


Article

Linking the Occupational Pressures of College Presidents to Presidential Turnover

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Robert J. Tekniepe¹

Abstract

Community colleges are expected to serve the needs of their local communities. Hence, college presidents are called on to lead this collaboration between the college and the community. Presidents, however, are affected by a multitude of factors that contribute to abridged tenures, a scenario that can have harmful effects on the educational institution, community, and collaboration. This study incorporated a quantitative research design based on Push–Pull Motivation Theory, a theory that broadly categorizes factors that affect turnover of executives into two areas. The first, push-induced factors, generally consists of organizational or community characteristics that motivate an elected board to dismiss an executive, or encourage him or her to seek employment elsewhere. The second, pull-induced factors, refers to conditions that facilitate an executive's departure due to career advancement opportunities. The study focuses on these occupational pressures that affect college president turnover based on data collected from 101 presidents of community colleges across 34 states. The analysis reveals that increases in political conflict, internal pressures, external stakeholder demands, and fiscal stress have statistically significant effects on college president turnover.

Keywords

turnover, college president, conflict, political, fiscal, community, internal

The emergence of community colleges as integral partners in the well-being of local service communities is extensively documented in the scholarly literature. In addition to their traditional role of academic preparation (i.e., providing the first 2 years of a

¹University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

Corresponding Author:

Robert J. Tekniepe, PhD, University of Nevada, Box 454030, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154-4030, USA.
Email: robert.tekniepe@unlv.edu

4-year college education), colleges have quickly moved into other fields, such as community economic stabilization, vocational education, and workforce development (Kasper, 2002; Jacobs & Dougherty, 2006). As Ruben (2004) pointed out, today's colleges have the same level of complexity as that of a municipality, and the challenges of providing an ever-increasing array of services can be daunting.

Hambrick and Mason (1984) suggested that successful organizational performance is a direct reflection on the decisions made by its top executive. It follows, therefore, that college presidents—acting as top executives—play a critical role in leading a college's efforts in providing services to the community. Their efforts, however, do have an associated cost. Specifically, college presidents must navigate turbulent environments involving elected boards, faculty governance bodies and internal subunits, community stakeholders, and fiscal constraints (Friedel, 2010). McFarlin, Crittenden, and Ebbers (1999) proposed that the demands of the position may be such that many presidents are worn down and leave their jobs under duress or by non-renewal of their employment contracts. Either of these scenarios can be potentially detrimental to an institution's stability and, in turn, can negatively affect a college's short- and long-term performance (Fretwell, 2004; Moore & Burrows, 2001). As such, Robken (2007) concluded that "stable leadership accompanies organizational stability, while frequent leadership succession brings about instability" (p. 140) in institutions of higher education.

This study attempts to further the body of knowledge of the relationship between occupational pressures encountered by college presidents to type of college president turnover (i.e., whether a push- or pull-induced departure) using a career movement model based on Push-Pull Motivation Theory. The model was estimated using data collected from 101 community college presidents from 34 states who participated in a nationwide survey. The specific objective of this study is to determine the effects of political conflict, internal and external pressures, and fiscal stress on college president involuntary turnover.

Applying Push-Pull Motivation Theory to College President Turnover

Academic literature suggests that career movement is a way of describing how individuals transition from one employment opportunity to another (Tekniepe & Stream, 2012). Arthur, Hall, and Lawrence (1989) described "career" as the sequence of events of an individual's work experience over the course of time. Career movement has been viewed as vertical, where individuals seek to move up an organization's hierarchy. Career movement, however, has also been viewed from a geographical and physical dimension standpoint where individuals move from one employer to another (Olsson, 2003). Arthur and Rousseau (1996) termed the geographical dimension as *boundary-less careers* because individuals move across boundaries of separate employers.

Much of the career movement research in the past 20 years suggests that leadership turnover is affected by what are called push and pull factors (Clingermayer, Feiock, & Stream, 2003; Feiock & Stream, 2002; Hall, 1989; Helmich, 1974; Lundberg, 1986;

Tekniepe & Stream, 2010, 2012). Push factors are generally characterized as pressures that force leaders from their current position and may include conflict with the governing board, internal pressures from organizational subunits, external pressures from community stakeholders, and negative perceptions of the leader's ability to adequately manage the fiscal affairs of the organization. Pull factors are those that position the leader in a favorable light, thereby facilitating his or her opportunity for professional, financial, or personal advancement into other positions or organizations.

Early research that applied Push-Pull Motivation Theory to the career movement of top executives in the private sector found that pressures from internal subunits within the organization, political conflict with governing boards and fiscal stress increased the top executive's likelihood of experiencing a push-induced departure (Hall, 1989; Helmich, 1974; Lundberg, 1986). Similar findings were observed in contemporary research that applied Push-Pull Motivation Theory to the career movement of local and regional government administrators (Clingermayer et al., 2003; Feiock & Stream, 2002; Tekniepe & Stream, 2010, 2012). Researchers, however, have yet to attempt to apply Push-Pull Motivation Theory to the career movement of leaders who oversee institutions of higher education in the United States (i.e., community college and university presidents).

Factors Contributing to College President Turnover

The importance of reviewing existing research is to provide a foundation for developing an accurate and predictive model of college president turnover. Past research on leadership turnover suggests that factors contributing to involuntary (push-induced) turnover can be grouped into four broad domains: political conflict between the governing board and college president, internal pressures from the professoriate and subunits within the organization, external pressures from community stakeholders, and fiscal stress.

Political Conflict Between Governing Boards and College Presidents

Political conflict between governing boards and college presidents as a predictor of push-induced turnover has been a topic of research for nearly 30 years. Political conflict can arise from many sources, such as turf battles within the governing board. Boggs and Smith (1997) concluded that when new members are appointed or elected to a governing board, the makeup of the board can drastically change. In turn, this can usher in a new set of relationships between board members and the president. According to Donnelly (1993), the relationship between board members and a president is very important to a president's success or failure. As Cohen (1998) pointed out, a president must be responsive to the board in all respects. For the most part, governing boards support the ideas of new presidents on their arrival, but later in their tenures "problems arise, relationships cool and trust wanes" (Seymour, 2008, p. 13). This has led researchers to conclude that disagreement between members of the governing board and president can directly influence a president's decision to seek employment

elsewhere (Boggs & Smith, 1997; Cohen, 1998). This preemptive move may be, in one sense, a strategic move on the part of the president to leave before the level of conflict with board members reaches the firing point.

Researchers have also attempted to link employment contract provisions to push-induced turnover; namely, do contract provisions sufficiently prevent a president from a politically driven termination by the governing board? Vaughan (2008) put forth the notion that abbreviated contracts offer little protection to a president from an involuntary dismissal. Moreover, as presidents typically face a vast array of occupational pressures and challenges, single-year employment contracts only add to some presidents' belief that their roles in the institutions are just temporary assignments.

Internal Pressures From the Professoriate and Subunits Within the Organizations

A number of studies have suggested a linkage between internal pressures emanating from the professoriate, subunits within the organization, and push-induced turnover (Malm, 2008). Olscamp (2003), for example, found that many presidents must cope with a gamut of unique challenges in their interactions with the professoriate. These challenges may be due to the professoriate advocating shared governance. The professoriate, by virtue of professional authority, is in a unique position to pass judgment on the goals and vision heralded by the president (Bensimon, 1990). This setting may make the building of constructive relationships between the professoriate and president a challenge.

Demands from internal subunits, such as academic departments and schools, can also affect a president's decision to seek employment elsewhere (Skinner, 2010). Many presidential decisions involve difficult personnel matters, such as staff reductions or the elimination of programs. More often than not, decisions that negatively impact departments and schools produce despondent staff within those subunits (Sanaghan, Goldstein, & Gaval, 2008). Friction between internal subunits and the president can ensnare the president in internal conflict and potentially lead to his or her involuntary departure (Floyd, Maslin-Ostrowski, & Hrabak, 2010).

External Pressures From Community Stakeholders

Researchers have long posited that external pressures from community stakeholders increase the incidence of push-induced turnover. To some extent, this may be due to community stakeholders' attempts to influence how a president manages the institution (Perrakis, Galloway, Hayes, & Robinson-Galdo, 2011). As Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) explained, an ever-increasing and diverse community constituency base—and the pressures they exert—complicates a president's ability to develop a clear mission and direction for the college. Malm (2008) supported this notion, adding that presidents must be skilled in overcoming the seemingly one-sided interests of community stakeholders with an aim toward mutually beneficial outcomes. A president who does not display the ability to adequately manage the diverse demands of community stakeholders will undoubtedly place himself at risk of a forced departure.

Fiscal Stress

The fiscal performance of a college, used as a predictor of presidential push-induced turnover, has only recently become a topic of research, and with inconclusive results. Presidents, once expected to focus their attention solely on the educational preparation of the student population, now must develop a fiscal vision for the institution (Boggs, 2003). As Floyd et al. (2010) pointed out, contemporary presidents are also expected to accomplish much more with less funding and financial resources. This fiscal stress presents new challenges for presidents, especially those at institutions with limited access to strong local tax support, requiring them to acquire new and expanded fiscal leadership skills (Phelan, 2005). According to Cloud (1991), a governing board and president should develop institutional goals that are realistic in terms of time frame and anticipated resources. To do otherwise would place the president in an untenable position that can lead to involuntary departure.

Research Design

Presidents of 2-year, associate degree-granting colleges accredited by one of the six regional accrediting agencies are the target population of this study. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), in 2013, there were 1,132 community colleges in the United States that met these criteria (AACC, 2013). Of these institutions, 942 are members of the AACC. Using the AACC membership listing and the time allotted for this study, an electronic address list of 868 active community college presidents was created. Although the electronic address list was not a complete listing of presidents, it did afford the opportunity to survey more than 76% of the target population.

An electronic web-based survey questionnaire was developed in June 2012 using information gathered from contemporary leadership turnover literature and input from a random cross-sample of 12 college presidents from the target population. The questionnaire was especially designed to differentiate and solicit responses from two subsets of the population: individuals who had previously held the position of college president and those who had not. As such, the questionnaire included a lead question that asked, "Had you ever served in the capacity of a college president (or its equivalent) prior to employment in your current position?" Individuals who answered "yes" to the lead question were automatically taken to Survey 1 and asked to answer the questions in relation to their previous position. Individuals who answered "no" were taken to Survey 2 and asked to answer the questions in relation to their current position. Survey 1 and Survey 2 contained the same set of questions, except that Survey 1 included an additional question asking the participant why he or she departed his or her previous position as president. This measure became the dependent variable in the study. The questionnaire was assessed for reliability and validity through a pilot test of 24 randomly selected presidents. In October 2012, the finalized questionnaire was distributed and the survey data were collected.

Research Model

Logistic regression was the method chosen for modeling the relation of occupational pressures encountered by college presidents to type of college president turnover because (a) the dependent variable was binomial and (b) unlike linear discriminant analysis, logistic regression is more relaxed in its assumptions. Namely, independent variables are not required to be normally distributed, linearly related, nor have an equal variance within each group.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was the type of college president departure measured as whether a president experienced a pull- or push-induced departure from their previous position. Based on the survey responses, individuals who indicated that their departure was “primarily due to a career advancement opportunity that more closely aligned with [their] professional, financial, and/or personal objectives” were classified and coded *pull-induced departure* = 0. Respondents who answered that their departure was “precipitated by differences in style, orientation, and/or policy direction with the governing board and/or internal/external stakeholders” were classified and coded *push-induced departure* = 1.

Independent Variables

The model included six independent variables thought to accurately measure political conflict between the governing board and college president, internal pressures from the professoriate and subunits within the organization, external pressures from community stakeholders, and fiscal stress. The independent variables and associated hypotheses are provided in Table 1.

The model also incorporated a variable to control for student enrollment. Survey question responses (with exception to student enrollment) were based on a 7-point Likert-type scale coded *strongly agree* = 1, *agree* = 2, *somewhat agree* = 3, *neutral* = 4, *somewhat disagree* = 5, *disagree* = 6, and *strongly disagree* = 7. Student enrollment was based on a 5-point Likert-type scale coded *5,000 or less* = 1, *5,001-10,000* = 2, *10,001-20,000* = 3, *20,001-30,000* = 4, and *greater than 30,000* = 5.

Results: Accounting for Community College President Turnover

Two hundred twenty-three (23%) of the 1,093 college presidents surveyed returned completed questionnaires. Of the 243 completed questionnaires, 101 individuals responded that they had served in the capacity of a college president (or its equivalent) prior to employment in their current position. These individuals became the focus of this study. The geographical distribution and departure classification for the 101 individuals in this study can be found in Table 2.

Table 1. Independent Variables and Associated Hypotheses.

Domain	Independent variable—Research Question	Hypothesis
Political	Did governing board members have a sufficient amount of knowledge and/or training to effectively perform their job functions?	Governing board knowledge and training decrease the incidence of a push-induced departure.
Political	My employment contract provisions sufficiently prevented a "politically driven" termination by the governing board?	Contract provisions that prevent politically driven terminations decrease the incidence of a push-induced departure.
Internal	Did faculty associations and college administration worked together well in labor negotiations?	Good working relations between faculty associations and administration during labor negotiations decrease the incidence of a push-induced departure.
Internal	Did deans and college administration worked together well to resolve internal administrative issues and disagreements?	Good working relations between deans and administration when resolving internal disagreements decrease the incidence of a push-induced departure.
External	Did community stakeholder pressures influence college decisions?	Increased pressures by community stakeholders increase the incidence of a push-induced departure.
Fiscal	Did increased general operating costs made it difficult to balance the college's budget?	Increased general operating costs and its impact on balancing the college's budget increase the incidence of a push-induced departure.

Descriptive Data Analysis

The average tenure of presidents who experienced push-induced departures was 5 years, which compares with approximately 7 years for presidents who encountered a pull-induced departure. Of the 30 presidents who experienced a push-induced departure, 22 (73.3%) were promoted to the position of president from within the college while 8 (26.7%) were recruited from outside the institution. Comparatively, of the 71 presidents who experienced pull-induced departures, 56 (78.9%) were promoted from within the college while 15 (21.1%) were hired from outside the organization. In addition, presidents of smaller rural colleges appear to have a higher incidence of overall turnover when compared with presidents of larger urban colleges (see Table 3).

The data shown in Table 4 suggest that the composition of governing boards in push- and pull-induced departures was more heavily weighted toward business professionals. Individuals termed *politicians* were the least represented on governing boards. Board membership turnover—measured as board members departing in the past 2 years—was noticeably higher for push-induced departures when compared with pull-induced departures. The number of board members departing during a president's

Table 2. Geographical Distribution and Departure Classification of Community College Presidents.

State	Number of college presidents	Departure classification	
		Push induced	Pull induced
Alaska	1	0	1
Alabama	3	1	2
Arkansas	5	1	4
Arizona	2	1	1
California	15	4	11
Colorado	7	2	5
Connecticut	4	3	1
Georgia	2	0	2
Iowa	3	1	2
Illinois	7	1	6
Indiana	1	1	0
Kansas	6	2	4
Kentucky	3	1	2
Louisiana	1	0	1
Massachusetts	1	0	1
Maryland	1	0	1
Maine	1	0	1
Michigan	1	0	1
Minnesota	3	0	3
North Carolina	6	3	3
Nebraska	1	0	1
New Jersey	2	0	2
New Mexico	1	0	1
Nevada	2	2	0
New York	2	1	1
Ohio	1	0	1
Oklahoma	3	1	2
Oregon	2	1	1
Pennsylvania	3	1	2
Texas	3	1	2
Virginia	3	0	3
Washington	3	1	2
West Virginia	1	1	0
Wyoming	1	0	12
Total	101	30	71

tenure was nearly the same for push- and pull-induced departures. Presidents who had experienced a push-induced departure were more likely than those who had experienced a pull-induced departure to indicate that the board members who had hired them had departed during their tenure as president.

Table 5 provides a descriptive breakdown of participant responses for each of the survey questions. A mean statistic (M) of 4.00 indicates a neutral response to the

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Community Colleges.

Measurement	Push-induced departure		Pull-induced departure	
	Count	%	Count	%
Community served				
Rural	18	60.0	40	56.3
Suburban	4	13.3	15	21.1
Urban	8	26.7	16	22.6
Enrollment full-time students				
5,000 or less	15	50.0	41	57.7
5,001-10,000	8	26.7	14	19.8
10,001-20,000	1	3.3	12	16.9
20,001-30,000	4	13.3	2	2.8
30,001 or greater	2	6.7	2	2.8

Note. Push-induced departures ($n = 30$), pull-induced departures ($n = 71$).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Governing Boards.

	Push-induced departure			Pull-induced departure		
	<i>M</i> (%)	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i> (%)	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
Number of members on governing board	9.43	3.64	0.67	9.82	4.62	0.55
Board member profession						
Academic	22.70	16.75	3.06	18.68	17.91	2.13
Political	19.84	26.50	4.84	9.70	16.18	1.92
Business	57.46	25.92	4.73	71.62	23.70	2.81
Board member turnover						
Board members departed in past two (2) years	29.21	27.60	5.04	18.01	14.94	1.77
Board members departed during president's tenure	38.34	19.30	3.52	33.58	34.17	4.05
Hiring board members departed during president's tenure	46.04	32.30	5.90	40.10	26.37	3.13

Note. Push-induced departures ($n = 30$), Pull-induced departures ($n = 71$).

survey question, a $M < 4.00$ indicates agreement, and a $M > 4.00$ indicates disagreement to the question.

Overall, presidents who experienced push-induced departures disagreed with survey questions one, two, and four; answered somewhat neutrally to question three; and agreed to questions five and six. These findings suggest those colleges where pressures exist from elected board members; the professoriate; internal subunits such as

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Political, Internal, External, and Fiscal Pressures.

Statistic	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Q1	Governing board members had a sufficient amount of knowledge and/or training to effectively perform their job functions					
Q2	My employment contract provisions sufficiently prevented a "politically driven" termination by the governing board					
Q3	Faculty associations and community college administration worked together well in labor contract negotiations					
Q4	Deans and community college administration worked together well to resolve internal administrative issues and disagreements					
Q5	Community stakeholder pressures had an influence on community college decisions					
Q6	Increased general operating costs made it difficult to balance the college's budget					
Push-induced departures						
M	4.33	4.80	3.97	4.27	1.80	0.85
SD	1.99	1.79	1.47	1.41	1.21	0.92
SE	0.36	0.33	0.27	0.26	0.22	0.17
Pull-induced departures						
M	2.64	3.01	3.24	2.06	3.73	5.11
SD	1.42	1.70	1.51	0.98	1.71	1.55
SE	0.17	0.20	0.08	0.17	0.20	0.18

Note. Push-induced departures ($n = 30$), Pull-induced departures ($n = 71$).

faculty associations, deans, and colleges; community stakeholders; and fiscal constraints may be correlated to push-induced turnover. College presidents who experienced pull-induced departures largely agreed with survey questions one through five, and disagreed with question six. These findings imply that institutions with non-turbulent environments, void of political conflict, internal and external pressures, and fiscal stress, may be linked to pull-induced turnover.

Logistic Regression Analysis

The regression analysis shown in Table 6 incorporates robust standard errors to ensure data independence. The data are clustered by state because in some states a local governing board and some state-level entity share a degree of authority over the actions of a college president. Regression coefficient estimates assume the logit transformation of the dependent variable has a linear relationship with the independent variables. Coefficient estimates for each of the independent variables are made available as indicators of the *directional* effect that an independent variable has on the dependent variable. A positive coefficient estimates indicate an independent variable will likely increase the incidence of a push-induced departure, whereas a negative coefficient estimate will likely decrease the incidence of a push-induced departure.

Table 6. Logistic Regression Results: Predictors of Push-Induced Departures.

Variable	β	OR	SE	Z-score
Explanatory variables				
1. Governing board member knowledge and training	-0.604**	0.54	0.12	-2.65
2. Employment contract provisions	-0.599***	0.55	0.18	-3.26
3. Faculty association and administration interaction	-0.627*	0.53	0.30	-2.11
4. Deans and administration interaction	-1.951***	0.14	0.42	-4.61
5. Community stakeholder pressures	0.680**	1.97	0.28	2.42
6. Increased general operating costs	0.780*	2.18	0.43	1.81
Control variable				
7. Community college enrollment	0.841**	2.32	0.31	2.73

Note. Push-induced departures ($n = 30$), pull-induced departures ($n = 71$). Log pseudo-likelihood = -26.43, Wald $\chi^2(7) = 62.78$, Prob $>\chi^2 = 0.000$; Pearson chi-square (90) = 46.49, Prob $>\chi^2 = 1.000$. Goodness-of-fit statistics: Efron $R^2 = .570$, McFadden $R^2 = .565$, McKelvey and Zavoina $R^2 = .866$, Cragg and Uhler $R^2 = .707$. Robust standard errors are clustered by state.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Odds ratios for each of the independent variables are provided to assist in assessing the *degree* or *size* of effect that each independent variable has on the dependent variable. An odds ratio >1.00 indicates that an independent variable increases the relative risk of a push-induced departure, whereas an odds ratio <1.00 indicates a decrease in the relative risk of a push-induced departure. Odds ratios equal to 1.00 signify that an independent variable has no effect on the dependent variable.

Based on the goodness-of-fit test statistics (R^2), the overall fitted model is shown to be suitable in predicting movement of the dependent variable (R^2 values $> .50$). The predicted effect each of the independent variables has on the dependent variable is statistically significant ($p < .05$) and supports the directional effect put forth in the study hypothesis.

From the data contained in Table 6, the coefficient estimate (β) and odds ratio (OR) for each of the six independent variables can be interpreted as follows:

Governing board member training and knowledge. The coefficient estimate ($\beta = -.604$) suggests that for every one unit change in the variable, holding all other variables at a fixed value, the log odds of a push-induced departure (vs. a pull-induced departure) decreases by .604. The odds ratio (OR = 0.54) indicates that presidents who indicated that governing board members had a sufficient amount of knowledge and/or training to effectively perform their job functions were 46% less likely to experience a push-induced departure.

Employment contract provisions. The coefficient estimate ($\beta = -.599$) shows that for every one unit change in the variable, holding all other variables at a fixed value, the

log odds of a push-induced departure (vs. a pull-induced departure) decreases by .599. The odds ratio (OR = 0.55) indicates that presidents who indicated that their employment contract provisions sufficiently prevented a politically driven termination by the governing board were 45% less likely to experience a push-induced departure.

Faculty association and administration interaction. The coefficient estimate ($\beta = -.627$) signifies that for every one unit change in the variable, holding all other variables at a fixed value, the log odds of a push-induced departure (vs. a pull-induced departure) decreases by .627. The odds ratio (OR = 0.53) indicates that presidents who indicated that faculty associations and community college administration worked together well in labor contract negotiations were 47% less likely to experience a push-induced departure.

Deans and administration interaction. The coefficient estimate ($\beta = -1.951$) infers that for every one unit change in the variable, holding all other variables at a fixed value, the log odds of a push-induced departure (vs. a pull-induced departure) decreases by 1.951. The odds ratio (OR = 0.14) indicates that presidents who indicated that deans and community college administration worked together well to resolve internal administrative issues and disagreements were 86% less likely to experience a push-induced departure.

Community stakeholder pressures. The coefficient estimate ($\beta = .68$) implies that for every one unit change in the variable, holding all other variables at a fixed value, the log odds of a push-induced departure (vs. a pull-induced departure) increases by .68. The odds ratio (OR = 1.97) indicates that presidents who indicated that community stakeholder pressures had an influence on community college decisions were 97% more likely to experience a push-induced departure.

Increased general operating costs. The coefficient estimate ($\beta = .78$) suggests that for every one unit change in the variable, holding all other variables at a fixed value, the log odds of a push-induced departure (vs. a pull-induced departure) increases by .78. The odds ratio (OR = 2.18) indicates that presidents who indicated that increased general operating costs made it difficult to balance the college's budget were 118% more likely to experience a push-induced departure.

Model Classification

Table 7 provides the confusion matrix data used to assess the model's predictive power and classification accuracy. The matrix—or classification table—incorporates a probability cutoff $\pi = 0.5$ to balance model sensitivity and specificity, and to ensure the percentage of involuntary departures correctly classified as push-induced is roughly equal to the percentage of voluntary departures correctly classified as pull-induced.

The results indicate 70.0% model sensitivity (push-induced departures predicted correctly) and 91.3% model specificity (pull-induced departures predicted correctly). Sensitivity is the ratio between the true positives (college presidents who are correctly

Table 7. Logistic Regression: Model Classification.

Departure	Total sample (n)	Predicted correct (%)	Predictive value (%)
Likely to be push-induced	30	70.0	77.8
Likely to be pull-induced	71	91.3	87.5
Total	101	84.9	—

Note. Classified as push-induced departure (true positive) if predicted value of the response variable $\geq .50$, otherwise classified as pull-induced departure (true negative).

classified as push-induced departures) and all presidents who are positives (presidents who should be characterized as positives). Specificity is the ratio between the true negatives (college presidents correctly classified as pull-induced departures) and all presidents who are negatives (presidents who are negatives, no matter how they are classified). The predictive value for a positive result (the probability that a college president actually experiences a push-induced departure) was 77.8%. The predictive value for a negative result (the probability that a president actually experiences a pull-induced departure) was 77.8%. Overall, the model predicted correctly 84.9% of the time.

Discussion

Past research that applied Push–Pull Motivation Theory to the career movement of top executives in the public and private sectors found that political conflict with the governing board, pressures from internal subunits within the organization, community stakeholder demands, and fiscal stress increased a top executive's likelihood of experiencing an involuntary or forced departure (Clingermayer et al., 2003; Feiock & Stream, 2002; Hall, 1989; Helmich, 1974; Lundberg, 1986; Tekniepe & Stream, 2010, 2012). This study had similar findings with Push–Pull Motivation Theory applied to the career movement of college presidents.

First, this study has shown that political conflict has an effect on presidential turnover, namely governing board member training and knowledge, as well as contract provisions that prevent politically driven terminations, diminish the rate of push-induced departures. One might argue that when a president views board members as having a sufficient amount of training and knowledge to effectively perform their job functions, adversarial tension and mistrust between the two parties wane. In the reverse, when a president loses trust in the board's abilities to provide substantive guidance, an antagonistic mind-set on the part of the board members toward the president can set in, precipitating the board to dismiss the president or encourage him or her to seek employment elsewhere.

While it has been shown that a strong employment contract can reduce the incidence of involuntary presidential departure, a weak employment contract can have the opposite effect, namely hastening a push-induced termination. According to Fain (2007), some governing boards may even prefer a weak contract so that a president may be more of an at will employee who serves at the pleasure of the board and can

more easily be terminated. More than a decade ago, formal written contracts were less common. Today, however, it is becoming more common for presidents to negotiate employment contracts that provide sufficient employment protection (e.g., multi-year contracts) from politically driven terminations. While this does not guarantee employment for the full term of the contract, it does provide stability to the volatile, high-pressure role of a college president, and makes it more difficult for a board to push a president out of office (Fain, 2007).

Second, the results of this study point to the fact that internal pressures have an impact on presidential turnover. Specifically, a lack of cohesiveness and mutual understanding among faculty associations, deans, and administration hastens the frequency of push-induced departures. Labor problems are a major cause of a president's departure. It takes an appreciation of this partnership and skill and experience in labor relations, on the part of the president, to make a cohesive partnership happen. In most cases, a lack of cohesiveness indicates that a president's leadership style does not include a commitment to teamwork and collegiality. When internal stakeholders view a president in this light, that president's decisions can appear ad hoc and even haphazard. This condition can exacerbate numerous other internal and external pressures on the president and, in turn, trigger a push-induced departure.

Third, the results of this study indicate that external pressures have an effect on presidential turnover. Specifically, increased pressures by community stakeholders quicken the occurrence of push-induced departures. Governing board members may listen, more so, to community stakeholders groups because of their perceived powers. Many times, community stakeholders are uninformed of a college's issues and demand actions that solely reflect their own agenda, whether it is in the best interest for the community and college as a whole. This being said, when a board chooses to allow community stakeholders to have an undue amount of influence with regard to facilitating change at the presidential level, the risk of a president being pushed out of office can increase.

Fourth, this study has shown that fiscal stress has an impact on presidential turnover, namely difficulty on the part of the president to balance the college's budget due to increased general operating costs increases the incidence of push-induced turnover. Research has shown that as college resources become scarcer, the amount of fiscal-related stress exerted on a president increases. Limited resources and increased general operating costs likely cause greater levels of friction between the president, governing board, faculty, and staff. Some presidents may find that providing a satisfactory quality of education under unreasonably tight fiscal constraints is simply too much to ask. When this condition occurs, the board may find no other recourse than to dismiss the president or encourage him or her to seek employment elsewhere.

Conclusion

As community colleges continue to be engaged and collaborate with the communities they serve, understanding presidential turnover becomes increasingly important. The outcomes of this study, while interesting in terms of academic research, have larger

implications for individuals motivated in becoming or retaining positions of college presidents. One important way a president can shield him- or herself from a push-induced departure is to learn how to interpret and predict the political landscape—internal and external—and to adjust accordingly. Another mechanism is to negotiate stronger employment contracts that provide protection from politically driven terminations. Because of the current fiscal challenges facing many of today's colleges, presidents would also be wise to take an entrepreneurial standpoint toward implementing effective and efficient budget management processes, along with expanding traditional revenue streams such as fundraising, to help ensure a college's future in difficult economic times.

Important to note is that the results presented in this study are based on a non-random sample of 101 college presidents from 34 states who participated in a nationwide survey of 1,093 college presidents across all 50 states. Although the sample provides a 95% confidence level (confidence interval = 9.29, 50%) for inferring the results to the target population, one should be cognizant that because of the low response rate (23%) to the nationwide survey, there may be a degree of unit non-response bias in the results.

To facilitate a greater understanding of college president turnover, future research should investigate the job-related pressures of the profession as it relates to the rising costs of attending college as well as the demands placed on a president as a result of the increasingly diverse needs and interests of the student body. Future enquiry should also compare the differences between the political pressures of local versus state governing boards and its effect on voluntary and involuntary presidential turnover. Last, it is recommended that future research explore whether there are specific operational costs that effect presidential turnover more than others such as declines in state and local funding, increases in wages, salaries, and benefits of professional and non-professional staff, and increases in capital expenditures.

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Author Biography

Robert J. Tekniepe is a Principal Management Analyst in the Department of Air Quality in Clark County Nevada, and an Adjunct Professor in the School of Environmental and Public Affairs, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He received his Masters degree in Public Administration from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (1997). He received his PhD in Public Affairs from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (2007). Dr. Tekniepe conducts research on top-executive succession, local-regional governance, and public policy analysis and evaluation.