



Sustaining Momentum During Presidential Transitions

Practical Advice for the First 100 Days

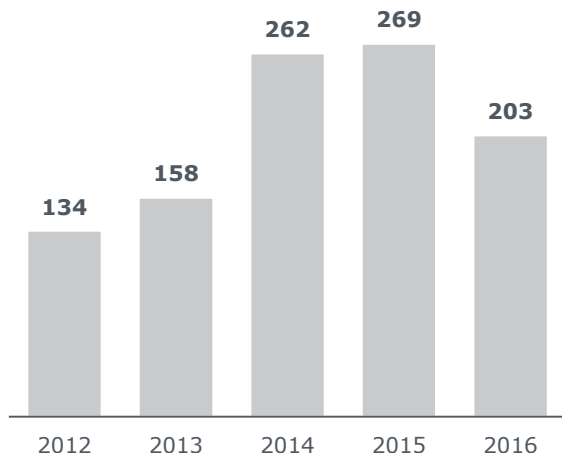
Community College Executive Forum

Urgent Need for Transition Support

Leadership Crisis Threatens Institutional Momentum

“Tsunami” of Leadership Transitions

Total Number of Community College President Changes Since 2012



Support Ranks Thinning Too

“Most search committees want a ready-made president... but that’s not realistic. Presidents come from someplace, **so the question is, do we have enough vice presidents out there?**”

Narcisa Polonio
Executive Vice President of Education
Research, and Board Leadership Services
Association of Community College Trustees

75%

Of presidents and vice presidents expect to retire within 10 years

New Presidents Face Unprecedented Challenges



Everything Has Become First Priority

Burgeoning Portfolio Divides Mindshare

Emerging Pressures Create New Mandates

Emerging Pressure



New Mandate

Declining enrollments
and market share



Compete with four-year
colleges for students

Tightening budgets
through funding cuts



Promote fiscal viability and
maintain academic quality

Increasing
regulatory scrutiny



Adopt new initiatives (e.g.,
completion, Title IX)

Ensuring workforce
credential relevancy



Grow employer partnership
portfolio

Serving a more “at
risk” population



Invest in new technology
and facilities

Responding to local
needs and issues



Provide new safety and
security protocols

Guidance Harder to Come By



“A number of community college leadership programs have closed at major universities across the county.

We’re not preparing as many leaders as we have in the past and there’s tremendous turnover.

We’re seeing people approaching retirement age, and I’ve heard from search firms they’re not getting qualified applicants for leadership positions at community colleges.”

*Dr. Terry O'Banion
Graduate Faculty Chair
National American University*

Rising Anxieties Over Job Security



Commonly Reported Reasons for Early Termination



Conflict with governing board



Disagreement with a key campus constituency



Falling out with major community leaders

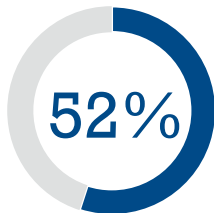


"A colleague of mine recently became president. He immediately cracked down on union negotiations. So the union ran a slate of officers for the next board election. All three of their candidates won. **When the next board meeting rolled around, their first order of business was to fire the president.**"

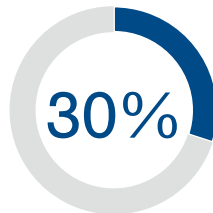
President, Community College (Southeast)

Challenges Rattling Sitting Presidents Too

Surveyed Community College Presidents' Attitudes Toward Job Security¹



Of presidents who expect to remain no more than 3 years



Of presidents who expect to remain for less than 1 year

1) The Center for Community College Leadership and Research survey of 64 California community college executives

Source: Marwa E, "City Colleges' Faculty Votes No Confidence in Chancellor," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 4, 2016, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-city-colleges-no-confidence-vote-met-20160204-story.html>; Smith AA, "Lake Michigan College Board Terminates President," *Inside Higher Ed*, May 6, <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2016/05/06/lake-michigan-college-board-terminates-president>; EAB interviews and analysis.

Opaque Expectations Nullify Experience

Difficult to Prepare for Role Alone

Traditional Information Sources Leave Critical Questions

 Information Source	 Useful Knowledge	 Missing Answers
 Interview Process	What institutional direction does the board envision?	What are the individual priorities of board members?
 Executive Colleagues	What are the strengths of the institution?	How is our particular institution received politically?
 Tenured Administrators	What is the faculty culture and morale like?	What change management pain points exist?
 Prior Experience	What are my leadership strengths?	What work did my predecessor do behind the scenes?

Even Institutional Experience Can Be Insufficient

“One thing I realized quickly was that until you sit in the chair, you really don’t know what the responsibilities, requirements, and challenges are really like. **I used to work very closely with my predecessor, and I saw what I could see, but I did not grasp the full perspective.** New presidents should realize the unprecedented scope of the position, and should not be surprised if brand new aspects or demands of the job appear—it’s going to occur a lot.”

*Dr. Liang Chee Wee, President
Northeast Iowa Community College*

Ensuring a Successful Tenure

A Roadmap for the First 100 Days

1

Navigate a New Campus



Improving Organizational IQ

- Prepare a Strong First Impression
- Design a Breakthrough Listening Tour
- Understand System Leadership

2

Form Connections



Building Essential Relationships

- Solidify Executive Team around Mission
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- Cultivate Development Prospects

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Clarify Performance



Understanding the State of the College

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Shape the Future



Accelerating Impact Post-100 Days

- Harness Storytelling
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Leadership Toolkit



Implementing Specific Advice

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Prepare a Strong First Impression

Initial Programs Focus on Student Services and Rely Heavily on Innovators

Institutional Knowledge



Learn Community Perceptions

Key Questions to Ask:

- How is the college regarded in the community?
- What local organizations (e.g., chamber of commerce, rotary club) exert the most influence?



"I learned from the interview process that the board wanted someone to lead a shift from access to outcomes.

I wanted to know more about where the college is now, so I know how far we needed to go."

President, Community College (Northwest)

Personnel Knowledge



Uncover Staff Dynamics

Key Questions to Ask:

- Who are the significant change agents on campus?
- Who are the problematic administrators or those with standing grievances?



"My predecessor had a very difficult period with union leaders. **There was still some residual animosity**. New presidents should identify and address such issues immediately."

President, Community College (Midwest)

Think Outside the Bubble



Triangulate College Perceptions Through a Wide Range of Perspectives

Consult a Variety of Information Sources



Design a Breakthrough Listening Tour

No Cookie-Cutter Approach

Listening Tour Should Reflect President's Leadership Style

Spectrum of Approaches



Reserved



Outgoing

Leadership Style

Selective Meetings

"Faculty must trust you, not like you. Authenticity comes from actions."

President, Community College (Southwest)

- Forced "charm offensive" creates resistance to presidential message
- Meet with essential stakeholders
- Accept all invitations and meetings

Comprehensive Tour

"I met every faculty and staff. I wanted them to know I'm here to listen."

President, Community College (Midwest)

- Spend at least 30 minutes speaking with each staff member
- Ask about pros and cons of institution
- Report findings to faculty and staff

Essential Questions to Include in Listening Tour:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☒ "What are the things we do well?" | ☒ "In what ways could I make your job easier?" |
| ☒ "What areas could we improve?" | ☒ "What actions do you expect from the president?" |

Remember to Listen on Your Listening Tour

Learn, Don't Teach in Early Meetings

Listening Underpins Everything

“You should assume no knowledge when you enter a new institution. You can reference alternate models from past experience, **but it's never successful unless the idea is collaboratively invented or appears invented at the institution.** Otherwise, that's the first step towards failure.”

*Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh, President
Grossmont College*

Light Preparation Goes a Long Way

Sample Meeting Research Document

Constituency	Reporting Line	Background and Career	Key Upcoming Initiative
Board Chair	Voters	- Served the board for 17 years - President and CEO of local manufacturing corporation	- Construct on-campus dormitories - Expand corporate training revenue
Executive Cabinet	President	- Combined 48 years of administrative experience - Promoted internally	- Guided Pathways implementation - New strategic plan
CEO of Largest Area Employer	Share Holders	- Donated \$250,000 last year - No formal ties with college	Increase employee recruitment and retention by 20%
Union Leaders	Faculty Members	Served at the college for 30 years	Renegotiating faculty wage scale

Understand System Leadership

Align Relationship-Building to Board Structure

Most Common Leadership Structures and Recommended Interactions



Chancellor or System Office

- Reports to the board
- Insulates president from electoral politics
- Importance of individual relationship elevated

Ways to Interact

- Schedule regular meetings
- Learn system priorities before first meeting



Locally Elected Board of Trustees

- Most common governance structure
- Often involved directly in campus affairs

Ways to Interact

- Call in advance
- Learn background information
- Organize collective retreats



Governor-Appointed Board of Trustees

- Least common
- More removed from daily campus affairs
- Requires higher-level data reporting

Ways to Interact

- Email monthly updates
- Evaluate power structure of board
- Invite select members to tour campus

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Striking a Balance Between Accountability and Engagement

Three Scenarios to Avoid as New President

Enabling Mission Creep



"Board members have a large stake in the success of the college, however you do not want them infringing on the president's role. **You do not want to miss the opportunity of setting clear expectations during the 'honeymoon period.'** They hired you for a reason, and want to see strong leadership."

President, Community College (Midwest)

Not Respecting Hierarchy



"I entered the community college system from out of state, though **I still underestimated the differences in doing business.** For example, during one meeting I raised my hand to comment, but I was told I could not speak unless I received the chancellor's permission."

President, Community College (West Coast)

Surprising the Board



"**I made the mistake of announcing a new initiative in my monthly email address before finalizing it with the board.** A trustee was in a delicate re-election campaign, so the surprise was particularly not good timing."

President, Community College (Mid-Atlantic)

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Solidify Executive Team Around College Mission

One-on-One Conversations Precede Team Strategy

Elevating Executive Competency with Trust and Vision



Conduct Individual Conversations

- Uncover strengths and weaknesses
- Ask where executive agenda should focus
- Diagnose past grievances or staff conflict



Measure Team Mindsets

- Assess executive team competencies
- Determine improvement areas for team
- Identify executive team pain points



Ground Change in College Mission

- Explain how changes further college mission
- Request action plans for new initiatives
- Release team members who oppose mission

Enter Conversations as a Blank Slate

“Every institution has strengths and weaknesses, and you have to listen to figure out which one’s which, and to see where the low hanging fruit are. **People will discover very quickly if you are truly listening or approaching the discussion pre-set notions.**”

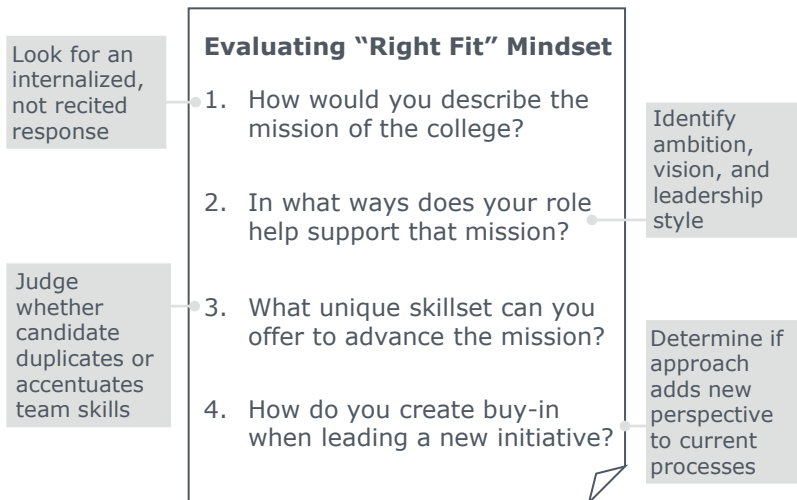
*Dr. Jerome Parker, President
Delaware County Community College*

Recruiting a Highly Effective Executive Cabinet

Structure the Search Process Around Core Institutional Values

Selecting an Executive Team

Four Criteria to Judge Vice Presidential Candidates



Encourage Diverse Thought Leadership

“A president must know the strengths and tendencies of the senior staff.

A homogenous mindset limits creativity and will eventually implode on itself. On the other hand, a president must explain to a diverse cabinet that even though we all think differently, we have a common target to work towards.”

President, Community College (Northeast)

Manage Labor Relationships

Institutional and Labor Interests Not Mutually Exclusive

Expect Some Culpability Regardless of Background

“I could not believe some of the problems I had to face when I became president. Even though I was new to the institution, **I discovered that I was still being held accountable for things that happened almost a decade ago.**”

*Dr. Liang Chee Wee President
Northeast Iowa Community College*

Early Outreach Creates Goodwill



Invite union leaders for a meeting during the first month



Inquire about past differences or ongoing grievances



Sustain relations with regular, monthly meetings

Access Additional Business and Finance Resources at eab.com



[Cost Savings](#)



[Revenue Enhancement](#)



[Human Resources](#)



[Data-Driven Administration](#)

Win-Win Labor Negotiation Strategy?

Comparison of Positional vs. Interest-Based Bargaining

Positional

- 1 Two sides treat negotiations as a zero-sum game
- 2 Each side seeks to maximize concessions
- 3 Strategies entail pressuring and misleading
- 4 One side looks "to win" exclusively



***Maintains
tension moving
forward***

Interest Based

- 1 Each side regards other as joint-problem solvers
- 2 Negotiations focus on common goals and interest
- 3 Bargaining incorporates other side's concerns
- 4 Both sides look for "win-win" opportunities



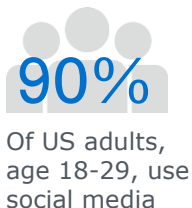
***Both sides
feel like they
won***

Connect with Students

Balancing Transparency with Time Commitments

Meeting Students at Scale on Preferred Channels

Increasing Social Media Usage for Students and Presidents



 **58%**

Of college presidents have a Facebook page

 **55%**

Of college presidents have a Twitter account

 **35%**

Of college presidents publish their own blog

"Out of the Box" Blog Inspired by Popular Demand

- Initiated in follow up to a system wide listening tour
- Met with over 5,000 students and faculty who requested more information about system office activities



Makes system updates relevant to student lives



Emails blog updates to over 80,000 students



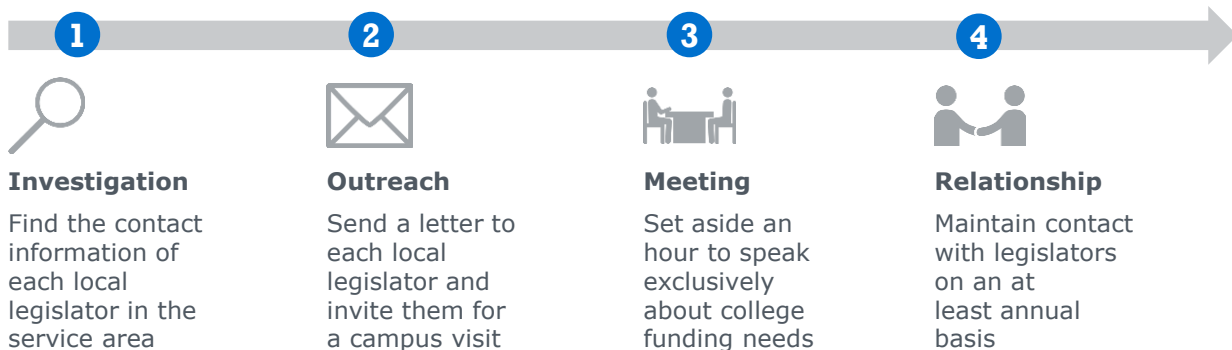
Re-posts messages on social media

Leave Nothing to Chance

Initiate Political Support

Reach Out to Lawmakers in Advance

Four Steps to Solidifying Advantageous Relationships



Prepare for Increased Public Scrutiny

“If I could go back and redo the first 100 days, I would have sat down with each member president with a very simple form to identify their main political advocates, their detractors and who do we need to work on. **Now, lessons learned, this fall I’m touring the 16 colleges and each trip I have to schedule individual meetings with the local legislators** and this would have been great the first time around, but I just did not think about it.”

President, Community College System (Southeast)

Standardize Your Outreach

Conserve Time with Form Letter

A New First Priority for Presidents

“**The first thing we ask new presidents during orientation is to send a personal letter to each of the legislators within their service area.**”

We had never been proactive in relationship building with local leaders in the past. Now we say ‘No, this has to be front and center for all new college presidents.’”

*Dr. Jay Box, President
Kentucky Community and
Technical College System*

Initiate Proactive Communication with Local and State Politicians

Sample Letter Template

Salutation,

- **Provide brief description** of the new president and of the community college.
- **Describe recent success** of the college and how it aligns with electoral priorities.
- **Invite to campus** for a 30-60 minute meeting focused primarily on funding.
- **Include contact information**

Signature

Cultivate Development Prospects

Build Relationships Before Making the Ask

Strong Relationships Yield Consistent Gifts



Identify Top Donors

- Compile a list of largest donors to the institution; segment by source (e.g., large employer, alumni)



Communicate Value

- Invite business leaders to tour the campus and speak with faculty; explain graduates' employment success



Nurture Relationship

- Continue to meet with potential donors through meals and conversations during community events



Provide Access

- Make yourself available to high priority donors
- Communicate opportunities to make donations

Find a Way to Say Yes to Invitations

Make Public Appearances Regardless of Volume

From Nobody Calling...

“Even in a large city like Seattle, a new president might have to outreach to local groups to schedule more public engagements.

If a new president receives a request to speak at an event, they should always say yes. It

makes the president and college seem more connected to the community. At a minimum, offer an alternative at their earliest convenience.”

*Dr. Gary Oertli, President
South Seattle College*

...to Ringing Off the Hook

“There will be a lot of organizations during the first 100 days that would love for the president to speak. They'll invite you to the rotary, the chamber of commerce or whatever. But don't be so quick to say yes I'm coming! **You must be strategic about whom you say 'yes' to. In fact, there is a very polite way of saying 'not now.'** Usually, it means suggesting a later date when the time is appropriate.”

*Dr. Liang Chee Wee, President
Northeast Iowa Community College*

Access Additional Advancement Resources at eab.com



[Recruit Major
Gift Officers](#)



[Launch Social
Media Campaigns](#)



[Cultivate
Alumni](#)

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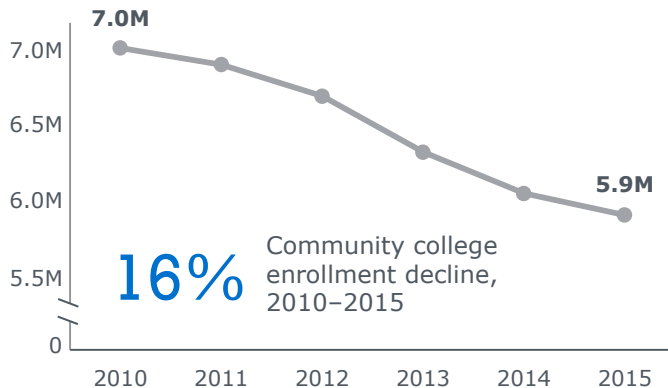
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Determine Fiscal Standing

Make Tuition Your Starting Point

Five Years of Enrollment Declines

Fall Enrollment at Two-Year Public Colleges, 2010–2015



Balance Full-Time Enrollment Revenue with Expenditures

“Any new president coming in, especially in this environment, **must look at what how many FTE does it take to support a faculty member instructionally and how do you allocate your overhead.** And this is not something you would normally look at if you are coming out of the chief academic officer role.”

*Dr. Stanley Sidor, President
Lake-Sumter Community College*

Starting Questions for Chief Financial Officer



How many additional students are needed to maintain services?



How does the cost per FTE compare with neighboring institutions?



What courses or programs can be expanded?



What services can be reduced or shared to lower costs?

Source: National Student Clearinghouse, “Current Term Enrollment Estimates,” 2015; National Student Clearinghouse, “Current Term Enrollment Estimates,” 2012; Smith A, “Mergers without Rancor?” *Inside Higher Ed*, 2015; Smith A, “Too Few Students,” *Inside Higher Ed*, 2015; EAB interviews and analysis.

Assess Institutional Performance

Guiding Presidential Strategic Priorities

Examine Internal Performance in Three Major Categories

1

Enrollment

Applicant Yield

Provides a snapshot of intake quality

Year-Over-Year Enrollment

Suggests aggregate trends in student population

**2**

Student Success

Fall-to-Fall Retention

Illustrates persistence of students

Overall Completion Rate

Indicates institution's overall performance in graduating degree seeking students

**3**

College Value

Cohort Transfer Rate

Shows success of transfer students

One-Year Employment Rate

Signals institution's ability to find jobs for graduates and credential market value



Fixing the DRIP (Data Rich, Information Poor)

Level Setting Performance Expectations

Use External and Longitudinal Data to Create Benchmarks

Sample Benchmark Table

Success Indicator	Current Year	Prior Year	Benchmark	Trend
Overall Course Success Rates (Grade A-C)	74%	74%	71%	↔
Percentage of Employed Graduates	88%	92%	90.5%	↓
Application Yield Percentage	62%	59%	55%	↑

Common Sources for Benchmark Data



State
system
websites



National
association
websites



Accreditation
agency
websites

Improve Board-level Financial Communication

Study available on eab.com



- Design and build board-facing Dashboard
- Continually support users
- Adapt to different audiences

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Set Presidential Workflows

Assign Tasks Based on Relevancy to Institution's Mission

President	Executive Team	Middle Management
● Mission Related  "You are going to be bombarded by thousands of things. New presidents must focus on the few items most integral to advancing the college mission." <i>Dr. Meghan Hughes President Community College of Rhode Island</i>	● Administrative  "Some things will seem critical to you, like budget, but it's perfectly OK to delegate them to your vice president." <i>Dr. Jerome Parker President Delaware County Community College</i>	● Communal or Peripheral  "Ask yourself, does this directly advance the lot of my students? Could I push this appointment back to a later date?" <i>Dr. Susan Huard President Manchester Community College</i>

Harness Storytelling

Compelling Narratives Empower Your Message

Modifying Storytelling for Presidential Audience

Examples of Narrative-Driven Anecdotes

Narrative Arc



Main Character



Adversity



Resolution



Value

Generic Example

Hero seeks to accomplish a goal

Obstacles present arduous challenge

Hero **overcomes adversity**

Inspiring **teaching point** of story

Student Example

Single mother wants to complete

Must balance **family and work**

College gives flexible classes

All students **can succeed** at college

Business Example

Employee wants to improve their skills

No time, worried about courses

Courses **tailored** to employer needs

College provides **valuable training**

Distill Lessons from Peers and Predecessors

Integrating Your Leadership

1 Prioritize Staff Improvements



Small changes may offend staff members more than large ones

Example

Renovating the presidential office before the faculty lounge

Lesson

"Don't spend on yourself first—it sends the wrong message. Replace the faculty's old coffee maker before renovating your carpets.

President, Community College (Midwest)

2 Be Mindful of Presidential Speech



Presidents face 24-hour scrutiny of words and actions

Example

A staff member takes a president's musings literally during a meeting

Lesson

"Know your own leadership style. Clearly explain any personal quirks or work expectations to your staff."

President, Community College (Northwest)

3 Wait to Introduce Large Changes



Big, early disruptions to institutional processes may engender resentment

Example

Changing performance evaluation metrics too quickly

Lesson

"I wanted to quickly improve to success rates, but I made the mistake of not getting enough faculty on board first."

President, Community College (Southwest)

Maintain High Performance

Recharging and Sustaining Yourself Beyond 100 Days

Look for Quick Wins to Build Momentum

Some may not be readily apparent during the interview process



"It seemed like the college **was committed to a new student-centric learning initiative, but it was stuck in committee.** I read the minutes and helped get it up and running quickly."

President, Community College (Southeast)

Some may require uncomfortable and decisive action



"There was someone frequently causing trouble on the executive team. **It was difficult to fire someone within the first few months but it hugely benefited the working environment.**"

President, Community College (Mid-Atlantic)

Some may need an outside perspective to justify



"When I joined our college , it did not have a grant office. **Creating one was one of my first actions as president and it became a huge asset to resource development.**"

*Dr. Stelfanie Williams, President,
Vance-Granville Community College*

Remember to Make Time for Yourself

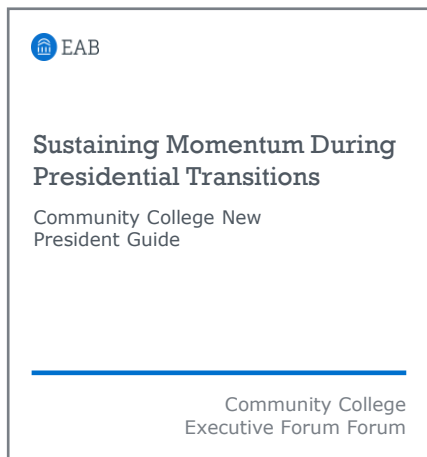
"Presidents are pulled in so many different directions that **they need to be able to find time for themselves.** This could be meditation, exercise, reading a good book, or even watching TV. Presidents need to look after themselves or they risk burn out."

*Dr. Susan Huard, President,
Manchester Community College*

Providing More Support for Your Transition



Sustaining Momentum During Presidential Transitions on eab.com



- Full publication contains expanded detail on all best practices
- Includes 5 corresponding tools to facilitate your transition
- Unlimited copies available to members

Questions on Today's Material?



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