfied partners regarding their most and least satisfying aspects of the role. While three partners who expressed overall dissatisfaction related personal struggles adjusting to the role, overall the comments from the most and least satisfied partners varied surprisingly little. It seems that people who were both satisfied and dissatisfied with the role of presidential partner essentially agreed on its best and worst features.

Least Satisfying Aspects Compared

A dissatisfied partner wrote

"No time for each other"

And an extremely satisfied partner wrote

"Lack of time together"

A dissatisfied partner wrote

"I feel like the community here is unaccustomed to my level of involvement in the role of chancellor's spouse and they do not understand my value or contributions."

And an extremely satisfied partner wrote that the least satisfying was

"Having to explain my role to people who have never seen this model at our campus."

Most Satisfying Aspects Compared

A dissatisfied partner wrote

"Meeting students and interacting with them."

And an extremely satisfied partner wrote

"Interaction with students."

Dissatisfied partners wrote

“I know I can make a difference with alumni and the community—they appear to view me positively, and that helps my spouse and hopefully therefore the institution.”

“I really appreciate my opportunities to serve and be engaged with campus community and the students.”

And extremely satisfied partners wrote

“Opportunities to meet interesting people, and making people’s day by showing up”

“We have an opportunity to meet and enjoy such diverse groups of constituents, and my spouse is very highly regarded by all of them.”

Variations by Overall Satisfaction

While we noted no illuminating differences among the above responses, there were two variations:

- Two of the dissatisfied 31 mentioned meeting with other spouses at association meetings as a most satisfying aspect, compared to none of the extremely satisfied and only four of the 362 overall responses.
- Three of the 31 dissatisfied partners mentioned issues regarding role clarity as a least satisfying aspect, which is a higher than average frequency than the 10 of 309 overall responses that mentioned role clarity. A dissatisfied partner wrote that the least satisfying aspect was

“Lack of interest in defining expectations of my role by governing board. This is a personal

challenge to create a role that is impactful to campus constituencies.”

An extremely satisfied partner wrote in response to the most satisfying aspect

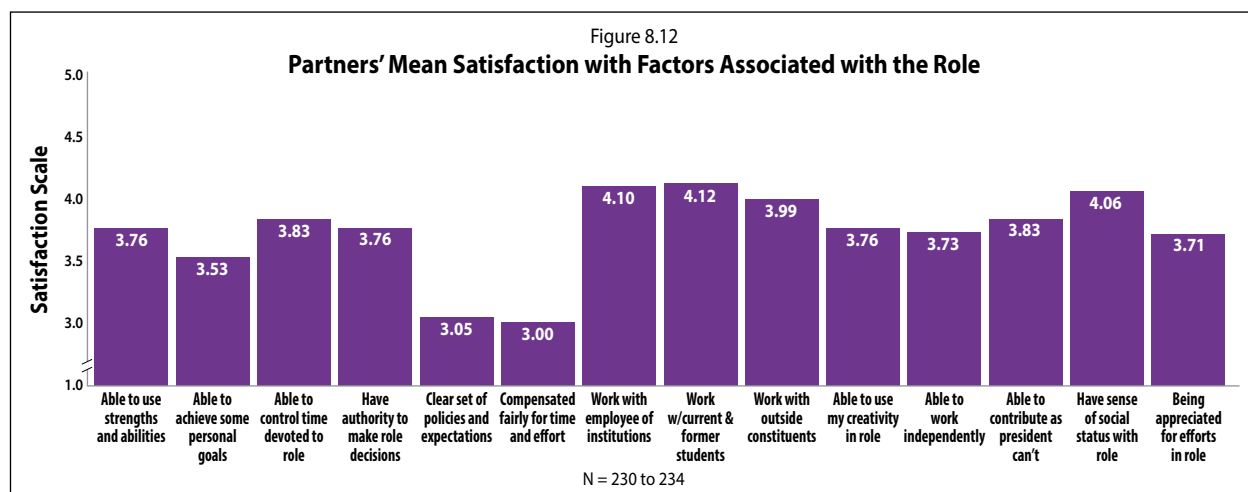
“I have no job description, no one reports to me and I report to no one. I can do whatever I want for the university.”

While partners who responded that they were dissatisfied overall might not be expected to describe aspects of greatest satisfaction, 27 of those 31 responded with aspects they most enjoyed, including

“While close and trusted friends are too few, the people I do get to meet on a personal or official basis is very satisfying. Being able to have meaningful contact with a variety of students is a great blessing. I am grateful for the privilege of being a part of the university community as the university has become a central factor in the growth and development of the city and region.”

Satisfaction Factors

The literature on an individual’s overall satisfaction in life, satisfaction in work life, and satisfaction with other roles such as spouse or parent typically includes a set of questions focused on specific aspects of satisfaction. We asked partners to indicate their level of satisfaction for each of 14 specific factors that may correlate with their overall level of satisfaction. This question included only partners who indicated that they were “somewhat involved” or “very involved” to get a description of specific



levels of satisfaction of those partners who devote a typical amount of time to the partner role.

As the results in Figure 8.12 indicate, the mean levels of specific aspects of satisfaction ranged from a high of 4.12 for the item “Working with current and former students of the institution” to a low of 3.00 for “Being compensated fairly for my time and effort in the role.” (The first item is an example of an intrinsic aspect of satisfaction, whereas the second item is an example of an extrinsic aspect of job satisfaction.)

Table 8.2 shows levels of satisfaction for the 14 factors by gender. These results indicate means for the 14 aspects of satisfaction are very similar for females and males.

We also correlated responses to the 14 specific aspects of satisfaction with overall satisfaction to see the degree to which factors may influence overall satisfaction. Not surprisingly, we found a statistically significant correlation ($p < .01$) for all 14 of the specific aspects of satisfaction. Figure 8.13 shows the degree of correlation, which ranged

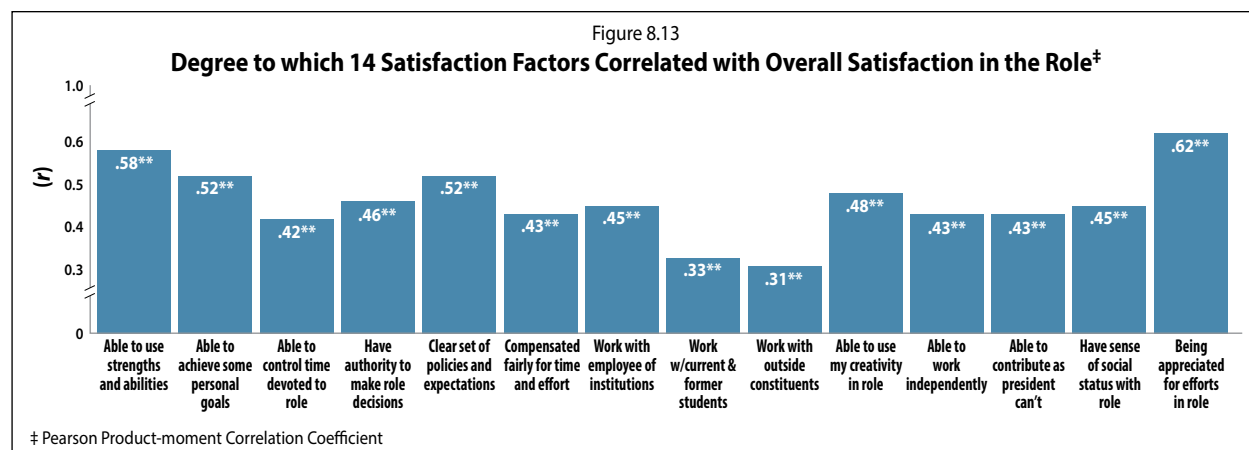
Table 8.2

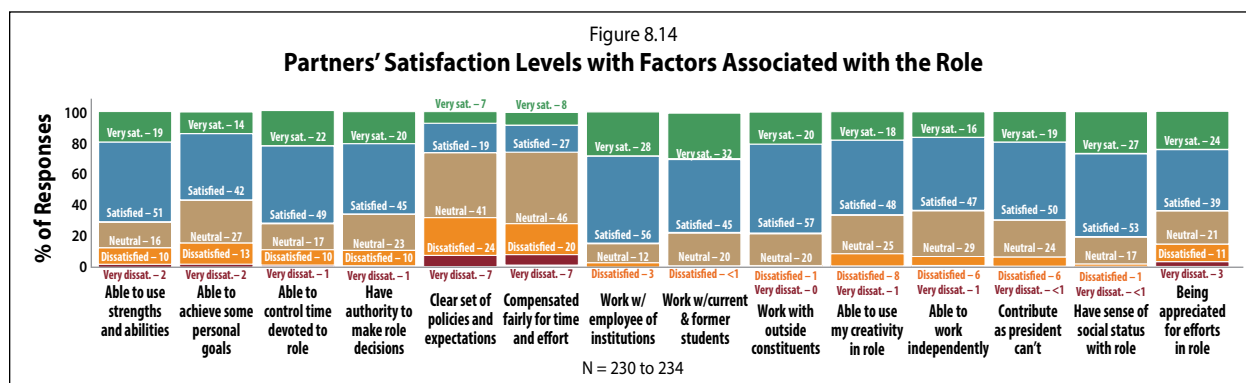
Levels of Specific Satisfaction Associated with the Role of Partner, by Gender

| Factors | Level of Satisfaction [‡] | | | | | | t (1,282) |
|---|------------------------------------|-----------|------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| | Female | | | Male | | | |
| | N | \bar{x} | SD | N | \bar{x} | SD | |
| Being able to use my abilities and strengths | 234 | 3.76 | 0.96 | 52 | 3.69 | 0.90 | 0.44 |
| Being able to achieve some of my personal goals | 233 | 3.48 | 0.97 | 52 | 3.62 | 0.89 | −0.89 |
| Being able to control how much time I devote to my role | 234 | 3.78 | 0.93 | 52 | 3.98 | 0.90 | −1.40 |
| Having the authority to make decisions related to the role | 232 | 3.76 | 0.92 | 52 | 3.73 | 0.87 | 0.21 |
| Having a clear set of policies and expectations related to role | 232 | 3.01 | 1.02 | 52 | 3.15 | 0.99 | 0.91 |
| Being compensated fairly for my time and effort in the role | 230 | 2.94 | 1.01 | 51 | 3.22 | 0.92 | −1.80 |
| Working with employees of the institution | 233 | 4.10 | 0.71 | 52 | 4.10 | 0.69 | 0.02 |
| Working with current and former students of the institution | 231 | 4.11 | 0.73 | 52 | 4.08 | 0.76 | 0.32 |
| Working with constituents outside the institution | 232 | 3.98 | 0.68 | 52 | 3.98 | 0.61 | 0.02 |
| Being able to use my creativity in my role | 233 | 3.78 | 0.88 | 52 | 3.63 | 0.82 | 1.06 |
| Being able to work independently in some responsibilities | 233 | 3.77 | 0.83 | 52 | 3.56 | 0.80 | 1.69 |
| Being able to contribute in ways the president is unable to | 233 | 3.85 | 0.83 | 52 | 3.69 | 0.78 | 1.28 |
| Having a sense of social status associated with the role | 233 | 4.08 | 0.72 | 52 | 4.00 | 0.74 | 0.73 |
| Being appreciated for my sacrifices and efforts in the role | 233 | 3.69 | 1.10 | 52 | 3.77 | 0.85 | −0.50 |

‡ Responses were obtained on the following five-point scale: 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = neutral, 4 = satisfied, and 5 = very satisfied.

Note: Only those partners who indicated they were involved in the role were asked the questions about specific contributions to overall satisfaction with the role of partner.





from a low of $r = .31$ for “working with constituents outside the institution” to a high of $r = .62$ for “being appreciated for my sacrifices and efforts in the role.”

Figure 8.14 shows the number of responses to five levels of satisfaction (very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied) for each of the 14 factors.

Specific Aspects of Satisfaction by Gender

We found both many differences and many similarities by partner gender that are detailed throughout this report. Male and female partner responses to the multiple choice questions about specific aspects of satisfaction were quite similar. Responses to the open-ended questions regarding most and least satisfying aspect of the role showed subtle variations. Males and females alike reported that interaction with students was the most satisfying aspect of the role, followed by interactions with other people they meet through the role. Male partners wrote comments that were categorized as pride in or support for spouse twice as frequently as female partners.

Regarding least satisfying aspect of the role, male partners more frequently mentioned their spouses being too busy rather than themselves being too busy. Male partners mentioned criticism of their spouses much more frequently than did female partners; half of the comments regarding criticism were from males, whereas males were only 18% of the surveyed partners. More details regarding frustrations are discussed in Chapter 9 “Challenges in the Role.”

Specific Aspects of Satisfaction for Partners of System Heads Who Do Not Head Campuses

Interaction with students was the most frequent response to most satisfying aspect of the role as an open-ended text question, and working with current and former students had the highest satisfaction level in the multiple choice section. We wondered if the partners of system heads who do not head campuses would have less interaction with students and therefore different experiences than those partners who were associated with a specific campus.

There were 22 partners of system heads in the survey (14 public, 8 private; 19 females, 3 males). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, those partners had levels of satisfaction approximately equal to the overall average. (See Figure 8.6, “Satisfaction in the Role, by Leadership Role of the President.”) Their responses to the multiple choice questions about specific aspects of satisfaction were approximately the same.

When asked about the most satisfying aspect of the role, they mentioned students nearly as frequently as did partners overall. They mentioned other people they meet through the role more frequently, equal to student interaction. Partners of system heads mentioned attending events more frequently as both the most satisfying aspect and as the least satisfying aspect of the role.

Comparing Satisfaction: 1984 and 2016

When designing the 2016 survey, we included several questions from the 1984 survey (Clodius & Skomars Magrath) in order to assess changes over time. In Chapter 5 “Transition to the Presidential Partner Role” we discussed our finding that partners today identified the same greatest challenges in making the transition to the partner role as did their 1984 predecessors.

Participants in the 1984 survey were asked to “Please list the best aspects of your role as the spouse of the President/Chancellor.” Corresponding 1984 results were not published, but Diane Skomars shared the anonymized answers with us. We categorized and tabulated the responses. Those results, along with the 2016 results to the most satisfying aspect of the role, are shown in Figure 8.15.

Comparing the two lists is problematic. In both surveys several participants listed more than one aspect, but others didn’t and the results might be different if those

respondents had had more time or space to give multiple responses. It is also possible that the most frequent answers to a multiple-choice question might be different from a fill-in-the-blank question. With open-ended questions, participant responses may be unduly influenced by recent events. Because of these concerns, we have not used percentages in other figures reporting responses to open-ended questions, but nonetheless do so here as it is best for comparison.

We found more variation among the most satisfying or best aspects of the role than among the frustrations and challenges. It may seem, in a refutation of Tolstoy, that all unhappy partners are alike; each happy partner is happy in his or her own way, at least when compared over time. As described below, however, the individual comments varied less than the frequency of the comments.

In 2016, the most frequently mentioned aspect of satisfaction was students (37%), whereas students were mentioned by only five percent of respondents in 1984. The four most frequently mentioned response categories in 1984 were meeting people (58%), travel (30%), making a difference (29%) and intellectual stimulation (26%).

Meeting People

While respondents to both surveys mentioned “meeting interesting people,” 1984 partners mentioned it more than twice as frequently (58% compared to 25%). The 1984 survey asked, “What are the most important qualifications for your role/job?” The overwhelming top response at 53 percent was “Enjoy people.” (The second most frequent response, at 9 percent, was flexibility.)

Travel

Travel was mentioned frequently in both 2016 (33 responses) and 1984 (25 responses), but at a much higher percentage in 1984 (30% compared to 9%). Neither survey asked detailed questions about travel, so we don’t know if partners currently travel less, appreciate travel less, or just mentioned more everyday aspects (such as student interaction) more frequently.

Figure 8.15

Most Satisfying Aspects of the Role in 1984 and 2016

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Students – 132 (37%) | Students – 4 (5%) |
| Meeting people – 90 (25%) | Meeting people – 49 (58%) |
| Others on campus – 46 (13%) | Others on campus – 1 (1%) |
| Making a difference – 40 (11%) | Making a difference – 24 (29%) |
| Pride/support for spouse – 39 (11%) | Pride/support for spouse – 8 (10%) |
| Entertaining, hosting – 33 (9%) | Entertaining, hosting – 11 (13%) |
| Travel – 33 (9%) | Travel – 25 (30%) |
| Events and activities – 31 (9%) | Events and activities – 5 (6%) |
| Partnering with spouse – 25 (7%) | Partnering with spouse – 18 (21%) |
| Development work – 24 (7%) | Development work – 0 |
| Living logo/ambassador – 20 (6%) | Living logo/ambassador – 4 (5%) |
| Flexible role – 19 (5%) | Flexible role – 3 (4%) |
| Community involvement – 15 (4%) | Community involvement – 2 (2%) |
| Feeling appreciated – 13 (4%) | Feeling appreciated – 1 (1%) |
| Part of campus life – 13 (4%) | Part of campus life – 5 (6%) |
| Status – 8 (2%) | Status – 4 (5%) |
| Intellectual stimulation – 6 (2%) | Intellectual stimulation – 22 (26%) |
| Support staff (house/events) – 6 (2%) | Support staff (house/events) – 9 (11%) |
| Love of institution – 4 (1%) | Love of institution – 0 |
| Association meetings – 4 (1%) | Association meetings – 1 (1%) |
| House – 4 (1%) | House – 4 (5%) |
| Other – 23 (6%) | Other – 3 (4%) |
| Nothing – 2 (<1%) | Nothing – 0 |

Key: 2016 1984

2016 (Hendel, Kaler, & Freed)
361 responses from 461 participants
1984 (Clodius & Skomars Magrath)
84 responses from 104 participants

Making a Difference

“Making a difference” was also mentioned more than twice as frequently in 1984 than in 2016 (29% compared to 11%). The individual comments were often similar:

1984: *“President/President’s spouse is a job we can do together; the opportunity to meet some fantastic people; travel; the feeling that I am contributing to something lasting and worthwhile that will make our world a little bit better.”*

2016: *“My spouse and I are quite GOOD at leading a private, non-profit, independent university, which brings us a real sense of accomplishment. And we feel it is necessary work . . . a calling to a higher good, in a way: for our community, county, region, state, country—indeed, the world.”*

Intellectual Stimulation

Comments that were coded as “intellectual stimulation” came from 2 percent of 2016 respondents compared to 26 percent of the 1984 respondents, but some of those comments were very similar:

1984: *“It is a fantastically broadening adventure, from the campus, where you are the architect of social activity, to the participation in a whole world, quite literally, of experiences.”*

2016: *“It has been a broadening experience and a privilege to meet and interact with people from many different fields of study (and from varying geographic origins).”*

Flexible Role

It bears noting that both the response rate and the comments were similar with regard to flexibility in the role. In the 1984 survey, about 30 percent of partners commented that they should have been included in the interview to “learn expectations of me,” similar to the request for clarity from 2016 partners noted in Chapter 7 “Role Clarity.” Nonetheless, some partners appreciate the ambiguity:

1984: *“The satisfaction of creating a role that is uniquely my own...”*

2016: *“It is up to me/us to define my role. That’s the best part.”*

1984: *“It gives me the opportunity to do what I like to do most and give my services to a worthy cause at the same time.”*

2016: *“Having the freedom to pick and choose which activities at the institution I can participate in.”*

Differences

As mentioned in Chapter 1 “Context,” state support for public institutions has declined and some private colleges are faced with financial vulnerability.

Fundraising has become more important to the job of university presidents and to the role of partners. Development work was mentioned as a most satisfying aspect by 24 partners in 2016, but by none in 1984.

Support staff at the official residences was more frequently mentioned as an asset in 1984 (11% compared to 2%). Both surveys asked who cleaned the official house and the response was similar, with 12 percent of the partners cleaning in 1984 and 12.6 percent cleaning in 2016. Comments seem to suggest that there was more support staff in the past:

1984: *“House, very pleasant; staff support—housekeeper, driver, entertaining coordinating, etc.”*

2016: *“Having a home I don’t need to worry about, especially having on-call help to maintain it”*

A 1984 partner summarized the role’s joys and frustrations:

“In spite of my complaint that we are not together (alone) enough we do have interesting and exciting experiences with people, in city government, other colleges, visiting foundations trustees, foreign visitors, Washington, other countries. The atmosphere of this city is warm and friendly. I am never bored. But I don’t have enough time to read.”

Fundraising was mentioned by no partners in 1984, but by 24 partners in 2016.

CHAPTER 9

CHALLENGES IN THE ROLE

“I have found the spouse role to be very stressful, mostly because the demands of [the president’s] job are such that it has been impossible for me to pursue my own professional and personal goals in the way I had hoped to. The president’s job is demanding, complex, draining, and 24/7 in nature. It impacts our marriage, our family, and his health. It takes a lot of intervention and proactiveness on my part to keep all the plates spinning. On top of that, it is very difficult to have friendships in the small town and church settings—everything is colored by the fact that one’s spouse is the president. The other side of the coin is that we are well-cared for by the board financially and relationally. We live a comfortable life, get to travel extensively, and have some assurance that our financial future is secure.”

– 2016 Survey Respondent

Chapter Overview

Our survey asked about challenges and frustrations in a variety of ways to get a more complete picture of the role. First, we describe concerns expressed in our study compared to concerns noted in 1977 and 1984 surveys. We then highlight key findings relating concerns with partners’ overall satisfaction, level of involvement in the role, and gender. (We compared levels of concern for partners in public versus private institutions and found that the mean levels of concern were virtually identical for the two groups.)

Partner quotes in this chapter are from responses to open-ended questions throughout the survey regarding aspects of the role, advice to others, “anything else,” and so forth, as we did not ask for specific comments about concerns.

Top Concerns, Past and Present

The 1975 survey, “Role of the University/College President’s Wife,” published in the 1977 book *The Partners* (Corbally, 1977), asked for responses to 37 “sensitive areas which may create great frustrations.” The “1983 Survey of Spouses of Presidents/

Chancellors,” referenced in the 1984 book *The President’s Spouse: Volunteer of Volunteered* (Clodius & Skomars Magrath, 1984), narrowed the longer list of possible frustrations to the top 13 and asked respondents to mark each as a “major frustration,” “minor frustration,” or “not a frustration.”

The current survey used those same 13 areas of concern, adding a fourteenth potential concern, “Impact on children.”

Table 9.1 shows the mean level of frustration for each of the items in 2016, overall and by gender. The highest mean (2.3) was for the item “Worry about the effects of pressure on partner,” while the lowest mean (1.4) was for the item “Impact on children.” An oversight in the design of the survey was that we did not ask partners if they had children living within the household.

The results in Figure 9.1 indicate that the top areas of concern were very similar to the two studies we use for comparison purposes. Given that those previous studies were almost exclusively composed of female respondents, it is notable that the current results, which included 18 percent males,

Table 9.1

Levels of Frustration Regarding Possible Issues Related to Role, Overall and by Gender

| Issue | Level of Frustration [‡] | | | | | | | | t (1,422) |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------|-----------|-----|------|-----------|-----|-----------|
| | All | | Female | | | Male | | | |
| | N | \bar{x} | N | \bar{x} | SD | N | \bar{x} | SD | |
| High personal expenses (e.g. clothes, entertaining) | 436 | 1.55 | 347 | 1.77 | .63 | 76 | 1.40 | .57 | 3.98*** |
| Too little time with partner | 436 | 1.88 | 347 | 1.88 | .70 | 76 | 1.89 | .62 | – 0.22 |
| Impossible to segregate official life, personal life | 435 | 1.81 | 347 | 1.85 | .73 | 76 | 1.67 | .64 | 1.98* |
| Too little time with family | 436 | 1.75 | 347 | 1.78 | .68 | 76 | 1.58 | .68 | 2.37* |
| Lack of time with friends | 434 | 1.76 | 346 | 1.80 | .73 | 76 | 1.58 | .68 | 2.40* |
| Unpredictable demands on time | 436 | 1.85 | 347 | 1.90 | .69 | 76 | 1.63 | .59 | 3.11** |
| Exposure to criticism of partner by others | 433 | 1.77 | 345 | 1.81 | .70 | 76 | 1.57 | .72 | 2.78** |
| Worry about the effects of pressure on partner | 434 | 2.32 | 346 | 2.35 | .66 | 76 | 2.22 | .65 | 1.49* |
| Responsibility without authority | 435 | 1.56 | 347 | 1.63 | .73 | 76 | 1.26 | .53 | 4.19*** |
| Way of life altered (out of control) | 435 | 1.58 | 346 | 1.64 | .69 | 76 | 1.34 | .56 | 3.52** |
| Isolation from others because of partner's position | 434 | 1.81 | 346 | 1.88 | .77 | 76 | 1.55 | .70 | 3.37*** |
| Lack of privacy | 434 | 1.79 | 346 | 1.84 | .73 | 76 | 1.58 | .66 | 2.88** |
| Too little time for personal pursuits | 436 | 1.70 | 347 | 1.77 | .63 | 77 | 1.40 | .57 | 4.68*** |
| Impact on children | 422 | 1.38 | 338 | 1.43 | .62 | 73 | 1.15 | .40 | 3.72*** |

[‡] Responses were obtained on the following three-point scale: 1 = not frustrating, 2 = minor frustration, and 3 = major frustration.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

were so similar to the two previous studies. As the results in Table 9.1 show, however, there were different levels of frustration for females and males in the present study.

Worry about the President's Wellbeing

Worrying about the president's wellbeing was the top concern in all three surveys. Elsewhere in our survey, partners wrote of

"The extreme demands on her time and the difficulty of ever getting completely away from the school's concerns/problems"

"Worrying about how best to support my husband: it seems to me that physical health and psychological well-being can easily be compromised in this all-consuming presidency."

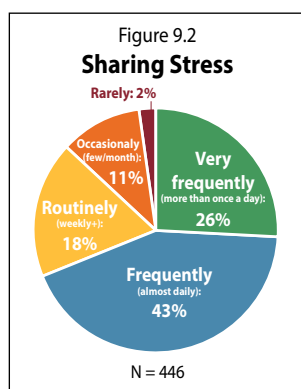
A partner advised others,

"Be prepared to live in a 'glass house' and for a huge increase in your spouse or partner's stress. His or her job as a University President or Chancellor is 24/7 and don't believe people who say otherwise."

| Figure 9.1 Top Five Areas of Concern/Frustration | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1977 (Corbally) | 1984 (Clodius & Skomars Magrath) | 2016 (Hendel, Kaler, & Freed) |
| 1. Worry about the effects of pressure on husband | 1. Worry about the effects of pressure on spouse | 1. Worry about the effects of pressure on spouse/partner |
| 2. Too little time with husband | 2. Too little time with spouse | 2. Too little time with spouse/partner |
| 3. Unpredictable demands on time that take precedence over my own activities | 3. Unpredictable demands on time that take precedence over my own activities | 3. Unpredictable demands on time that take precedence over my own activities |
| 4. Too little time for own activities | 4. Too little time for own pursuits | 4. Isolation from others because of spouse/partner's position |
| 5. Being isolated from others because of husband's position | 5. Too little time with family | 5. Impossible to separate official life from personal life. |
| N = 246 | N = 104 | N = 436 |

Sharing Stress

Besides worrying about pressure on presidents, partners seem to be sharing the stress. We asked partners, “How frequently does your spouse/partner share her or his thoughts and feelings about work-related problems and stresses with you?” Most serve as a confidant of the president, discussing problems and stresses frequently. As results in Figure 9.2 indicate, slightly over one fourth (26%) indicated they had such conversations, on average, more than once a day. It is noteworthy that there was no gender difference in the frequency with which partners have work conversations with the president, as detailed in Table 9.2. Partners mentioned worry about



“Occasional inappropriate criticism of my wife’s job performance by a few members of the College community”

“Living with ongoing anxiety about negative media or other attacks on president”

“Worrying about my husband’s stress level, ambiguity. He tells me a lot, but, understandably, not everything, so some of the challenges seem

too serious— only because I do not have the full picture. I may know of the challenge, but not of the means to deal with it, whereas people who are actually dealing with it have the full picture.”

“My husband travels a lot for work [as President] in addition to the [on-campus] work. . . I not only miss him when he’s gone but worry about his health and stamina in the long run. The demands on his 24-7 job are incredible.

Worry about the effects of pressure on partner was the perennial top concern.

I often drive home from the many week night events so that he can rest. His days start at 5:00 AM and often end after 10:00 PM. What is this dedication to the work going to cost him in the end? He is diligent about working out and staying healthy but the stress is worrisome.”

A partner advised other partners to

“Absorb your spouse worries. You do not have to fix problems. Care not cure. Don’t keep your spouse’s stress, but do engage it with a patient ear. You offer advice, but don’t take offense if it is not acted upon. Be the enabler for patience, kindness, generosity, and humility.”

Table 9.2

Frequency of Conversations about Work of President/Chancellor, by Gender

| | Responses | | | | | | | | t (1,422) |
|--|-----------|------|-----------|------|------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| | Female | | | | Male | | | | |
| | N | % | \bar{x} | SD | N | % | \bar{x} | SD | |
| Frequency of Conversations About Work of President/Chancellor ‡ | | | 3.80 | 1.05 | | | 3.84 | 0.84 | -0.36 |
| Rarely | 11 | 3.2 | | | 0 | | | | |
| Occasionally | 35 | 10.1 | | | 7 | 9.1 | | | |
| Routinely | 63 | 18.2 | | | 13 | 16.9 | | | |
| Frequently | 142 | 40.9 | | | 42 | 54.5 | | | |
| Very frequently | 96 | 27.7 | | | 15 | 19.5 | | | |

† Responses were offered on the following seven-point scale: 1 = extremely dissatisfied, 2 = very dissatisfied, 3 = dissatisfied, 4 = neutral, 5 = satisfied, 6 = very satisfied, and 7 = extremely satisfied.

*** $p < .001$

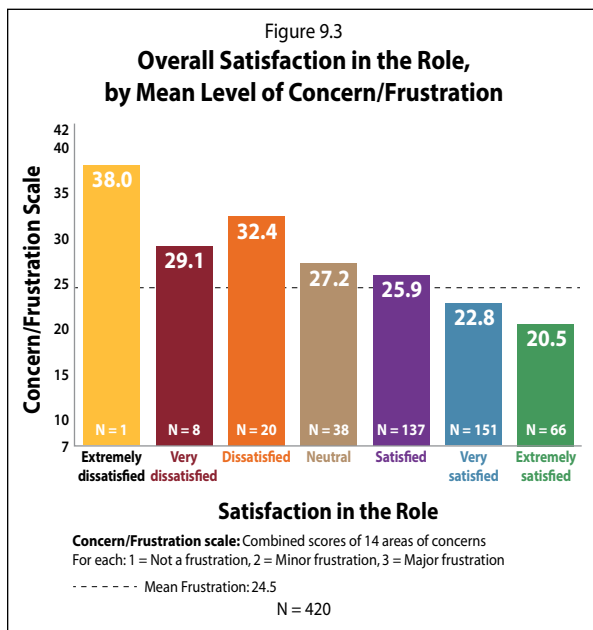
Concerns Affect Satisfaction

As discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 8 “Satisfaction in the Role”), 84 percent of partners stated they were satisfied, very satisfied, or extremely satisfied. Some commented about the questions that asked about challenges:

“I don’t see this role as a frustration. I see it as an opportunity. I would disagree with the way these questions are framed.”

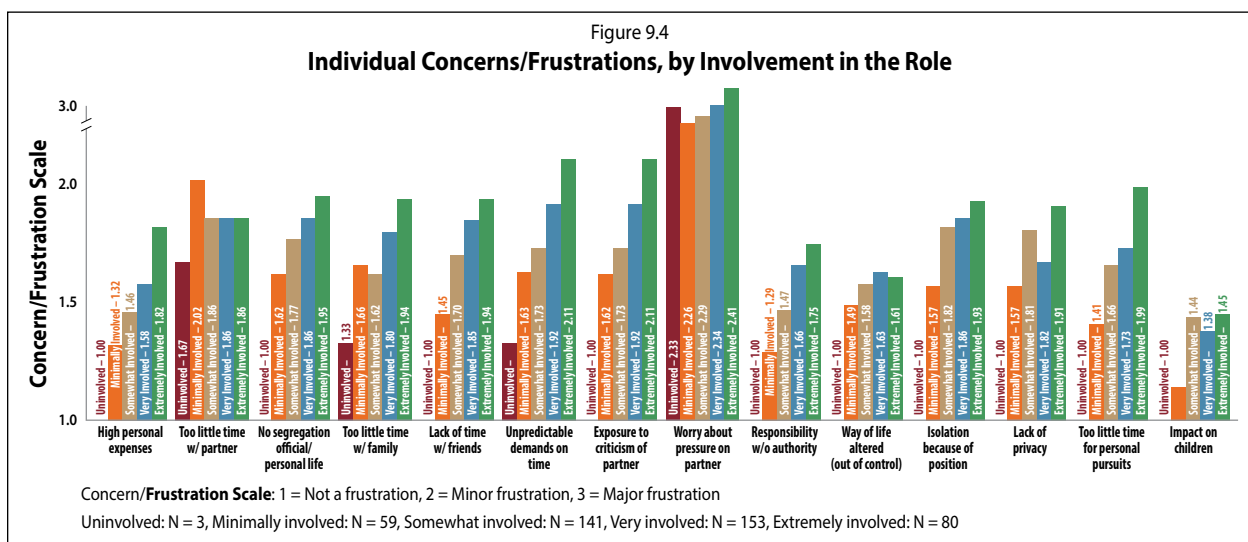
“Role of presidential spouse is not a burden, it is a joy beyond measure.”

Nonetheless, it’s no surprise that concerns and frustrations lead to decreased satisfaction. To measure overall frustration, we developed a concern/frustration scale. For each of the 14 areas of concern, responses were coded: “not a frustration” = 1, “a minor frustration” = 2, and “a major frustration” = 3. The concern/frustration scale combines answers to all 14 issues. A partner reporting no frustrations would have a score of 7, whereas a partner for whom each of the 14 items was a major frustration would have a score of 42. Figure 9.3 shows mean levels of frustration for each of seven levels of overall satisfaction. The partners who have the highest overall satisfaction have the lowest overall frustration.



Levels of Concern by Partner Involvement

Being more involved in any role or activity provides more opportunities for frustration. We examined the relationship between involvement in the role of presidential partner and levels of frustration for each of the 14 items of concern. Figure 9.4 shows that for 10 of the items of concern, frustration means increased with each increased level of involvement. More time spent in the role is associated with less time available for family, friends, and personal pursuits. The only area where those minimally involved reported a higher level of concern than those more involved was in too little time with spouse/partner.



That more involved partners expressed less frustration than those minimally involved regarding little time with spouse/partner may be explained by a quote about positive aspects of the role from a partner who reported being extremely involved:

“Being able to travel with my spouse. Being able to work as a team—supporting the same institution and working together to nurture friendships/donors.”

A higher level of involvement in the role by the partner is associated with a higher overall level of satisfaction, as discussed in Chapters 6 “The Partner Role” and 8 “Satisfaction in the Role.” (Reduced-size copies of the relevant graphs from Chapters 6 and 8 are repeated here for reference.)

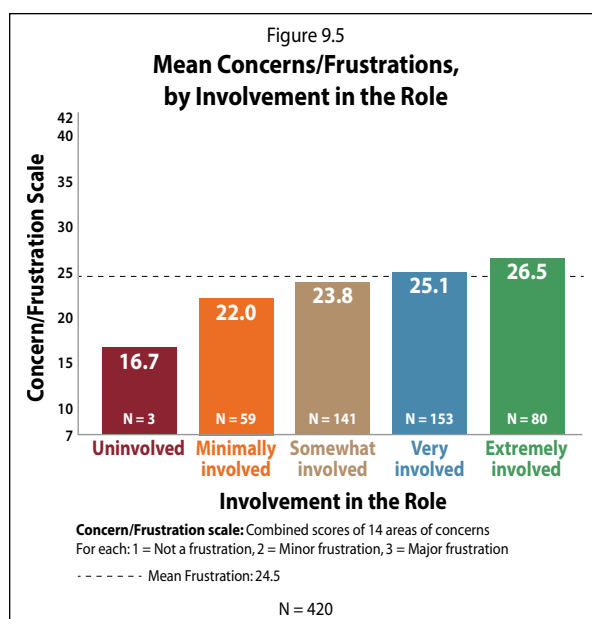
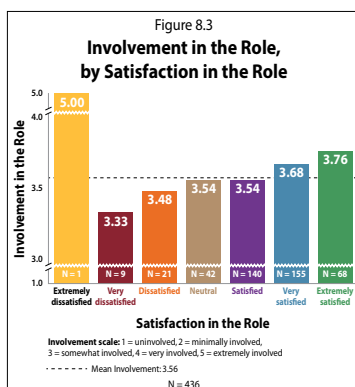
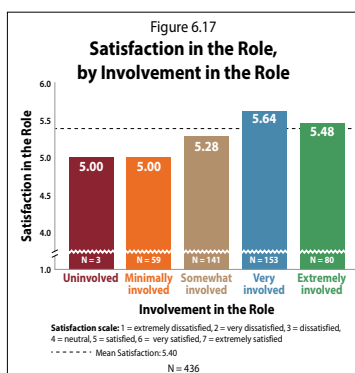
While satisfaction increases with involvement, so does frustration. Figure 9.5 displays the results for the mean level of overall concern/frustration by level of involvement. As level of involvement increases, so does overall level of concern.

Overall, more involved partners had both greater satisfaction and greater frustration.

We reviewed comments in response to the open-ended text prompts elsewhere in the survey as a function of level of involvement. Below are illustrative comments about frustrations for partners in each of the five levels-of-involvement categories.

Uninvolved

“I regret that I have not been able to play some role at the campus, but it was not practical once we decided that our family would not move to the college.”



Minimally Involved

“I miss my spouse.”

“I’m a supernumerary who appears when an event calls for a ‘spouse of leader.’”

Somewhat Involved

“I feel like I am a walking suggestion box in that everyone complains to me about everything.”

Another described the least satisfying aspect of the role as

“Remembering names! Thank goodness for nametags. And seriously, there are times when there are just not enough hours in a day.”

Very Involved

“At times, the time commitment is too much.”

Another described the least satisfying aspect of the role as

“Attending all the community’s social events, galas! Cold ballrooms and uncomfortable chairs.”

Extremely Involved

“Not enough physical or emotional energy to meet responsibilities.”

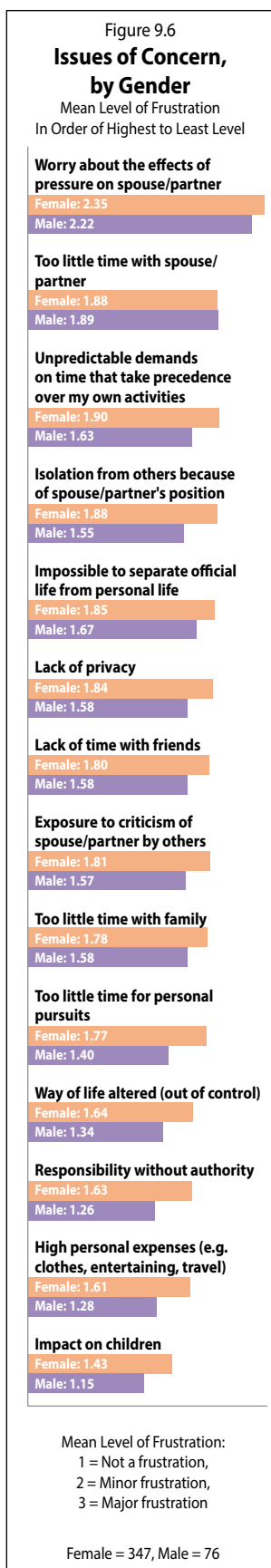
“I would enjoy all of the tasks if there were more appreciation for my role. I find being left out of communication very frustrating.”

Levels of Concern by Gender

There were statistically significant differences between female and male partners in the levels of frustration for 12 of the 14 items listed. (Only “Worry about the effects of pressure on spouse/partner” and “Too little time with spouse/partner” were not significantly different.) In all 12 of these areas, the females reported higher levels of frustration, as detailed in Table 9.1 and illustrated in Figure 9.6. The three most significant differences were

- 1) Too little time for personal pursuits,
- 2) Responsibility without authority
- 3) High personal expenses

Analysis of open-ended text responses to “Which aspects of your current spouse/partner role do you find least satisfying?” by gender revealed more subtle differences in the stated frustrations. For the top six items of concern, comments that speak to those frustrations are included below by gender.



Worry about the effects of pressure on spouse/partner

Female: “I worry a lot about the stress on my husband and his health.”

Male: “Not being able to talk with her (even though she is physically next to me) as she is preoccupied and thinking something related to institution”

Too little time with spouse/partner

Female: “The amount of time that is given by us as a couple which takes away from any personal time allotments”

Male: “I do not at all like the demands of time on my spouse, and how much that keeps us from being together. I feel lonely often, especially when my spouse is traveling.”

Unpredictable demands on time that take precedence over my own activities

Female: “Being ‘on call’ for events; pulled in many directions, not in control of my schedule. That said, I’ve learned to flow with it and enjoy the many rich experiences I have in this role.”

Male: “The extreme demands on her time and the difficulty of ever getting completely away from the school’s concerns/problems.”

Isolation from others because of spouse/partner's position

Female: “Understand that it’s impossible to have very close friendships because of the spouse’s position.”

Male: “Having little in common professionally with people I meet at official functions.”

Male: “The job can be very isolating—both for the president and the spouse. Don’t know how someone would do this alone.”

Impossible to separate official life from personal life.

Female: “Our time is very programmed and there is not much down time to just ‘be.’ ”

Male: “I am excluded from numerous campus committees by this relationship.”

Lack of privacy

Female: “Feeling like our ‘lives’ are always on display. People knowing who we are, but we don’t know them.”

Male: “Lack of privacy and not enough anonymous time together”

Other Concerns

After the 14 items of concern was the choice, “Other, please specify.” Of the 35 responses, the most frequently mentioned topic was loss of career, with eight responses. Three of those mentioned now working without pay (in the role). One partner explained

“I cannot really hold a job because of the time commitments, co-teach a class and attend innumerable functions, but am not paid—even to get a portion of my husband’s salary in my own name—which affects retirement.”

Four partners mentioned the time demands, such as

“Being ‘on’ all the time, from getting up in the morning until going to bed—and even then must be ready for something happening overnight to which my husband must respond. Can never take a day off.”

The high profile nature of the role, along with the need to be careful about expressing opinions was also mentioned by four partners, including

“In a small town everyone knows I’m married to ‘the president’—hard to be recognized/wanted just as myself.”

Three partners mentioned lack of friends, not just the lack of time for friends, such as

“Having friends you can trust”

“Lack of real friendships and time to be a friend”

Some partners added comments about the role not being a frustration, and others listed concerns not repeated by others:

“Concerned about the impact of media on university challenges and the president/chancellor”

“Perception of being overly caring vs. overly involved”

“Not enough support”

“Not engaged as much as expected”

“Lack of control”

“People expect me to influence the President”

“I can’t imagine how I would have done this when my children were growing up.”

Three partners wrote that the President’s residence was a frustration, including

“Lack of privacy and control of the residence”

As will be discussed in Chapter 10 “Official Residences,” living in an official residence was associated with a statistically significant higher level of involvement in the role by the partner. As was seen when comparing increased overall involvement with frustration, living in an official residence increased frustration in numerous areas of concern. In Chapter 10 we will discuss positive and negative aspects of living in the official residence in more detail.

More involved partners had both greater satisfaction and greater frustration.

CHAPTER 10

OFFICIAL RESIDENCES

“Excellent functionality for entertaining on first floor, outdoor terraces and grounds while providing comfortable privacy upstairs. Location just off-campus provides privacy, but is easily accessible for frequent events for students, staff/faculty, alumni, others. House is beautifully and historically appointed, well-maintained, updated technologically.”

*“It’s a lovely old house, with almost everything taken care of—
what’s not to like?”*

—2016 Survey Respondents

Today, many university leaders are contractually required to live in official residences, so living in the house is a duty rather than a (taxable) benefit. Presidents and their families generally avoid complaining about the houses or undertaking lavish renovations, knowing that houses have a way of attracting controversy (Ezarick, 2007; Walters, 2015).

***Living in an
official residence
was correlated
with a statistically
significant increase
in the partner’s
level of involvement
in the role.***

Chapter Overview

This chapter will include a brief history of official university residences, indicate the percentage of institutions that have official residences, and answer the question of whether presidential families really live in the houses. The chapter will describe differences in involvement between partners who do versus do not live in an official residence. It will detail the use of the official residence in fundraising, partners’ views on the value and importance of the official residence, the most and least satisfying aspects of the residences, and partners’ overall satisfaction with official residences.

Official Residences, a Selected History

The first degree-granting college in the United States, Harvard College, founded in 1636, was committed to the English collegiate tradition in which students board in—eating, sleeping, and studying together. In the English system, faculty lived in residences with their students. Headmasters were allowed to marry, so schools provided houses that would accommodate their families. The president’s house was one of four buildings at Harvard in 1655. Other colleges in colonial America also followed the English system and provided houses for their heads, and continued to provide houses for presidents even after other faculty were allowed to marry and live off campus (Turner, 1984).

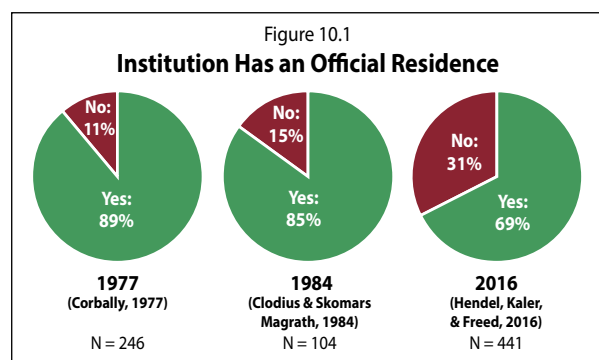
The College of William and Mary, the second oldest college in the U.S. (chartered 1693), claims the oldest president’s house (built in 1732) still in use. Eleven U.S. Presidents, from Washington to Eisenhower, have been guests in the home (The President’s House, n.d.).

The University of Missouri, Columbia, was founded in 1839 as the first state university west of the Mississippi River, and the state provided its first appropriation of \$10,000 in 1867, in part to build a home for the president on campus (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2007).

In the first 70 years of the University of Washington's history, its presidents lived on its Seattle campus, first in a building that was part of the 1861 Territorial University, and then, beginning in 1909, in a fair pavilion converted after the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. In 1932, the president moved to Hill-Crest, a bequest of Maude and Edwin Ames (Griffin, 2007). The Ames family stipulated that the house was to be the home of the university president or would be sold. The 35-room residence overlooking Lake Washington is judged to have the highest market value (\$8.5-million) of all university-provided homes (Newman, 2013).

Who Lives in an Official Residence?

In the present study, a majority of respondents (69%) reported that their institutions have official residences, but a lower proportion do today than



reported in past surveys, as shown in Figure 10.1.

The president's role was associated with the existence of an official residence. Most common was the head of a multi-campus system, but not a single campus (82%); then head of a multi-campus system plus a single campus (72%); followed by head of a single campus (69%). Least common was head of a single campus of a multi-campus system (58%).

Existence of an official residence also appears to be somewhat related to the size and location of the institution and public/private status. Figure 10.2 shows that partners in private institutions more frequently have houses than do those in public institutions, and partners in larger institutions more frequently have houses than do partners in smaller institutions.

Institutions in the Northeast had the highest percentage of official residences (77%), and institutions in the South had the lowest (65%).

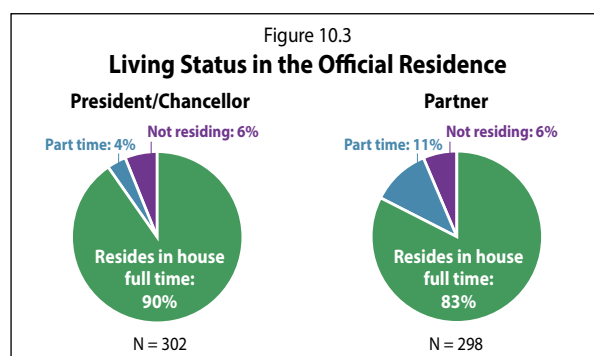
Figure 10.2

Existence of Official Residence, by Enrollment and Public/Private Status of Institution

| Number students | Private | | Public | |
|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | # Schools | % w/OR | # schools | % w/OR |
| <1,000 | 33 | 61% | 0 | — |
| 1,000 – 5,000 | 171 | 71% | 30 | 67% |
| 5,001 – 20,000 | 33 | 85% | 88 | 64% |
| 20,001 – 40,000 | 2 | 50% | 52 | 67% |
| 40,001+ | 0 | — | 26 | 73% |
| Overall | 240 | 71% | 197 | 67% |

When asked to describe how the institution came to have an official residence, 39 percent of partners responded that the house was built to house the president, 30 percent responded that the house was donated to the institution, and 24 percent responded that the house was purchased to house the president. (The remaining 7% had a variety of other answers such as the building was converted from other use, or the respondents did not know.)

Of those who have an official residence available to them, most presidents and partners live in the house full-time (90% and 83% respectively), as shown in Figure 10.3. Partners who live in the house part time most frequently reported that it is because of employment outside the area.



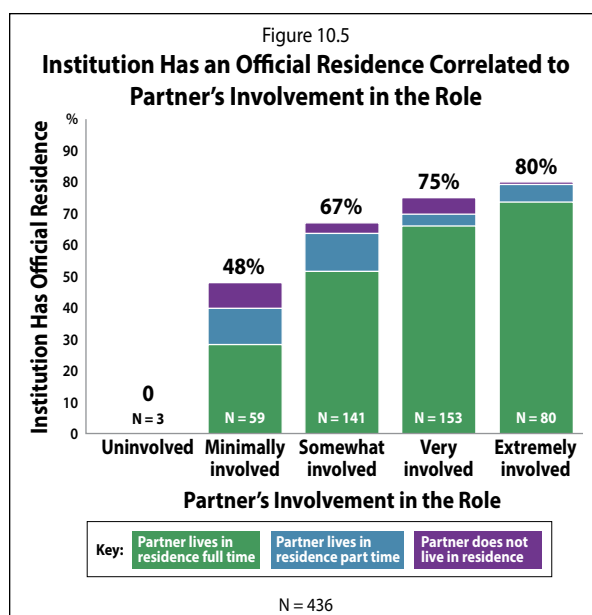
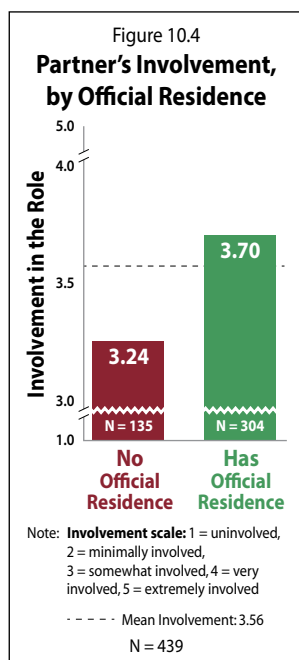
Of those who do not have official residences at their institutions, more than 40 percent reported that the institution formerly had a residence that was sold, put to other use, torn down, or otherwise made unavailable. Of the respondents without institution-provided housing, two thirds reported that the president receives a housing subsidy.

At institutions that have official residences, 78 percent of presidents and partners personally own a house, condominium, or other personal real estate. Partners who live in official residences and own other real estate expressed a very similar level of satisfaction with the official residence compared to those who don't own real estate (a mean of 4.32 compared to 4.25 on a 5-point scale). Partners who live in official houses and own real estate have a slightly higher level of overall satisfaction compared to those who don't own real estate (a mean of 5.42 for those who own, compared to 5.12 for those who don't, on a 7-point scale).

Partner Involvement

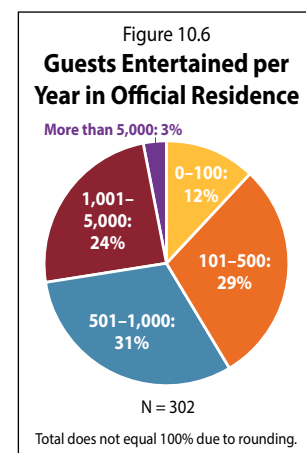
An institution's having an official residence was related to a statistically significant higher level of the partner's involvement in institutional life, as shown in Figure 10.4, although the partners were no more satisfied in their role. This finding of increased involvement was intriguing, so we analyzed the data further to discover that more involvement by the partner correlated to a higher instance of the institution owning a residence, and to a higher instance of the partner living in the residence as shown in Figure 10.5. There were only three partners

who said they were uninvolved, and none of their institutions had official residences. Only 48 percent of minimally involved partners' institutions had official residences. At those institutions, only 59 percent of the partners lived in the house full time. This compares to the partners who reported being extremely involved: 80 percent of the institutions had official residences, and of those institutions 92 percent of the partners lived in the house full time.

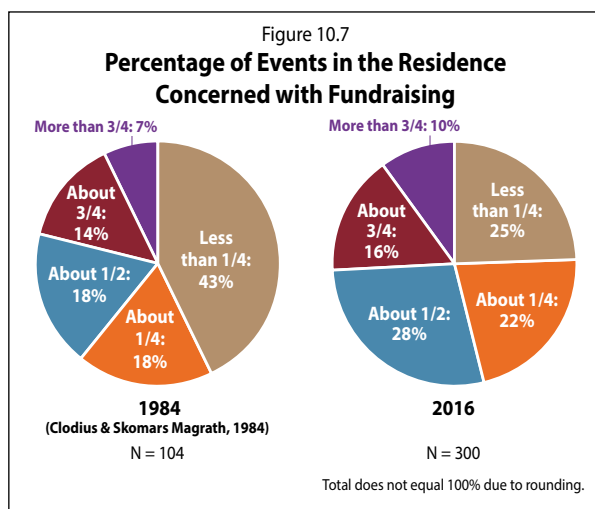


Entertaining and Fundraising

Most of the residences are used heavily for entertaining, with 27 percent of partners reporting that they entertain more than 1,000 guests per year, as shown in Figure 10.6. The number of guests entertained varied by the size of the institution. For example, entertaining more than 1,000 guests per year in the official residence was reported by 23 percent of partners at institutions with fewer than 20,000 students and by 45 percent of partners at institutions with more than 20,000 students.



In recent years, philanthropic support has become increasingly important for colleges and universities. Correspondingly, entertaining involving fundraising at the official residence was reported more frequently in the current survey than in the 1984 survey, as shown in Figure 10.7. In 1984, 39 percent of respondents said that about one half or more of the events were concerned with fundraising, compared to 54 percent who said that one half or more of the events were concerned with fundraising in 2016.



Partners responded to a set of seven items regarding the value and importance of the official residence; Table 10.1 contains the partners' responses. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed (83%) that the official house is viewed positively by the institution's external constituents, as detailed in Table 10.1 and shown in Figure 10.8.

In addition to the results highlighted in Figure 10.8, Table 10.1 suggests that most partners believe the official house plays a significant role in the institution's identity and serves as an important landmark for the institution.

Given the variations among the houses (location and age and will be discussed later in the chapter), partners were split in opinions regarding a rich campus history of the official house. Only a small percentage noted that their official residences displayed photographs of previous presidents and their families.

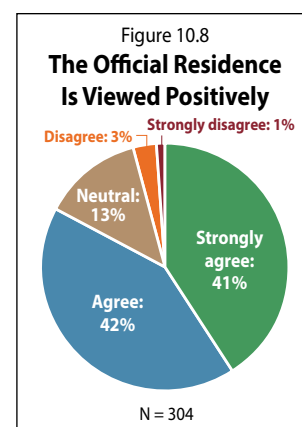


Table 10.1

Partners' Opinions Regarding Value and Importance of the Official Residence

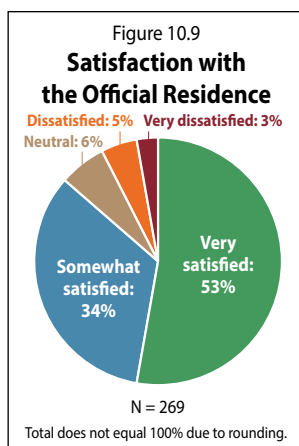
| Item | Response [‡] | | | | | | | | | | \bar{x} | SD |
|---|-----------------------|------|----------|------|---------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|-----------|------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | Disagree | | Neutral | | Agree | | Strongly Agree | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| The official house plays a significant role in the institution's identity. | 8 | 2.5 | 31 | 10.2 | 46 | 15.1 | 109 | 35.9 | 110 | 36.2 | 3.93 | 0.84 |
| The official house is an important landmark for the institution. | 21 | 6.9 | 43 | 14.1 | 51 | 16.8 | 96 | 31.6 | 93 | 30.6 | 3.65 | 1.25 |
| The official house is viewed positively by the institution's external constituents. | 3 | 1.0 | 10 | 3.3 | 38 | 12.5 | 127 | 41.8 | 126 | 41.4 | 4.19 | 0.85 |
| Outside constituents take pleasure in attending events held at the official house. | 4 | 1.3 | 1 | 0.3 | 12 | 3.9 | 89 | 29.3 | 198 | 65.1 | 4.57 | 0.71 |
| The official house displays photographs of previous presidents/chancellors and/or their families. | 165 | 54.6 | 81 | 26.8 | 27 | 8.9 | 11 | 3.6 | 18 | 6.0 | 1.79 | 1.13 |
| There is a rich campus history regarding the official house. | 53 | 17.5 | 59 | 19.5 | 79 | 26.1 | 54 | 17.8 | 58 | 19.1 | 3.02 | 1.36 |
| I am glad the institution owns the house. | 5 | 1.7 | 10 | 3.3 | 41 | 13.5 | 90 | 29.7 | 157 | 51.8 | 4.27 | 0.93 |

[‡] Responses were obtained on the following five-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Note: Only those partners who were currently in institutions which had an official residence were asked this set of items.

Overall Satisfaction with the Residence

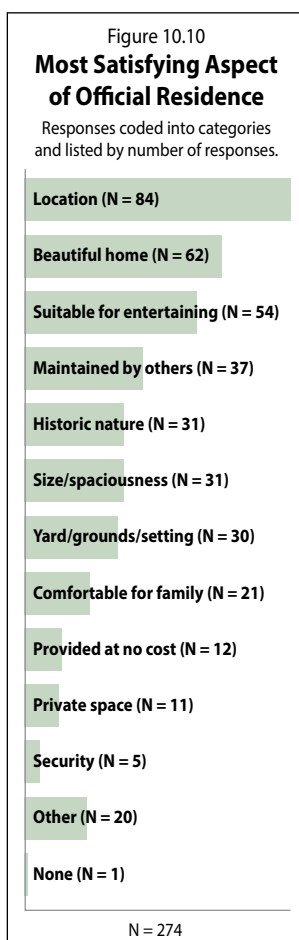
A large majority (87%) of partners with official residences reported being very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with them, as shown in Figure 10.9.



Most and Least Satisfying Aspects of the Official Residence

Partners who reported having an official residence were asked, “What aspects of the official residence do you find most satisfying?” The open-ended question was answered by 274 respondents as shown in Figure 10.10, and “What aspects of the official residence do you find least satisfying?” was answered by 259 respondents, as shown in Figure 10.11. Responses were coded into categories. Many partners gave multiple responses so the sum of categories is greater than the total number responding.

Representative comments for the six most frequently mentioned aspects, both most and least satisfying, follow. Each residence is unique, as is each respondent’s perspective. A particular feature might be viewed as a benefit to some and a liability to others, and certain aspects of houses are perceived as a benefit and liability at the same time.

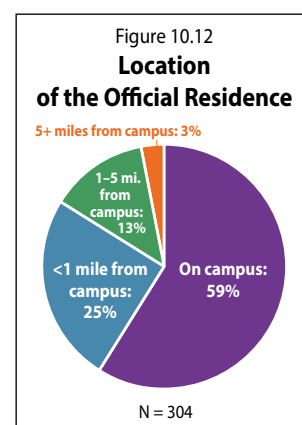
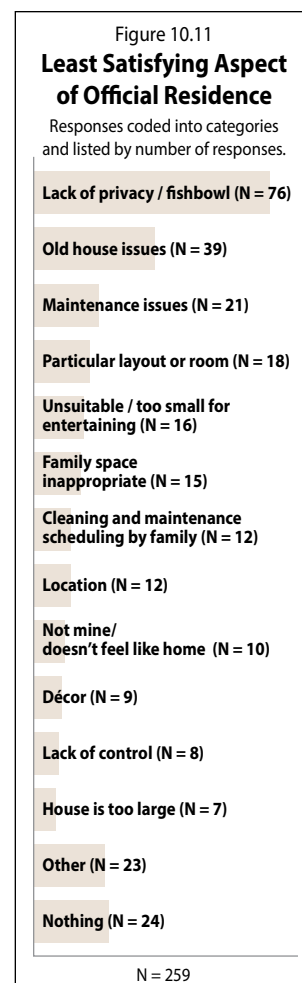


Location Versus Lack of Privacy Versus Maintained by Others

Most of the official residences are on or near campuses, as shown in Figure 10.12. Location was the most frequent (N = 84) response for most satisfying aspect of the home. Lack of privacy was the most frequent (N = 76) response for least satisfying aspect of the home and location was mentioned as a negative by 12 partners.

Distance from campus did not make a significant difference in overall satisfaction with the residence, even though many mentioned location as the most satisfying aspect. A few specifically mentioned being on campus as the least satisfying aspect of the residence, while many more mentioned proximity to campus as the most satisfying aspect of the residence. (Eight said a campus location was least satisfying and three said being far from campus was least satisfying, while 61 specifically mentioned the campus location as most satisfying.)

Most satisfying comments about location included
“Living in the middle of a beautiful campus and in a great old house”



“On campus near the students—sends a message that we care and live here, too”

“Location just off-campus provides privacy, but is easily accessible for frequent events for students, staff/faculty, alumni, others”

Many simply wrote “Proximity” or “Being on campus” as the most satisfying aspect.

On the other hand, as a least satisfying aspect, partners wrote

“We lack privacy on all sides except for the back yard. People can walk right up and look in the windows if curtains are open.”

“It is located on the busiest corner of campus with lots of traffic and noise.”

While many wrote simply “Lack of privacy” or “Life in a fishbowl,” some responses indicated that issues with privacy were not related to entertaining or location, but rather the complications of in living in a university facility. Many mentioned maintenance people and university personnel as the reason for lack of privacy, such as

“Staff always in and out”

“Initially, maintenance people and others would pop in with no schedule/warning.”

“Lack of privacy—apart from maintenance/ event-related staff, there’s a house manager here from 9 to 5—hard to adjust to the idea that there’s always someone around who isn’t related.”

“Having university personnel in the house for repairs, maintenance, yardwork”

While having university personnel in the house related to lack of privacy, 37 partners mentioned the maintenance being done by others as the most satisfying aspect, including

“The university takes care of all maintenance, yard work, and housekeeping.”

“Not having to worry about upkeep, snow removal, maintaining the garden, repairs”

“Staff takes care of nearly everything. All I have to do is coordinate with them.”

“Worry-free living!”

A partner wrote that the least satisfying aspect was

“I am the house manager and must be responsible for maintenance, supervising cleaning, receiving inspections, etc., a full-time job.”

Comparing satisfaction in the official residence with tasks connected to the residence indicates that having control over one’s home is important, while help with tasks is appreciated. Partners who schedule the houses for events themselves show more satisfaction; partners who set up the houses for events themselves show less satisfaction. Partners whose families decorate the houses for themselves show more satisfaction; partners whose families clean the houses for themselves show less satisfaction.

Help is appreciated, but control is an important factor in satisfaction.

In the last question on the survey, “Is there anything you would like to add,” one partner wrote

“I love my role. I became much happier with it when I exerted my wishes about having staff in our private area at my discretion.”

Beautiful Home Versus Particular Layout or Room

The second most cited theme for most satisfying aspect (62 responses) of the residence was that the house was beautiful, such as

“Gracious old house with extensive gardens”

“Lovely house, nice interior space”

“It’s beautiful and a great home for entertaining.”

“The gourmet kitchen; ceiling to floor windows that permit floor and table-standing plants; private rooms on a separate floor; large fenced-in gardens that are well maintained throughout seasons.”

Most satisfying aspects included family space by 12 partners and private space by 11 partners.

On the other hand, 18 partners mentioned a particular room or layout as a least satisfying aspect, with 15 also mentioning inappropriate family space and nine mentioning decor. Least satisfying aspect comments included

“Although it was renovated just before we moved in, it is very poorly designed with no regard for outdoor living areas. There is no space between our home and our neighbors on one side.”

“While it is perfect for hosting events, it is NOT a great house for a family (that includes small children) gathering.

“Lack of private family space. Small bedrooms.”

“This house was remodeled and redesigned by a committee of middle class staff and employees, and it is very middle class. . . . It does not look like how our donors live and they tell us, yet the university says it’s a done deal, there is no money for new furniture because the stuff they put in here is just a few years old. Our donors have done as much as purchase guest towels for the guest bath, sent their decorators over here, and refused to attend events until problems with furniture, accessibility, acoustics were fixed.”

Suitability for Entertaining

As mentioned previously, the houses are used heavily for gatherings. Entertaining was mentioned by 54 partners as a most satisfying aspect of the house, and 31 mentioned the size, including

“It is absolutely lovely, serves us well for events; has plenty available resources for serving/hosting events, is convenient to campus events . . . is convenient for hosting student events.”

“Plenty of room for entertaining”

“This house has lovely spaces for entertaining, both indoors an out.”

“Guests are eager to come to our house.”

“The public areas are well suited for entertaining: very large living room, dining room, and kitchen.”

Most of the houses are large enough to accommodate guests. While spaciousness and appropriateness for events were mentioned as most satisfying aspects of the houses, 16 partners wrote of their residences as being too small or inappropriate for entertaining as the least satisfying aspect:

“Too small to host large groups”

“Entertaining here is a challenge because of the building’s age. (For example, we have limited comfortable space available for events.)”

“Not conducive to entertaining and serving as living quarters; old, dark, deteriorating”

As the size of the residence increased, overall satisfaction with the residence increased, until the residences were over 10,000 square feet, where satisfaction declined slightly.

Pros and Cons of Historic Houses

A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the official house plays a significant role in the institution’s history and is an important landmark for the institution, as mentioned above.

As shown in Figure 10.13, the typical house is between 51 and 100 years old. Multiple respondents (31) mentioned the historic nature of the residence as an asset, and 15.6 percent of the residences (18.2% at public institutions and 13.5% at private institutions) are on the National Register of Historic Places. Being on the Register did not increase nor decrease the level of satisfaction with the home.

Seven partners said their residences are less than five years old. The 11 partners who reported their residences were 6 to 15 years old reported the highest satisfaction with their residences (a mean of 4.91 on a 5-point scale), followed by the 74 with residences over 100 years old (a mean of 4.38).

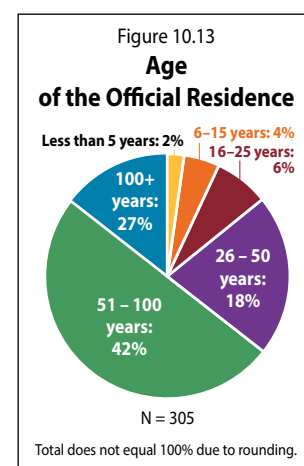
Partners wrote that most satisfying was

“Historic significance”

“Being part of this rich aspect of the institution’s history”

“The house is historic, built in 1787, so people are very interested in the history.”

The age of the houses also came up as a negative, with respondents referencing renovation and maintenance needs, and the lack of modern amenities:



"It has steam heat—and this time of year, the clanking can get a bit annoying. Earplugs help."

"The house is over 100 years old, so it doesn't have many of the modern features of houses built in recent years."

Large, historic homes often require expensive upkeep; several partners mentioned that there was not money available for maintenance and renovation, such as,

"Old with no money to update. University facilities acts like taking care of the house and the grounds is a large pain in the rear."

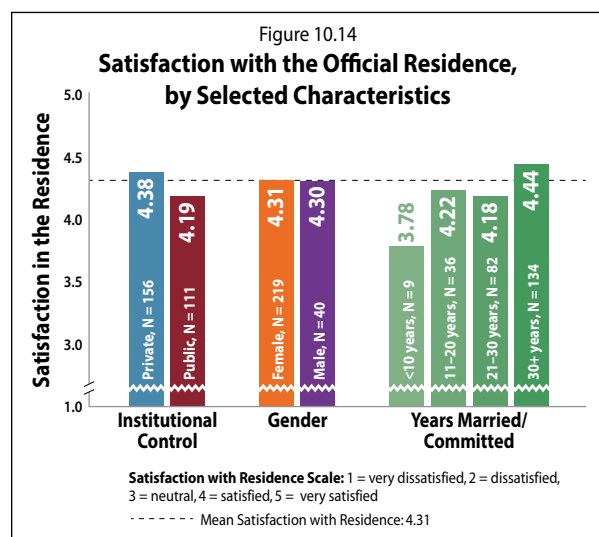
Partners offered advice to others,

"If at all possible, avoid doing anything major or dramatic at the President's House—unless it is something you can do on your way out."

"An ongoing theme is not to make any repairs or improvements to the State-owned home you live in, even if it is with private donors' money. This is even more important when budget problems face the State, etc."

Satisfaction, but Frustrations

While most respondents reported being very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with living in the official residence, there were some slight variations by the situations of the partners themselves, as shown in Figure 10.14. Compared by years married/committed, partners married fewer than 10 years reported the least satisfaction with residences (a mean of 3.78 on a 5-point scale) while



partners married more than 30 years reported the most satisfaction (a mean of 4.44). Partners in private institutions reported a slightly higher level of satisfaction (4.38) than did partners in public institutions (4.19). Female and male partners reported virtually the same level of satisfaction with the residences (4.31 and 4.30, respectively).

In addition to the results shown in 10.14, satisfaction with the residence varied with the role of the president. It was highest if the president was head of a single campus, not part of a system (4.45), and lowest if the president was head of a single campus of a multi-campus system (3.78). By region, satisfaction was lowest for partners at the five institutions outside the U.S. (4.00), and highest for the 72 institutions in the South (4.40).

Frustrations for Partners in Official Residences

Having an official residence was not correlated with overall satisfaction in the role. And while the partners living in official residences are not less satisfied with the role overall, they do report more challenges. When considering the first year, partners living in official residences more frequently reported challenges, particularly with "Lack of privacy" and "Moving and settling in," as shown in Table 10.2.

Additionally, as shown in Table 10.3, partners whose institutions have official residences more frequently, and statistically significantly, reported frustration overall, particularly with lack of privacy, unpredictable demands on their time, lack of time with friends, and feeling they have responsibility without authority. Partners also worry about moving out in worst-case-scenario situations. One partner advised others to establish expectations for the

"Length of time the spouse has access to house, etc., in the event that the president dies"

There are also specific frustrations for those without houses. One partner, who does not live in an official residence, wrote that the least satisfying aspect of the role was

"Not having a residence on campus. I waste a tremendous amount of time driving back and forth from my house to the campus several times a day."

In addition to asking about satisfaction with the residence, we asked later in the survey for response to “I am glad the institution owns the house” as shown in Figure 10.15. This question was answered by all but one of those who reporting having an official residence (not just those living in the residence) and a large majority of

Table 10.2
Challenges in the First Year, by Official Residence

| Challenges | Official Residence | | | |
|--|--------------------|------|-----|------|
| | Yes | | No | |
| | N | % | N | % |
| | 304 | | 133 | |
| Moving and settling in | 143 | 47.0 | 45 | 33.8 |
| Family adjustments | 95 | 31.3 | 36 | 27.1 |
| Career adjustments | 127 | 41.8 | 41 | 30.8 |
| Schedule demands | 161 | 53.0 | 64 | 48.1 |
| Struggle with my own identity | 121 | 39.9 | 47 | 35.3 |
| Lack of friends | 123 | 40.4 | 47 | 35.3 |
| Lack of staff support | 44 | 14.5 | 11 | 8.3 |
| Lack of privacy | 116 | 38.2 | 24 | 18.1 |
| Secondary status to spouse/ partner on campus | 53 | 17.4 | 11 | 8.3 |

respondents agreed or strongly agreed (82%).

It is also noteworthy that when responding to the open-ended question, “What aspects of the official residence do you find least satisfying?” 24 respondents wrote comments such as

“Nothing”

“None”

“Love it. Took time but it’s great.”

“We’ll have to give it back some day!”

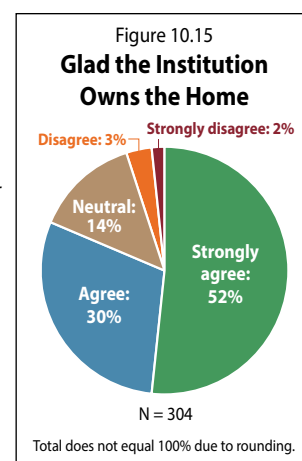


Table 10.3
Levels of Frustration Regarding Possible Issues Related to Role, by Official Residence

| | Living in Official Residence and Level of Frustration [‡] | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----------|-----|--------|-----------|-----|-----------|
| | Live In | | | Do Not | | | |
| Issue | N | \bar{x} | SD | N | \bar{x} | SD | t (1,435) |
| High personal expenses (e.g. clothes, entertaining) | 302 | 1.53 | .68 | 134 | 1.60 | .64 | − 1.02 |
| Too little time with partner | 302 | 1.90 | .68 | 134 | 1.83 | .69 | 1.02 |
| Impossible to segregate official life, personal life | 301 | 1.85 | .69 | 134 | 1.73 | .77 | 1.57 |
| Too little time with family | 302 | 1.79 | .67 | 134 | 1.63 | .70 | 2.29* |
| Lack of time with friends | 300 | 1.83 | .71 | 134 | 1.58 | .73 | 3.39*** |
| Unpredictable demands on time | 302 | 1.92 | .67 | 134 | 1.69 | .67 | 3.31*** |
| Exposure to criticism of partner by others | 300 | 1.79 | .70 | 133 | 1.71 | .72 | 1.07 |
| Worry about the effects of pressure on partner | 301 | 2.31 | .69 | 133 | 2.35 | .60 | − 0.49 |
| Responsibility without authority | 301 | 1.63 | .74 | 134 | 1.40 | .62 | 3.14*** |
| Way of life altered (out of control) | 302 | 1.64 | .69 | 133 | 1.45 | .62 | 2.76** |
| Isolation from others because of partner's position | 301 | 1.87 | .75 | 133 | 1.69 | .77 | 2.23** |
| Lack of privacy | 301 | 1.89 | .73 | 133 | 1.57 | .62 | 4.33*** |
| Too little time for personal pursuits | 301 | 1.74 | .63 | 135 | 1.62 | .63 | 1.82 |
| Impact on children | 291 | 1.41 | .60 | 131 | 1.31 | .56 | 1.49 |

‡ Responses were obtained on the following three-point scale: 1 = not frustrating, 2 = minor frustration, and 3 = major frustration.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

CHAPTER 11

DIFFERING EXPECTATIONS BY GENDER

“I was the first male spouse of the president of my wife’s institution, so I was in a position to reset expectations for the role here. My impression from many discussions with fellow spouses, male and female, is that relatively little is expected of male spouses compared to female spouses.”

– 2016 Male Respondent

“I have been to conferences for university presidents and the male spouses have little to no expectations placed on them by the institution or the community and can’t seem to understand the stress of the female spouses.”

– 2016 Female Respondent

Chapter Overview

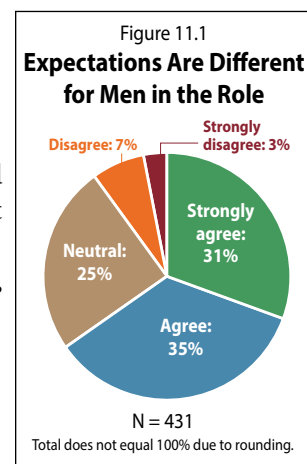
As demonstrated in the foregoing chapters, gender emerged throughout our study as the variable associated with the most numerous, and most statistically significant, group differences among participants. Females reported more time spent in the role, and greater levels of institutional involvement, than males did. Of those involved in institutional life, females spent more time in related activities. Females more frequently curtailed or discontinued prior employment as a result of their partners’ presidencies, and they found aspects of the role more frustrating or concerning.

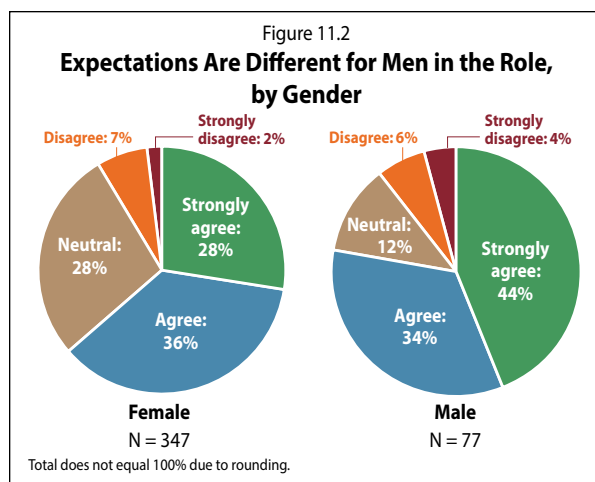
How can we account for such differences in the experiences and perspectives of females and males? It does not appear from our study that institutions commonly dictate involvement—at least not explicitly. As reported earlier, our results suggest relatively few colleges or universities have formal policies regarding the partner role, and few institutions issue written job descriptions to partners. In the absence of documented understanding, then, on what basis do female partners accept or assume more responsibilities, engage in more institutional activities, and identify partner challenges as more problematic? To find out, we asked participants about perceived external expectations from a gender standpoint. The question

brought forth some strong reactions. This chapter presents our findings and participant comments on the issue.

Expectations for Males Versus Females

An item near the end of the survey asked participants to rate their level of disagreement or agreement with the following statement: “Expectations (institutional, societal) are different for men in the presidential spouse/partner role than they are for women.” As shown in Figure 11.1, there was wide agreement with the statement. Thirty-five percent of respondents agreed, and an additional 31 percent strongly agreed. Only seven percent disagreed, and three percent strongly disagreed, with the remainder (25%) selecting the “neutral” option. As Table 11.1 and Figure 11.2 show, males agreed more frequently with the statement than females.





Given the opportunity to comment in an open-text box following the statement, most participants shared observations, experiences, and viewpoints that helped explain the nuanced and largely intangible—but for many, very real—phenomenon of differing expectations.

Figure 11.3 shows that the large majority of commenters underscored or elaborated on the notion that more is expected of women (or, conversely, less is expected of men). Others commented that they lacked information or experience to have an opinion, or voiced the view that expectations are changing or are minimal at any rate.

Males agreed more frequently than females that expectations are different for men in the partner role than they are for women.

Overall Expectations Are Different

Male: “I don’t know how much is left of the old tradition of expecting the president’s wife to be a full time hostess without pay, but I assume that idea is not completely dead and that at least remnants of it remain. Maybe more than remnants. No one had those expectations of me, or if they did, I never heard about it.”

Female: “I have a basic understanding that there are expectations for me in my role that are undefined, not expressed, but, nonetheless, very real. The expectations and the role I play are very traditional, very much a part of an historically patriarchal culture. In conversations surrounding the arrival of the new female president who will be assuming my husband’s role at retirement, it is clear that the community does not expect the new president’s spouse to plan events, host open houses, plan dinners for seniors, decorate for Christmas, etc.”

Male: “I do not feel a strong sense of expectation in the role. Whatever I choose to do or not to do is accepted. I think a female spouse would face more expectations in the role.”

Female: “I have several male professional acquaintances who are married to presidents or vice-presidents who tell me they basically have NO expectations from the institution or board. In fact, when they do go to something many people express surprise

Table 11.1
View of Gender Expectations in the Role of Partner, by Gender

| | Responses | | | | | | | | <i>t</i> (1,422) |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------|-----------|-----|------|------|-----------|------|------------------|
| | Female | | | | Male | | | | |
| | N | % | \bar{x} | SD | N | % | \bar{x} | SD | |
| Gender Role Expectations [‡] | | | 3.81 | .97 | | | 4.08 | 1.09 | –2.12* |
| Strongly disagree | 6 | 1.7 | | | 3 | 3.9 | | | |
| Disagree | 23 | 6.6 | | | 5 | 6.5 | | | |
| Neutral | 97 | 28.0 | | | 9 | 11.7 | | | |
| Agree | 125 | 36.0 | | | 26 | 33.8 | | | |
| Strongly agree | 96 | 27.7 | | | 34 | 44.2 | | | |

† Response to the question “Expectations (institutional, societal) are different for men in the presidential spouse/partner role than they are for women.” Responses obtained on the following five-point scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

* $p < .05$

and say how grateful they are that they attended. If I don't attend something, people want to know why I'm not there. Interestingly, most of the judgment on this comes from staff rather than the board."

Male: "When my wife became the first female president of her university, the only expectation of me (for about a week) was to pick flowers and design a meal at our house. I suggested hot dogs and hamburgers. The staff never asked me again. Being a male gave me the total freedom to pick what I wanted to do. I picked going to athletic events. I like athletics and the student athletes truly appreciated me being at all home games and traveling to many. They keep me young."

Female: "Male spouses with careers have told me that they have felt little or no pressure to adjust career demands to fulfill role of presidential spouse. They say they have felt

Figure 11.3

Comments Regarding Differing Expectations

Male responses

(# responses + % of all male responses):

There are more expectations for females – 28 (50%)

A female president/male spouse is still new – 8 (14%)

Misinterpreted question to mean president – 5 (9%)

It depends on the institution or individuals – 4 (7%)

Females take on more responsibility – 2 (4%)

I don't know other partners, not enough experience – 2 (4%)

There are assumptions, but they are changing – 1 (2%)

Other – 6 (11%)

Female responses

(# responses + % of all female responses):

Fewer expectations/assumptions of males hosting, etc. – 87 (46%)

I don't know male spouses, don't have experience – 19 (10%)

It depends on the institution or individuals – 18 (9%)

Yes, bias and sexism exists in society, institutions – 10 (5%)

There are assumptions, but they are changing – 9 (5%)

Males are expected to have careers – 9 (5%)

Males have different/fewer expectations of self – 7 (4%)

Misinterpreted question to mean president – 6 (4%)

Depends on career demands – 3 (2%)

Males in the role seem more likely to get paid – 3 (2%)

Other – 18 (10%)

Male = 56, Female = 190

more free to choose what to be involved with at the college, and have not felt judged or criticized for their decisions. In contrast, the previous spouse at my institution had a full-time career, and had two minor children at home while her spouse was president. When I (we) came into the role, faculty/staff criticized her, saying she 'did nothing' for the college except serve on one committee. Also, male spouses say that when new at the institution, it has commonly happened (at community events) the people assumed he was the president, not the female."

Male: "I believe less involvement is expected of me because of my sex."

Hosting Expectations Are Different

Male: "Men are expected to play golf and ATTEND events. Women are expected to PLAN and HOST events."

Female: "Women in this role are expected to entertain and organize events while men are offered more aid."

Male: "The previous spouse was female and entertained quite a bit. That's not my skill set."

Female: "I think female spouses are more likely to ACCEPT traditional institutional/societal expectations of the wife as hostess; male spouses are much less likely to be expected to have a major role in planning entertainment."

Male: "No one expects me to organize events, plan dinners, decide on decor, etc. I could do it, I suppose, but I have no interest, and I believe that no one expects me to."

Female: "My sense is that male partners are given lots of kudos for doing the most basic things—like showing up at events or going to a student concert—while female spouses who don't do those things raise eyebrows."

Male: "I have no duties for entertaining. There are less expectations of me than I think there would be if I were female."

Female: *"I am expected to attend many, many university functions, but the male spouse of the previous president never went to campus or attended events, functions."*

Male: *"I am not expected to plan parties, review the menu, etc."*

Female: *"The previous president was a female; there was no expectations for his attendance at social events other than athletics."*

Community Expectations Are Different

Male: *"We aren't expected to head up the knitting club, ladies auxiliary or bridge night."*

Female: *"I get invited to too many ladies' fashion show/luncheons where they serve salad all the time; I do not see the male leaders or male spouses of leaders of other colleges and universities in this city at these events. . . . Yet the absence of a female is noted by all; no one says anything about the absence of male spouses. The previous Chancellor here was female; her husband CHOSE not to take on the Associate of the Chancellor role. I had no such 'choice,' I was told where to be and what I was signed up to do from the start—no one told me I had a choice."*

Differing Expectations Are Due to Sexism

Male: *"This is one of the last places of sexism in our culture. People let the guy off the hook."*

Female: *"Where have you been living? Just consider the pay differential between men and women or the number of full professors who are men vs. women. . . ."*

Male: *"Different expectations related to entertaining, assuming I know nothing. Reverse sexism."*

Female: *"My academic field is gender studies—this is not new territory for me! Just the language of spouse suggests to boards and others that 'wives support their husbands' and fails to understand the development*

and PR roles that many spouses contribute. This is not the same expectation for male spouses—who are not identified primarily as 'supporting their wives.' "

Male: *"Society expects less of a male spouse."*

Female: *"There are less expectations if it is a man in this role because that is just how our society is. There is still the prevailing thought that women should support the man and not the other way around. I don't like it either."*

It Depends on the Institution

Male: *"I think the response depends on what kind of institution you are referring to: at many, larger institutions, the presidential spouse is expected to be the 'social arm' of the Presidency, whether male or female. Fortunately for me, at our institution, being smaller, that is not an expectation for me. But I think, overall, since the number of female Presidents has been increasing, male Presidential spouses are becoming far more 'accepted.' "*

Female: *"My husband has served both male and female college presidents in his higher education career. The expectations for presidential spouses were different not only based on gender, but on geographical location as well. Spouses of southern institutions are much more likely to be involved in event planning and hospitality. The size of the institution was also a factor in the expectations/role of the presidential spouse."*

Male: *"This is my observation from listening to other spouses. At this institution, expectations are so low that I don't think it would be possible to discern a gender difference."*

Female: *"This institution doesn't have any expectations for the spouse/partner of the president. Gender would not make any changes to their expectations."*

It Depends on the Individuals

Male: “There are many ways to be a successful presidential spouse/partner for both men and women. Others’ expectations of the role are not fully formed or deeply held. In fact, they learn most of what they know about the role from how you—the spouse/partner—choose to live it.”

Female: “I think most spouses can select the role they want to play as spouse but I do believe males have more degrees of freedom.”

Males in the Role Are Still New

Male: “No one knows what to do with a male presidential spouse/partner. People don’t want to ask the same questions of a male that they would of a female and assume the female president is the one to ask.”

Female: “I have no current information, but do know for many years institutions did not know what expectations to have of a male spouse so the couple got to decide what role he would take.”

Male: “Men are still the exception so institutions don’t have things planned out as well. Expectations of wifely duties are often not met and the college does not know how to best use a male spouse.”

Female: “I do not know any male partners, so haven’t observed whether they are viewed any differently from the female partners I have known.”

Male: “In my wife’s two presidencies I don’t think the staff of her office ever knew how to regard me. To the degree that the spouse’s primary responsibility is often to attend social functions as set dressing or arm candy, I am an complete failure.”

Assumptions Are Changing

Male: “I think that a generation ago this may have been very true. Now women spouses are just as likely to have independent careers as the male spouses. The changes that I have seen are mostly generational, not gender related.”

Female: “The roles have changed significantly in the nearly three decades I have served as a spouse. I find boards do not have the expectation that the president’s spouse will be a full time ‘partner,’ and that many spouses work. But I think that the expectation that a woman spouse host events is expected—and that having a male spouse its not. In fact, if anything, I think that it’s joked about for a husband of a president. But it IS changing—and with younger people, such biases are far less prevalent.”

Some Expectations Are Self Imposed

Male: “It has been my observation that spouses of presidents who are female take on more responsibility for entertaining, etc.”

Female: “As a woman, I have made the choice to serve in a supportive role. I don’t think many men would even consider such an option. As a woman, it is easy to assume I would take on the supportive responsibilities as those before me have done. It is easy for the university to assume they get ‘two for one.’”

Female: “I know that societal expectations color even my own choices—and being complicit in doing the very things that I complain about ‘having’ to do—but not (yet) being totally willing to disappoint expectations or have that reflect poorly on my husband/‘the President’ or myself is yet another frustration and source of feeling inadequate. I don’t think a lot of men struggle with this. For example, as I’ve long said to my husband, if the house isn’t decorated or cleaned, it doesn’t reflect on HIM . . .”

Complications and Expectations of Males

Male: “One has to be very careful not to look as though as a male I am running the institution.”

Female: “I would assume men would be expected to have their own separate career unless they are retired.”

Male: *“Many older donors feel uneasy to meet with a female alone and want a male to pay for expenses.”*

Thought the Question Referred to President

Less than 10 percent (40 of 431) of partners responding disagreed or strongly disagreed that expectations are different for men in the role. Twenty three of the partners disagreeing wrote comments; of those, nine apparently misinterpreted the question as referring to the president.

Male: *“While performance expectations are the same, regardless of sex, the bias against women leaders exists. At a previous university gender bias from the system chancellor was extreme.”*

Female: *“I have not observed differences. The women in the schools I am familiar with are impressive and successful.”*

Expectations Are Not Different

Male: *“I have no idea what the ‘expectations’ are for either. The ones I know are all in different circumstances and those have defined their positions.”*

Female: *“These are really demanding jobs no matter your gender.”*

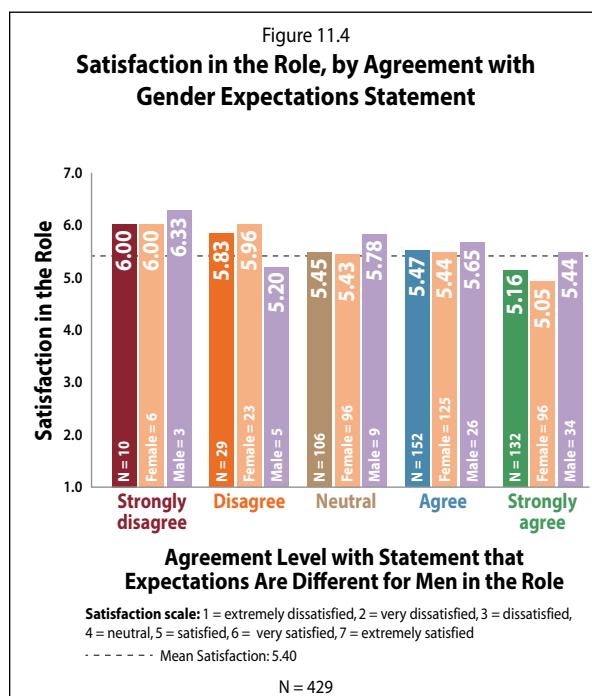
It’s Different, but the Same Where It Matters

Male: *“Male spouses are less expected to devote a substantial part of their effort/time in the supporting role. This comment applies to institutional/informal/entertainment matters. In terms of personal support, I don’t think this distinction is so strong, in large part because it is a private, less visible aspect. From my perspective, the personal support is critical between partners irrespective of their professional roles, but is truly critical when the spouse has such a demanding job.”*

Female: *“The men I have met in the spouse role at national meetings seem as genuinely interested in ‘making a difference’ for their institutions as women. They tend to be slightly older and having retired from their own careers, while many of the women have been trailing spouses who have made career adjustments and accommodations.”*

Satisfaction Related to Belief that Expectations Are Unequal

How individuals feel about expectation differences for men and women matters. Participants’ responses to that question help explain some of the differences in their levels of overall satisfaction with their partner role. As shown in Figure 11.4, as respondents’ degree of agreement with the statement, “Expectations (institutional, societal) are different for men in the presidential spouse/partner role than they are for women,” increased, their overall level of satisfaction decreased. The difference was highly significant statistically for females. No significant difference was found in satisfaction for male respondents. These findings suggest that for females, satisfaction in the role is linked to perception of differing expectations for men compared to women in the role.



CHAPTER 12

A CHANGING ROLE

“I suspect that most of us resent many times being an unpaid adjunct of our husbands. . . . I do wish I could stay around long enough to see what women’s lib makes of our problems in another generation or so.”

– 1977 Survey Respondent (Corbally, 1977, p. 128)

“I think I represent many women of the feminist movement of the 60s and 70s. We married men who, like us, have a commitment to their careers. When the spouses move into president position—neither spouse is prepared for what is expected. The president is suddenly enveloped in university responsibilities and the wife’s schedule is overwhelmed with obligations that interfere with her profession. It is difficult in a highly egalitarian marriage to be suddenly thrust back into the 50s.”

– 2016 Survey Respondent

Chapter Overview

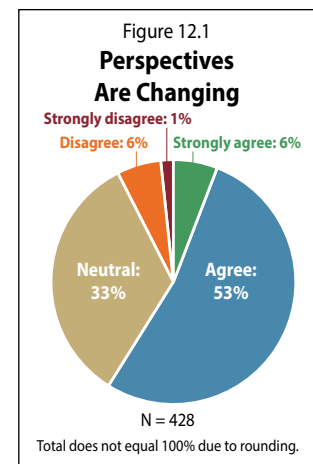
Reports and essays from more than a generation ago (Corbally, 1977; Ostar, 1983, 1986, 1991; Clodius & Skomars Magrath, 1984; DiBiaggio, 1984) evinced a degree of confidence that perspectives were changing with regard to the partner role. More women would be working (including as college presidents) in the future, the reasoning went, and so fewer would be expected to play significant support roles in their husbands’ careers. Presidential partners would be freer to choose the nature and scope of their involvement with institutions, and institutions, in turn, would expect less of them.

Four decades later, females account for nearly half the U.S. workforce, but remain under-represented as college presidents and over-represented as presidential partners. Even so, many partners in our study believed that perspectives on the role are changing.

Views Are Changing, Partners Believe

As shown in Figure 12.1, 53 percent of our respondents agreed, and six percent strongly agreed, with the statement, “Perspectives are changing with regard to the president/chancellor’s spouse/partner in higher education.” Thirty-three percent were neutral. Only seven percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

As shown in Figure 12.2, many partners linked changing perspectives with more partners working and fewer expectations from institutions. Some partners were unsure about whether perspectives are changing, lacking information or experience to judge. Some commented that more male and same-sex partners



help to change perspectives. Others complained that progress is too slow, suggested that whether and how perspectives are changing really depends on the particular institution, or commented that the role is increasing in importance and impact.

Outside Careers More Common

Invited to comment on changing perspectives, the largest number of participants (N = 45) observed that partner careers outside the role are more common, accepted—even expected.

“It seems to me that the president’s spouse nowadays is expected to be an accomplished professional herself/himself.”

“[More] spouses work than they used to, so the ‘two-for-one’ joke applies less and less.”

“Working spouses are becoming more common, and we are learning how to evolve as this happens. We have a long way to go. People make lots of assumptions about what I must do. It is difficult but critical that we break down those assumptions and claim all parts of our lives.”

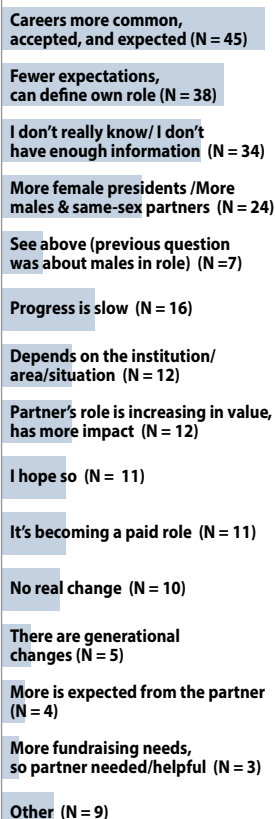
“Individual identities and roles of spouses are respected and encouraged.”

“Boards are gradually coming to understand two-career couples.”

“I think both internal and external constituencies understand that spouses have professional lives of their own, and often do not want to, nor can they, be involved in activities at the school.”

Figure 12.2

Comments about Changing Perspectives



N = 214

“Women are now expected to have their own jobs, interests, activities outside their husband’s employment sphere. While my attendance at official events is always appreciated, it is not always expected.”

“One of the best pieces of advice I got from another spouse was to get a job so that I would always have an excuse not to do something, as well as because men understood how to deal with professional women whereas they had a hard time feeling comfortable with women who raised children or otherwise did not have paying jobs or careers. High powered volunteer work was another option; low-level or hands-on volunteer work was an obstacle to professional conversation.”

Institutions Expect Less, Partners Can Define the Role

The next most frequent comment type (N = 38) was that institutions make fewer demands on partners, leaving them to define the role for themselves.

“The changes are toward fewer assumptions that the spouse will play a traditional ‘hosting’ role for the president’s professional events, more reliance on college professionals such as Sodexo, events planning coordinators, etc. There is growing awareness of, and respect for, the career goals of the spouse, their interests and goals, and ways the spouse might fulfill them while also supporting the president and college in ways that are negotiated and/or agreed upon. There are fewer expectations for the spouse to volunteer extensive hours on behalf of the college, although this is welcomed.”

“In general, I think there are fewer institutions that expect unpaid full time services from spouses of the president/chancellor position.”

“I think there is a growing recognition that there is not just one way to handle this role. The fact that growing numbers of spouses have work outside the institution is changing expectations.”

“I have seen it go from being expected to volunteer 100% of your time for free, to being compensated for the role, or being able to reject the role altogether.”

"I think every spouse can decide what level of involvement they want. I don't believe a board would insist."

"I receive less criticism than I did 16 years ago for not being super involved. The board no longer seems to have the same expectations now that it did back then."

"I can't imagine being in this role 15 years ago when the presidential partners were expected to run the entertaining and play a real first lady role. I feel like I have much more freedom about how much I want to be involved now, even if the boundaries are sometimes unclear."

Thirty-four respondents indicated they lacked sufficient information, experience, or clarity to comment with certainty as to perspectives on the partner role.

"I don't know; I can't tell. There seem to be a lot of mixed messages. For example, I really appreciate the spouse/partner programs offered by the associations, but those who are less involved in the role are presumably not attending. I'm still having the vague sense that I'm wasting an opportunity or disappointing unvoiced expectations."

"I haven't been in this role or environment long enough to judge that question. Society is changing as a whole, generational issues, minority populations, and the role of higher education. It is all impacting society norms and I would expect perspectives relative to the roles of presidents/chancellors are changing along with society."

"I hear this at conferences (so I have to agree that some people's perspectives are changing), but I have not experienced it myself, or seen it."

More Males, Same-Sex Partners

Two dozen respondents credited the changing gender make up of presidents and couples for changing perspectives. Some noted that institutional staff members now perform duties previously carried out by partners.

"There seems to be more diversity now in the presidential role and I sense a shift is about to occur. Particularly in acceptance of same sex presidential spouse and more women becoming presidents as well."

"More male spouses are forcing the institutions to reexamine and modify the expectations for the partner."

"I think I am the last of the traditional female trailing spouses at this institution. Our incoming president is a woman so I think the duties that I had will be delegated elsewhere."

"[Perspectives] are changing because the people filling the role are changing. They are more diverse with respect to gender, race, and sexual identity, and they are more likely to have a career of their own, sometimes one that can be continued online in a location far from the president/chancellor's campus."

Progress is Slow

Sixteen wrote that change is too slow.

"Hopefully, [perspectives] are changing; society changes slowly; colleges and universities perspectives may change even more slowly."

"I have talked to several new spouses and I find that many women are finding that professionally working in the institution has serious drawbacks because the spouse is never totally accepted. I am pleased to see that, like men, women who have outside employment are slowly determining that their work should continue outside the university. I am also finding that many new male presidents are beginning to understand that female spouses should not be required to carry on traditional, anti-feminist roles in the university. Yet the perspectives of students, alumni, donors, staff and members of governance devote little time, if any, regarding the role of the spouse and lean toward praising female spouses when they are in traditional roles."

"Maybe slowly, but most of the current donors are of the age where traditional roles still apply."

In the past, partners believed that perspectives were changing with regard to the president's partner in higher education. They continue to believe it today.

It Depends on the Institution

A dozen commented that when it comes to change in the partner role, much depends on the characteristics, traditions and culture of each particular institution.

“Spouse/partners often have their own careers. But any college may hold on to traditional expectations.”

“Roles are defined by the individuals and are dependent on sex, age, number of dependents and spouses’ interest and willingness to accept certain roles.”

Partner Role Increasing in Importance

Not all participants believed that changing perspectives mean less partner involvement. Twelve thought partners’ contributions are increasing in their importance to institutions and presidents.

“Spouses are more and more likely to be expected to play a larger, more specified role, especially as relates to fundraising/donor relations.”

“The president/chancellor roles are big and challenging roles. They need good support systems, not only institutionally but also in their personal lives.”

Hope and Doubt

Eleven voiced hope that perspectives are changing, and some questioned the degree to which changing perspective actually manifest in partners’ lived experiences.

“Maybe it is wishful thinking, but I ‘agree’ because I hope it is true.”

“I think perspectives are changing; actions aren’t.”

CHAPTER 13

SUPPORT, ADVICE, AND LAST WORDS FROM PARTNERS

“The role of presidential spouse at a university is life altering, it is not a job it is a way of life. I am glad of the support of other presidential spouses as they totally understand what you are going through. The older I get I have to say, the more I am relaxing with this role and letting myself enjoy every situation.”

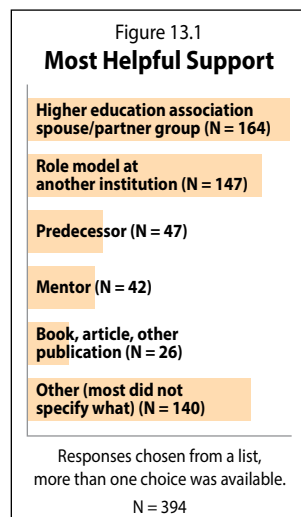
– 2016 Survey Respondent

Chapter Overview

Partners find most support in the role from others in it, as well as from friends and mentors, written work, and higher education association partner groups. In turn, partners are generous in offering counsel and encouragement to their peers. This chapter highlights sources of support, advice shared by partners, and responses to our final survey item: “Is there anything you’d like to add?”

Sources of Support

When asked “What people or resources have been most helpful to you in your role?” respondents overwhelmingly mentioned the support of other partners, as shown in Figure 13.1. They drew this peer support from higher education associations, partners at other institutions, and predecessors. As to published resources, they mentioned books written by others in the partner role, including *Spousework* by Teresa Oden (2007) and *The President’s Spouse: Volunteer or Volunteered* by Joan Clodius and Diane Skomars Magrath (1984). (The latter book, over 30 years old, is still being used for support and advice, and is available on the APLU website.)



Higher Education Association Partner Groups

The top response for helpful resources was the partner groups of higher education associations, and partners mentioned the groups elsewhere in the survey:

“Do not miss any chance to join any higher education association spouse/partner group!!”

“Seek the advice of spouses from similar schools and attend conferences specifically designed for presidential spouses, but realize that it will take several years to develop your style and method of being a presidential spouse.”

“Only other college presidential couples understand . . . it’s frustrating to not be able to talk freely about the role very often.”

“Talk to others in the same role, use them as a support network. They are the only others who understand what your life is like.”

All participants in this survey are partners of leaders whose institutions belong to one or more of four higher education associations: AASCU, AAU, APLU, and CIC. Each has an active partner group that meets at least annually. Partners rated attending association meetings as one of their most enjoyable responsibilities, as was shown in Table 6.3 in Chapter 6. A partner explained,

“The spouse/partner program at AASCU has evolved to its current state of providing excellent workshops for spouses at conferences, to help each of us explore ways to fulfill our roles in ways that are congruent with our needs, interests, abilities.”

While several partners mentioned association partner groups by name, many others were evidently unfamiliar with the specific associations to which their partners' institutions belonged. As shown in Figure 13.2, many respondents either did not know, or were incorrect about, association membership.

Figure 13.2
**Higher Education Association Membership
of Respondents' Partners' Institutions**

| | Yes | No | Do not know |
|---|-----|-----|-------------|
| Association of American Universities (AAU) | 126 | 113 | 166 |
| Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) | 76 | 221 | 102 |
| American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) | 145 | 155 | 101 |
| Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) | 214 | 92 | 104 |

Many partners strongly expressed, nonetheless, that association meetings provide an important venue for them to speak frankly and confidentially with peers about the role's joys and challenges, and to give and receive advice and encouragement.

Advice for Others in the Role

The survey asked, "What advice would you give someone new to the role of spouse/partner of a higher education leader?" Three hundred forty-eight offered advice, some of it lengthy. (Where respondents gave advice on multiple topics, each item was categorized accordingly.) Responses, organized by theme, are listed in order of frequency in Figure 13.3. Specific quotes are provided below for the 14 categories that have more than 10 responses.

Seek/Establish Clarity on Expectations

The top response was to seek or establish clarity on role expectations, with some specifically suggesting written job descriptions or contracts:

"Be clear about the roles and responsibilities from the institution's perspective."

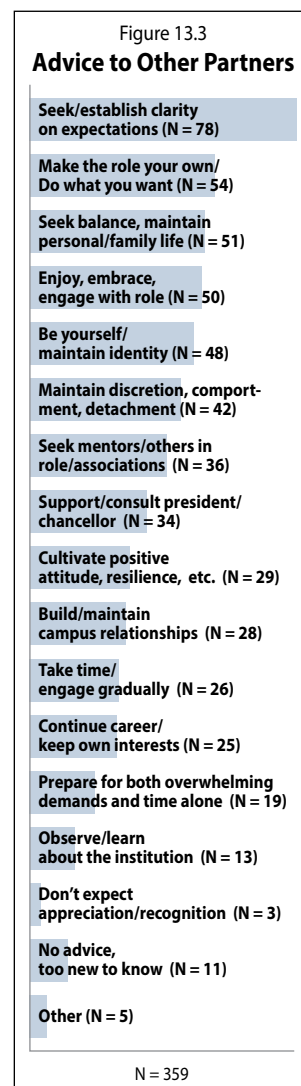
"Ask questions about the institution's expectations of you before your spouse takes the job because you are both taking this job."

"Make sure of the expectations and support you will get, try to get a well structured office with clear understanding of the responsibilities."

"Draft a written description and log hours."

"Written clarity on your budget & role."

Other comments in this category underscored the paradox of role clarity that came up regularly throughout the survey: partners seek to understand what is expected of them, and yet many



enjoy or desire the flexibility to establish their own role. (See Chapter 7 “Role Clarity” for more discussion.) A partner wrote

“I have found that I can take advantage of the gray areas to develop an agenda that suits me and the institution. I am not bound by traditions nor am I expected to be.”

When advising about expectations, the partners offered ways to navigate the need for clarity and the reality of being in a role rather than a job:

“Take control of your own position and be a major part of determining exactly what your role is or may evolve into. Unless you are accepting a paycheck with outlined duties, I feel it is up to the spouse, and to a lesser degree, the partner to determine what the role of the spouse will be during the tenure of the President. I also believe that the role changes as the tenure changes.”

“Talk with the board and other members of the university’s senior staff about the expectations that the institution has for the spouse. Decide which activities you are interested in participating in, discuss with your partner which activities he or she feels will be important to his or her success in the role and stick with those. Don’t take on additional responsibilities, particularly those that you are not excited about, because you will set a precedent and it will be difficult to back away.”

“Re-examine the role from the ground up. Find where you can both benefit the community, but also in ways that you find personally rewarding. Don’t get caught up in prior expectations from the previous spouse—the role is changing.”

“Obtain a spouse/partner role description; if one does not exist, consider developing one yourself (although anticipated roles may not be congruent with actually expected roles—particularly during the first year).”

Make the Role Your Own

The next most frequent advice theme, make the role your own, dovetails with taking initiative to assert role clarity:

“Make the position what you want it to be (which can include nothing).”

“Make it your own. There’s (usually) more freedom to shape what you do than is often

perceived. Get to know the institution and carve out an area of interest for yourself, and go for it!”

“The first year may seem daunting—but the role can become what you envision—the trick is that very thing—what do you envision doing? That’s the hard part. Once you know, then dig in and make it happen.”

The freedom to “make it your own” may be a real change from the past. In *The Partners* (1977), Corbally wrote, “A few wives suggest that if you want freedom of choice on campus, you must break all traditions immediately and carefully avoid setting new precedents for yourself.” Another major change in the role is reflected by the title of *The Partners* advice chapter: “Just Between Us Girls.” In the survey that informed the 1977 book, the most frequent advice was to “Be yourself” (p. 143).

Seek Balance, Maintain Personal/Family Life

Partners advise others to take care of themselves:

“Protect some of your time to nurture yourself and your family.”

“Continue to be yourself and support your spouse/partner the same way you have been prior to being in this position. Your achievement together speaks for itself.”

They advise finding regular time away from campus with the president, such as

“Keep your marriage healthy by making time for one another—date nights are key!”

“Go away for a weekend once every 6 weeks.”

One partner explained,

“If the partners have a strong, trusting, and committed partnership, and value one another’s companionship, I think that will make the difference in a successful run in higher education, whatever the circumstances.”

Enjoy, Embrace, Engage with Role

Despite the complications, many view the role as a true privilege to be enjoyed:

“Enjoy it. This is a great life!”

“Embrace this new role and all that it has to offer. You will have wonderful opportunities.”

"Stop grumbling and recognize the awesome opportunity you have to make a difference."

"Be aware of the huge commitment and embrace the many blessings received."

"You have an esteemed role at the university and in the community. Value that role and enjoy the privileges that come with it."

Be Yourself, Maintain Your Own Identity

As in Corbally's survey (1977), "be yourself" was commonly advised. Nineteen partners in our survey offered advice along that line:

"Be yourself."

"Be yourself, it's too hard not to be."

"Be yourself and have a sense of humor."

Some of advice offered on this theme seemed more nuanced than the "be yourself" advice from the 1970s. Rather than reassuring partners that they will be accepted for who they are, our respondents typically urged partners to maintain their identities for their own wellbeing, including:

"Do not lose sight of your own personal goals and needs."

"If you haven't already done so, develop a strong sense of self/identity. Acknowledge the fact that, although some personal sacrifices may have to be made, you will be able expand your sense of self by way of the new opportunities that come with the job."

"I wish I could say, 'hold onto your own identity,' but I think that is impossible in most situations. Changes in family life, day-to-day living routine, status and schedules are inevitable even if the details vary from one institution to another. So, maybe more realistic would be to say 'remember who you are and try to be yourself.'"

Maintain Discretion, Comportment, Detachment

There were warnings, both direct and implied:

"Be very careful of what you say, and whom you say it to."

"Always be polite and be sure that your actions are beyond reproach."

"Remember that you are a representative of the University at all times."

"Beware of those who will try to use your influence with the president to their own advantage."

"Work on getting a thick skin. Social media can be brutal to leaders today and its difficult for spouses to deal with this at times."

"You can easily do more harm than good. Keep your philosophy (politics) to yourself. Never speak for your spouse, unless specifically given permission to do so. Never discuss personnel issues. Never speak to the press/media as an individual/off the record. Protect the privacy of your spouse at home. Always answer the phone/door first. Never allow a stranger direct contact with my spouse."

Seek Mentors/Others in Role/Associations

As mentioned earlier, partners recommended seeking out mentors:

"Join a spouse group at the appropriate national organization of universities to which your university belongs and always go and participate (learn from others, share)."

"Develop networks with other spouses (APLU and other groups within state, within athletic conference)."

"Attend the CIC New Presidential Spouse sessions!"

Besides suggesting mentors and professional connections, some partners emphasized finding friends outside the campus community:

"Find someone you can really be yourself with, perhaps lifelong friends or neighbors or colleagues from LBP (Life Before Presidency), to visit and call at a moment's notice."

Another explained why outside friends are important:

"It is hard to socialize exclusively with people whom your spouse can fire!"

Support/Consult President

One partner wrote "Get used to being second-place!" Thirty-three others advised being supportive in a more serious way:

"Realize your spouse is taking on a huge responsibility and be as supportive as you can."

"Your most important task is being a support to your spouse, and every individual needs to figure out the public dimensions of the role in his or her own way."

"Be a sounding board, a confidant, and be supportive of your spouse."

"Be your own person, do your own thing but, support your spouse to the maximum degree possible."

Cultivate Positive Attitude, Resilience

Some advice described an attitudes and attributes:

"Be genuine, be friendly and approachable, be interested and involved. Be a good listener."

"Anytime you are on campus, you are working. Be gracious, be pleasant, even if you aren't feeling that way!"

"Hold the job loosely. Don't take yourself too seriously."

Build/Maintain Campus Relationships

Interactions with students, staff, alumni, donors, and board are all important to the role:

"Students are away from home, many times for the first time. Your kindness means so much."

"Be kind to everyone. Don't be demanding. Appreciate what each person at the institution does and let them know that."

"Building relationships with board members and donors is a lot of work but it is well worth the energy. Find ways to connect with them that fit your personality and likes."

Take Time, Engage Gradually

Some partners advised going to as many events as possible the first year, but many more recommend taking it slow:

"Do not join anything for the first year."

"One of the best pieces of advice I received (at an AAU partners meeting) was not to commit to any community involvements during my first year (e.g., invitations to join museum boards, symphony board, etc.). This gave me time to get to know the city and its institutions before making any commitments. It also gave me a polite way to decline invitations: 'I'm new to the city and

the university, and would like to get my bearings before taking on new commitments.' "

Continue Career, Keep Own Interests

Some of the advice, particularly regarding employment, is contradictory:

"Quit your 'day job.' " versus "Hold fast to your own career."

"Know your role and request compensation." versus "Don't take a salary position. If they pay you they . . . have expectations. If you aren't paid, there still are expectations but you are not obligated or run by the board."

Several suggested keeping careers or separate interests:

"Keep your day job. You'll garner more respect."

"If you work, keep your job!! You need your own identity. If you don't work, do whatever you can to find your own space."

One wrote of the difficulty in maintaining a career:

"I would not recommend this role to a spouse that expects to have a career of their own. There are too many expectations that are thrust upon you—apparently particularly if you are a woman—many of them unwritten. A modern woman who is used to having an independent career, and being recognized for her own achievements, will have a hard time adjusting to such a role, in my view—perhaps unless they are a saint, and get the majority of their pleasure in life through their sense that they are supporting their husband. In my case, my husband would not have been able to achieve what he did, while having a family, without me doing the lion share of all the family work . . . And now, he has a top job, and I have finally given up on trying to restart mine again in yet another place. What a world."

Prepare for Both Overwhelming Demands and Time Alone

Several partners mentioned transition challenges that were discussed in Chapter 5 "Transition to the Presidential Partner Role":

"You cannot be prepared for the demands and expectations for any specific institution but just know it will be more than you imagined."

“Get used to it—your time with your spouse will come when others have no need of her.”

“These positions can be isolating—but you have more control than you think.”

Observe/Learn About the Institution

Partners encouraged others to be intentional regarding learning about their new institutions:

“Know details about your university. Attend functions on campus. Wear your ‘swag’ proudly.”

“Go through the first year as an observer of the events that the college or university does. Make notes on how and why you may want to change things. Have a rock solid events planner on your side—insist on it. If the current one is not up to your standards, make changes.”

“There is no set of rules for this particular position. Observe, listen and learn about the culture of the institution—the hopes, the disappointments, frustrations and positives. As time goes by, I think most spouses find their niche and the areas they can most effectively impact. Most expectations are self-imposed—just be friendly, engaged and open. Eventually, you identify your role.”

Advice on a Range of Topics

One partner summed it up:

“A good relationship with your spouse is essential, because it will feel lonely at the top. You will be surrounded by many people, but most of them are not going to be personal friends since your spouse can hire or fire them or they will want something from you. It will be helpful to be self-sufficient, as your spouse may not always be available to you, either. Let the staff do their jobs; don’t overstep or be too critical. Be upbeat and diplomatic at all times. You are likely to travel often and not have time to take good care of a pet, if you have one. If you have children, there will be additional stresses. On the other hand, you’ll meet lots of interesting people and go interesting places. Your income and retirement outlook will improve. You most likely will be in a better position to make things happen in your particular area of interest thanks to the connections and resources that you will be able to access. So enjoy the good and put up with the bad. Enjoy the ride, for it’s all temporary!”

Anything Else?

The last question of the survey asked, “Is there anything you’d like to add, regarding your role as spouse/partner of the president/chancellor of a system, university or college?” and included an open-ended text box for comments. Responses were organized by theme, and are listed in order of frequency in Figure 13.4.

After committing the time to complete the survey, more than 300 partners wrote more. Many seemed to have thought deeply about the role, and used the last question as an opportunity to summarize their thoughts. Some of those comments were used elsewhere in this report, and some of the others are included below.

Positive Comments about the Role

Nearly one fourth of the responses (N = 80) spoke to partner’s satisfaction in the role, with 14 partners using the word privilege, as in “It’s a privilege to serve in this role,” and five mentioned being thankful for the opportunity.

“I find it to be one of the most exhilarating and satisfying undertakings—we have the opportunity to uniquely impact young people’s lives. Too often career academics lose sight of this. Role of presidential spouse is not a burden, it is a joy beyond measure.”

“I appreciate the great opportunities I have to meet people who are doing transformative research or building innovative, meaningful careers to better society. I learn something new every day from my campus experiences. I value my role for

Figure 13.4

Final Thoughts From Partners

| |
|--|
| Positive comment about role, It's a privilege (N = 80) |
| It's a complicated role with pros and cons (N = 17) |
| Complications of getting paid, some for, some against (N = 15) |
| It's a stressful role (N = 15) |
| Have defined own role, set own expectations (N = 13) |
| Seeking clarity, expectations should be defined (N = 11) |
| Mentions of association partner groups, mentors (N = 10) |
| Offering advice (N = 8) |
| Each situation is individual (N = 5) |
| Explaining own low involvement (N = 5) |
| Role expectations were oppressive (N = 2) |
| Nothing else (N = 24) |
| Other (N = 18) |

N = 359

what I have made of it so far, and for its potential for how I can contribute to university life as I mature in the role. I also appreciate the partnership with my husband as we work together to advance university life and prominence.”

“I have loved the role. I love feeling like I’m part of a team, sharing almost all facets of this life with my beloved—expect for the administrative aspects. I’ve never wanted a salary or title, but have relished the opportunities to be closely engaged in the life of our campus. Our grandchildren have thrived on the opportunities presented them by this life, on this campus, in this house and within this community. What a life!”

“It’s a great way to live and I feel blessed. When I figured out that this is a way of life, and not just a job, my life became more joyful.”

“I wasn’t really aware of the positive impact that we are seen by the students as a ‘team’ and role model of a successful relationship until many of them asked me how we have maintained our marriage and relationship. Our partnership in attendance of sporting events, student as well as staff events and awards ceremonies has had a very positive overall supportive impact for staff and students alike. We are not just a figurehead couple, but two individuals who care about the institution and those who attend and lead it.”

“The role is what you make of it. I am having a blast and have been helpful to my spouse because the job of President is bigger than for just one person. Thus we are considered a partnership. Constituents often say the university got two for one!”

“Overall it’s been an enriching experience. You have to be flexible and keep your sense of humor at all times. I’m pretty easy going, I stay away from politics, and I’ve been lucky to work with very helpful staff wherever we’ve been.”

It’s Complicated, Pros and Cons

Some partners offered final survey input of a more mixed nature:

“I do not feel as though my state values higher education. It is tiresome hearing that ‘a college degree is not for everyone.’ Especially when these statements are normally made by someone holding one or more college degrees. We have a huge shortage of educated and skilled workers in our state. It is sometimes hard to keep my opinions to myself. Overall, it is a satisfying experience.”

“I think everyone has to find their ‘niche’ within the institution. I think some institutions are more positive than others and have more resources. I think some personalities are a better ‘fit’ with the spousal duties—whether they feel it necessary or want to contribute. Experience in higher education is a plus!”

“It’s challenging, but I have met so many wonderful people and been able to go to a lot of great places, because of this role. I do wish it was not such an isolating proposition to be the presidential spouse. I think much of this varies, depending upon the location of the institution. For example, if we were in New York City, I am sure there would be many ways in which to have an independent life or career.”

“There are pros and cons to the role. I wouldn’t say it is the best experience ever, but it certainly is not the worst. Looking for the silver lining is imperative to all spouse/partners.”

Compensation Issues

“As long as you are unpaid, you may have more freedom to choose exactly what role you want to play.”

“I should have been more forceful about the possibility of securing a paid role at the first institution my husband served. I inquired about it at the meeting with the chair of the Presidential Search Committee at end of the joint on-campus interview during the selection process for my husband’s first Presidency, but was told that was not a “tradition” at that institution. The wife of my husband’s successor there DOES have a paid position there, however!”

More such comments are included in Chapter 6
“The Partner Role.”

It's a Stressful Role

Final thoughts, for some, focused on the stresses of the role:

“This is a tough time in American Higher Education and I think this is the toughest time ever to be college president, especially for small liberal arts colleges. That has to impact the spouse as the demands on the president and the stresses he/she faces make life difficult. The biggest job I have had in the past few years is keeping his spirits up, providing as much diversion as possible and listening to things he can't express to anyone else. It is tiring and I am glad we are getting out!”

“It is a 24/7 job for the person in it and it is very hard to carve out personal time.”

“It is extremely difficult in a small rural town where there are so few options for non-college activities and friendships.”

“The longer the job goes on, the more difficult it is. I get very frustrated when my spouse is not treated fairly by others, whether it is the media, the board, students, or faculty. My spouse is very popular on campus, but I guess you could say that my skin is not very thick. I feel protective.”

“The lack of privacy and the all-consuming role of president's wife has become wearing after these many years, but the role has also been immensely rewarding, and I am glad to have been able to serve as my husband's ‘other half’ in his challenging work in leading the institution.”

“Probably the most difficult challenge for me has been constantly being aware that what I say or do is subject to a lot of chatter—negative and positive. Even issues that relate to the home have to be dealt with after much conversation with my spouse concerning who should make the request—myself or the president's administrative assistant.”

Have Defined My Own Role/Expectations and Seeking Clarity

“Much of the spouse's role involves making it up as you go along: there isn't a road map. I don't know of any institution that has formal expectations or tasks for the spouse, though of course that could change, even as a result of a survey like this one! That the role of the spouse/partner is undefined is probably a good thing, because each spouse brings different skills, talents, and personality traits to the job. What is important is that the spouse be willing to enter into the life of the institution, be willing to join with the president in representing the institution. I don't think it is unfair for a search committee to consider the spouse's potential role and attitudes or aptitudes for undertaking that role.”

“Institutional expectations differ greatly among colleges and universities. Everyone needs to know those expectations fully.”

More of these comments are included in Chapter 7
“Role Clarity.”

Mentions of Associations, Mentors

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, partners find support from others in the role:

“Only other presidential spouses/partners really understand what the job involves.”

“I am glad of the support of other presidential spouses as they totally understand what you are going through.”

“Looking forward to working in CIC regarding re-inventing the role to fit a new generation”

“When my spouse became president, and we moved into a college-owned president's house, I had no preparation for what to expect, or what would be expected of me. The first ‘help’ or informal orientation/education I received was at AASCU summer council spouse/partner programs.”

“I have learned much from AASCU fellow spouses—appreciate that group and the ongoing dialogue.”

Offering Advice

Some partners used the last question as an opportunity to include more advice:

"I'd like to change the advice I would give to a new spouse. I would tell him or her to take over from the start and make it clear that he or she was willing to learn how things worked in the new place, but in the end whatever reflected on the Chancellor or President and family had to be approved by the spouse or President or Chancellor. So much of the job is image and perception that a staff that is not supportive of your personality will end up misrepresenting you and in the end you will look bad. Most importantly, a good staff that supports you and takes care of you is imperative."

"A college/university is an important part of its community. Active, visible, and positive spouse engagement both on and off campus is a vital contribution to the success of the president and the university. Further, it is fun and rewarding to be known and get 'hellos' from faculty, staff, and students, as well as members of the community."

"Pay close attention to the institutional fit, it is too hard of a task to do if you are not really happy with where you are. The best decision we made was for me to retire and this has helped relieve much of the potential stress that comes with this demanding job."

Explaining Low Involvement

Partners explained their personal situations:

"My advisory role is entirely informal and based on the personal relationship between the two of us and sometimes my professional expertise and experience. My role accompanying her at social events is limited. I do not accompany her on out-of-town development trips. My role as the principal communications link between the two of us and the house staff rarely takes much time. I have had a successful career in my own discipline, people respect and value that, and that is my principal role at the university. I do much more good for the university doing my own work than standing beside her and smiling."

"As a presidential spouse with a full time job, I have chosen to develop a life that is separate from his university where I am recognized for my talents and skills."

Each Situation Is Individual

Partners pointed out that there are variations by individuals and by institutions:

"My role, as I suspect is true of any other spouse/partner, is the product of my own wishes, my spouse's needs, and institutional expectations, in that order of significance. The result is a role that is quite individualized, though no doubt there are commonalities across institutions of higher education."

"Every situation is different."

Other

A few comments defied categorization:

"I prefer being known for who I am, not for who I married, so I usually don't mention my husband's job until I get to know someone better. And I look forward to the day that my husband retires and our life is not ruled by the demands of the university, its constituents and state legislators. People need to know it's a job of service, not prestige."

"I already said it—this position is the one of the last bastions of male chauvinism."

"Not at all as easy as it looks!!!"

Advice to Institutions and Boards

Partners were asked, earlier in the survey, "What could the institution have done to make the transition into the role of spouse/partner of the president/chancellor easier for you?" Those responses are described in Chapter 5 "Transition to the Presidential Partner Role." Some of the "anything else" comments, meanwhile, could also be read as specific recommendations to institutions and boards:

"There are few resources available for president candidate spouses—I think this survey is very important. Additionally I think there needs to be a way to educate boards . . . We are seeing dual career hiring issues all the way through academic life and it will continue."

"It's a privilege to serve in this role but more attention should be paid to preventing burnout for both the president and spouse . . . I recommend attendance at CIC or similar conference be required of the president by the University. The connections and time away are needed for renewal, reflection, and education but often are bypassed due to cost and personal fatigue."

"When we began in this position I was at a loss as to what my role was and the expectations for me. My spouse jumped right in and was extremely busy from day one and I was to figure out what my role was. It was very lonely and frustrating. It seems there should be some input and mentoring involved when a couple takes this on together."

"I would have liked more orientation/preparation/education from the institution, as well as linking with other resources such as AASCU programs, local spouses who could be informal support and mentors to me, and something written to read, prepared by the college, which could be a companion to the book published by AASCU spouse/partner program. This would be more of a specialized pamphlet for spouse/partners that is tied to the specific history and purpose of the college and its community."

Three partners wrote of their gratitude for their own situations, which may be used as advice to other institutions and boards:

"The ideal situation for any incoming spouse is to have a board (and staff) who embrace the personality and goals of the spouse, and accommodate them if at all possible. For me personally, the privileges and opportunities of the role have always far outweighed the downsides (isolation, lacking close friends nearby, etc.). Ultimately, one finds one's way—as long as that individual personality is respected. I think the health of the marriage is also key. I haven't resented much because I enjoy my husband's company and his fascinating world. But if we didn't have a good long term match, it would be much harder."

"I have a wonderful Board of Trustees to work with who encourage me to do what I want and are very supportive."

"I recognize that I am in a unique situation and I am very grateful that the University community of which I am a member has allowed me to continue my work as a professional. My husband and I do not fit a mold and the University has been very respectful in not asking us to fit a mold! For that, I am grateful and in return, am willing to be flexible in how I can be supportive."

Advice to Other Researchers, What We Missed

A few comments mentioned other areas to consider, and perhaps topics for other researchers:

"For me, the real story is how this appointment has affected our marriage and family dynamic. We have worked hard to preserve and nurture these important relationships. It's interesting to me that this factored little into this survey."

"I think the role is amplified at HBCU's [Historically Black Colleges and Universities]. Similar to African-American churches, the 'first lady' is seen as a true symbol of her husband and the campus. Thus, hair, clothes, shoes and language are always scrutinized. It is also difficult to make close friends, because in small towns, all lines go back to the university and you don't want to get used/cause problems with personnel issues."

"Would some of these answers be different for those in a public/secular institution vs. those at a faith-based institution where there is a sense of 'calling' which gives additional meaning to the willingness to gladly serve? Maybe that question/category will be forthcoming, but it should definitely be considered as a variable for the survey to be accurate."

"I have not seen much about linkages with the community. The town/gown divide is often a large one and the spouse can play an important role in creating connections."

Anticipated Outcomes for this Survey

A few partners mentioned their hopes for this survey. We give them the chapter's last words:

"I am pleased you are doing this survey. This is a challenging and complicated topic. So many colleges and universities are in small communities where the spouse may feel that it is a conflict to work, to take jobs away from others, and where the demands on his/her time are very high."

"The role should be seriously reviewed as a very important part of the success of the president/chancellor and institution."

"I am eager to read the results of your research. I hope this survey provides some valuable insights into the role of the president's spouse. Those insights could be helpful for future presidential couples."

"Don't let them forget us. We're needed."

CHAPTER 14

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The role of partner of a college or university president, while unique, has some similarities to the role played by partners of corporate executives, ambassadors, clergy, and highly-ranked governmental leaders such as the President and Vice President of the United States and governors of the states. What such partners share is a degree of public visibility and status, sometimes associated responsibilities that take a toll on their professional lives, and, usually, family responsibilities. Partners are sometimes judged by their actions or inactions, and such judgments may be based on unstated expectations of which partners are unaware when they enter the presidential partner role.

Characteristics of Partners

Our study sought to portray the lives of a substantial number of partners of college and university presidents, almost all of whom led institutions in the United States. The changing demographic characteristics of college and university presidents have brought concomitant changes in the characteristics of presidential partners. We used the word *partner* intentionally rather than the word *spouse*, which had been used in previous studies, since we believe the word partner conveys a more inclusive relationship status. Although previous studies included too few males to warrant statistical comparisons of the experiences of females and males, our study included the responses of 77 males, thus enabling us to examine gender differences in the experiences of presidential partners. Our study included the responses of 54 partners of color, but only the Black/African American category had enough partners (N=25) to identify possible differences in the partner experience

as a function of race. Our study included the responses of 12 same-sex presidential partners, but not enough to warrant reliable comparisons with opposite-sex partners. As the characteristics of presidential partners change, it is probable that the nature of the role will reflect the priorities of presidential partners. Our findings hint at some of the traditional activities of presidential partners that may or may not be assumed by partners in the future. Future research should seek to portray the lives of diverse groups of partners whose personal characteristics may affect how they carry out their partner role.

Transition to the Presidential Partner Role

The transition to the role of presidential partner is complicated by a variety of individual and institutional factors. At the institutional level, the hiring authority typically cannot conduct a formal interview with the potential presidential partner, yet 22 percent of partners in our study indicated that they participated in interviews, and 38 percent reported they had informal interactions with institutional representatives. That such interactions occur suggests that institutions consider partners to be “part of the package” when hiring a new president. Once the president assumes office, the partner’s first year in the role is often a significant life transition. Especially for females, moving into the partner role may bring changes in their professional lives, going from full-time to part-time employment or leaving their careers altogether after realizing the magnitude of the responsibilities associated with the role. For partners, generally, the first year is one of adjustment and adaptation, often compounded by the ambiguity of the role at many institutions.

Role Clarity

The degree of clarity associated with the role of presidential partner affects how a presidential partner crafts a role best suited to his or her interests and personal and professional responsibilities. Our finding that almost three-fourths of partners have “informal responsibilities in an unpaid position” suggests that the role of presidential partners is inherently ambiguous. Of our respondents, slightly less than eight percent agreed with the statement that their university had “specific policies related to the responsibility of the partner.” The ambiguity versus clarity of the role of presidential partner presents a conundrum, since many partners in our study argued for greater clarity, while others argued that the ambiguity allowed them to craft a role they most preferred. Our finding that higher levels of clarity were associated with higher levels of satisfaction confirms the importance of clarity in the lives of partners. Perhaps of most importance is that partners and the presidents agree about how a partner enacts the role of presidential partner, and the good news is that 92 percent of partners agreed with the statement “My spouse and I have a common understanding of my role and responsibilities as a presidential partner.”

Satisfaction in the Role

We found that overall levels of satisfaction in the partner role were very high (e.g., 16 percent were extremely satisfied, 36 percent were very satisfied, and 32 percent were satisfied), with a mean of 5.41 on a seven-point satisfaction scale). This seems to reflect the many ways partners use their abilities and interests proactively to craft a meaningful partner role, in spite of inherent ambiguities. Our study is unique in that it examined 14 specific aspects of satisfaction with the role; our finding that the item “Being appreciated for my sacrifices and efforts for the institution” was the item most highly correlated with overall satisfaction is instructive. Second on the list of items most highly correlated with overall satisfaction was the item “Being able to use my strengths and abilities.” “Being compensated fairly for my time and effort related to the role” also was significantly correlated with overall satisfaction.

Involvement in the Role

We found that there is large variability in the extent to which partners are involved in the role of presidential partner. We found that one percent of partners were “uninvolved,” and 13 percent were “minimally involved,” while another 33 percent were “somewhat involved,” 35 percent were “very involved,” and 18 percent were “extremely involved.” The finding that females had higher involvement levels than males is explained, in part, by the lower percentages of females who continued to work in some other professional capacity. Although we found that overall satisfaction in the partner role increased as involvement increased, the dip in satisfaction level for those who indicated that they were extremely involved perhaps suggests that there is an “ideal” level of involvement and that too much involvement may bring with it too many frustrations, concerns, and demands on partners’ time.

Institutional Variables

Whereas most previous studies of presidential spouses included partners in only certain types of institutions, our study is notable for its inclusion of the largest numbers of partners from a variety of four-year institution types. Our survey included several questions about the institution in order to discern differences in the enactment of the presidential partner role as a function of certain institutional characteristics. We were somewhat surprised to find that the presidential partner role is pretty much the same across different types of institutions and different regions of the United States. We found few differences between partners in public versus private institutions, save for differences in degree of perceived positive attitudes of two constituencies, alumni and governing board, and in the percentages of partners who lived in an official residence (higher percentages in private versus public institutions). We found some expected differences in involvement levels and time devoted to the role as a function of institution size (with involvement and time spent higher for larger institutions). Our results also indicated differences in involvement and time spent in the role as a function of athletic association membership of the institution, with those in NCAA

Division I institutions indicating the highest levels of involvement and time spent in the role.

Gender Differences

Given that we had enough males to examine gender differences, we compared males and females on many survey items. We found that on the five most general questions about the experience of partners (i.e., satisfaction, level of involvement, degree of clarity, frequency of conversations with spouse, and differing gender expectations), there was a statistically significant difference for level of involvement in the partner role, and differing gender expectations. As to the former, females reported spending significantly more time in the role; as to the latter, while the majority of all partners agreed that expectations are different for men than for women in the role, males agreed more strongly. When we examined gender differences for the more specific questions, we found gender differences for the majority of the items. Females much more frequently than males assumed certain responsibilities (e.g., coordinate entertainment and write thank you notes) and in general, females indicated higher levels of enjoyment of the responsibilities than males. Females nevertheless had higher levels of concern/frustration for most of the items dealing with potential problematic aspects of being in the role. We found even more striking differences between females and males when we analyzed their comments to several open-ended questions in the survey.

One limitation vis-à-vis the statistical analysis is that gender-difference analyses were performed separately for several of the questions concerning experiences of female and male partners. In subsequent analyses of gender differences, a more complicated multivariate analysis (i.e., several dependent variables simultaneously) will be performed to first determine if there is a statistically significant gender difference for the set of variables followed by univariate (i.e., one dependent variable at a time) analyses of selected variables. Given the magnitude of the gender differences for several variables it is very likely that the multivariate analysis will also indicate statistically significant gender differences.

A Changing Role?

Although our survey was designed to include many of the questions used in a previous study of spouses (Clodius & Skomars McGrath, 1984), it was problematic to use their results and our findings to make sound conclusions as to whether or not the role of presidential spouse has changed in the past three decades. Challenges were twofold: a) Although we had access to the results, we did not have the file of individual responses; and b) The composition of that sample of respondents was limited to spouses in institutions in the precursor organization to APLU. Our general sense in comparing the findings from studies done three to four decades earlier with our findings is that results have been quite similar over time. Results of our analysis of gender differences in responsibilities of partners suggest how the responsibilities of the total group of partners may change as more males come into the role. Whether or not females in the role will continue to behave as previous generations of females is an open question. If both males and females are no longer willing to perform partner responsibilities, who will do the tasks and how much will it cost for an institution to hire someone to perform them?

Or, will some female higher education leaders themselves carry out some of the activities traditionally associated with partners?

Our finding that 64 percent of female partners and 78 percent of male partners agreed that “Expectations (institutional, societal) are different for men in the presidential partner role than they are for women” suggests that as more men come into the role, expectations for them will not be the same as for women. Will changing expectations for women mirror changing expectations for men, or will women continue to be expected to do things historically associated with their gender? It seems problematic to us if the latter occurs. How will changing gender-based expectations play out in the larger context of how the role of presidential partner is construed in the changing context of higher education in the United States? Of our partners, 59 percent believed that “Perspectives are changing with regard to the role of a presidential partner.”

Official Residences

Although previous studies of spouses collected specific data about responsibilities associated with living in an official residence, our study is the first to include questions about partners' views on the importance of the official residence and how it affects their partner experiences. We found a large and statistically significant difference in the level of partner involvement: partners in institutions with an official residence reported higher levels of involvement. There were no differences in overall satisfaction between partners in institutions with or without an official residence, but there were differences in the overall concern/frustration scale, with those partners living in an official residence reporting higher levels of concern/frustration. Many items in the scale focused on such issues as lack of privacy and loss of control over schedule, which are much more likely to occur when there is an official residence. At the same time, partners reflected on the value and positive effects associated with an institution having an official residence.

Guidelines and Advice

An obvious question arises as to how partners craft a partner role in the absence of clearly stated institutional policies and the lack of position descriptions. Two sources of guidance are the connections partners have with one another, including partners who previously served in the partner role at the institution, and resources and opportunities provided by various higher education associations. As institutions consider how to proceed, there are numerous legal and human resources issues that must be addressed if the partner role becomes more clearly specified and/or includes compensation. Such issues are beyond the scope of this study.

In our report, we included many comments made by partners who responded to our survey, since we believed that each comment had somewhat different emphasis. Although, overall, there were several consistent themes, advice on the importance of a position description were mixed, with some arguing that such a description up front would

have been helpful, and others suggesting that such descriptions would be counterproductive. Most partners would probably endorse the importance of a flexible description of their role, provided that they had a major role in crafting it and that there was a periodic process to renegotiate aspects of the role.

Higher Education Associations

The findings that high percentages of partners looked to the associations in which their institution belonged as a source of support for various aspects of their role underscores the importance of the work already being done by the various associations. At the same time, it was puzzling that somewhat large numbers of partners did not correctly identify their association membership. Perhaps those errors were due to how the questions were worded, or perhaps the partners do not have a clear understanding of the landscape of types of institutions and their affiliations. To be most effective in the role of presidential partner, perhaps partners could benefit from attending association sessions geared to the presidents, because being an effective presidential spouse is about more than how to host events and relate to donors and current and former students of the institution.

Although the four associations that provided us with the names and contact information of partners are diligent in adding to and updating lists of partners, the fact that we had the names and contact information for only about two-thirds of the institutions affiliated with one or more of the four associations suggests there is more work to be done to connect with presidential partners. Some institutions are, of course, led by presidents who are not married or in a committed relationship. Nevertheless, a weakness of our study is that our pool of presidential partners likely comprised a subset of partners more involved in the role than partners not yet on the radar screen of one or more of the associations.

Topics for Further Discussion

In this last chapter we refrain from making specific recommendations concerning various aspects of the partner role, other than to point to several issues in need of further discussion and possible resolution at the level of individual institutions. Just as each institution has unique features that must be considered in hiring a president, so too are the unique characteristics that each presidential partner brings into the institution. When and how to involve a partner in the process of hiring a president and how best to assist a partner's transition to the role are among the important decisions institutions should make. The issue of compensation for the responsibilities assumed by a presidential partner remains unresolved at most institutions. As more males come into the role of partner, the question of who will assume the responsibilities previously assumed by an unpaid, female presidential partner is one of the many our participants raised in responding to our survey.

In our study we focused on partners' descriptions of their activities and contributions, as well as their views of how they were perceived by various constituencies. We did not attempt to articulate the intangible aspects of the role, and the many ways in which what a partner can add value to the institution. The intangible benefits may be especially important in those fundraising situations in which a president and his/her partner engage in fundraising conversations with couples, in which the two act as a team to engage in meaningful cultivation of donor couples.

As we reflected on our study, we wondered about the lives of presidents who are single and do not have partners to assist them in achieving institutional goals. We also wondered about the lives of partners, who, out of choice or necessity, live far from their presidents' campuses or are uninvolved for other reasons. In those situations, who does the traditional work of the partner? Although we had seven partners of presidents of institutions outside of the United States, that small number precluded a separate analysis. In an era of increasing attention on higher education in countries across the globe, we wonder how similar the partner role is in other countries, or if the partner role is somewhat unique to the United States.

Changes in higher education in the United States and elsewhere in the world are the result of complex forces, some of which are external to the higher education environment and others of which are internal within institutions. The majority of partners in our survey, 59 percent, believed that perspectives on the partner role are changing. Certainly, one of the forces for change will be the changing demographic characteristics of partners, most notably the increasing numbers of male partners. We believe it is important to chronicle the periodic changes that will occur for the partners to presidents who continue to lead higher education institutions. We look to the four higher education associations and higher education scholars to do future research on the lives of presidential partners.

We hope that the results of our study will be helpful to the four higher education associations that provided invaluable assistance to us in identifying partners who might respond to our survey. We are encouraged by their desire to find additional ways to be of assistance to the partners in institutions included in their membership. We are grateful to the 461 partners who took a substantial amount of time to complete our lengthy survey, and to the large majority who made specific comments in response to one or more of the open-ended questions on the survey. It is our wish that our report will be of use to partners, presidents, institutions, governing boards, and associations, and that it serves as a springboard for further inquiry and understanding.

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