“Being president of a university is no way for an adult to make a living. Which is why so few adults actually attempt to do it. It is to hold a mid-nineteenth century ecclesiastical position on top of a late-twentieth century corporation.” (p. xi)

A. Bartlett Giamatti, former president of Yale and former Commissioner of Baseball.
Overview of Presentation

1. University leadership – an oxymoron?
2. Some Canadian American differences
3. Three primary issues for discussion with our expert panelists:
   a) The critical importance of institutional culture
   b) Financial leadership in disruptive times
   c) The role of educational technology
The Elusive Concept of University Leadership
University leadership with a distinctly Canadian flavour
Leadership Under Fire: The Challenging Role of the Canadian University President

- Uniquely Canadian perspective
- Interviews with 11 of the most successful presidents of recent decades
- Blending theory and practice
- Focus on institutional culture and “institutional fit” – the right president for the right institution at the right time
What’s different about leading a university?
A “simple” organization with very clear and consistent goals. eg:

**Dry cleaners:** customer service & satisfaction, profits

**Sports team:** entertainment, ticket sales, championships

**Corporation:** sales, profits, stock prices
Why is Organization “A” relatively easy to lead?

- Clear and measureable set of objectives
- Employees share in and reap benefit from their realization
- Reporting lines and role differentiation
- Leader’s authority, accountability clear
- Culture consistent for all
- Easy to assess how we are doing
The university: different on almost every variable

- Multiplicity of purposes that may not be mutually consistent
- Assemblage of individual entrepreneurs
- First loyalty to their own discipline.
- An individual’s success may or may not be tied to the institution’s
- Process as important as product
The university: different on almost every variable

- Roles self-defined and often independent of institutional objectives
- President’s authority both acknowledged and challenged by core professional staff
- Multi-faceted institutional culture with clear academic/administrative division
- Elusive pursuit of (often counter-productive) performance criteria
Small wonder we liken it to herding cats!
And the job takes its toll... BEFORE
AFTER
Some Canadian and American perspectives on the challenge
“I manage to survive; I manage to plan, organize, staff, coordinate, budget, report, and make decisions regarding the future of this organization; I manage to serve this organization as part figurehead, part pastor of interpersonal relations, part spokesperson, part disburser of institutional propaganda and positive reinforcement to students, faculty, alumni and trustees...
I manage to be an unprincipled (at times) promoter and principled (at other times) huckster of the institution and its objectives; I manage to bring forward the historical traditions of the institution and give some of them new life and meaning in a different world;...
And more...

I manage to articulate a set of goals for the institution that, despite all odds, actually covers all the activities of what increasingly has become a general-service-public utility; I manage an organization of bewildering scope with at least a little dignity, respectability, some authority, and (occasionally) wisdom...
I manage to preserve some sense of community in a sea of independent and fiercely self-regulating disciplines; I manage to blur the contradictory obligations the modern university too eagerly assumes; I manage to convince others that our elitism is not of the unjustified sort; I manage to persuade our patrons that no single university can address all the needs of modern life.”
The Practitioner...

Harold Shapiro (former president, Michigan and Princeton, and a fellow Montrealer)
“The president’s job is necessary and important. It is illusory and impossible. It is transactional, transformational, managerial, marginal. It can be heroic. Heroism cannot prevail. Individuals can make a difference. Any difference will be minimal given the constraints and complexities, the ambiguities and uncertainties, of the university environment.” (p. 132)
“It does not know what it is doing. Its goals are either vague or in dispute. Its technology is familiar but not understood. Its major participants wander in and out of the organization. These factors do not make a university a bad organization or a disorganized one; but they do make it a problem to describe, understand and lead.” (p. 3).
Arnold Naimark, former president, The University of Manitoba

“University administrators are like chimpanzees – the higher they climb, the more they reveal their most unattractive parts”
The best single word depiction of the job...

RELENTLESS!

Stephen Toope
President, UBC (2006-2014)
The University: A dramatic evolution over 50 years
Canadian university presidents in the 1960’s

- Presided over the academy
- Moral leadership, like a headmaster
- Almost always a man
- Even our largest institutions were small by today’s standards
- President knew most of the faculty and many of the students and vice versa
- On campus most of the time
CEO of a major corporation
Many institutions 8-10 times larger
$100’s of millions in operating budget
Off campus role predominant
Less personal contact on campus
Public eye, accountability to broad range of stakeholders
Fifty years on...

- Research displacing teaching at centre
- Increased competition for scarce resources (enrolments, grants)
- Resultant expectations for lobbying, marketing and fund-raising, alumni relations
- Faculty unions, collective bargaining
- Government and community relations
- Performance indicators, rankings
Given the changes, we must be selecting very different institutional leaders today?

No, over 90% of Canadian university presidents come from inside the academy and almost always (85%) from another Canadian university, not the one where they have served as a Vice-President or Dean.
OK, but we must at least be training them better?!

No, while there have been some improvements in professional development opportunities for new presidents, almost all of us learn “on the job” – that was the case for all 11 presidents interviewed for the book.
Canadian vs. American concepts of leadership
Reflect differences in national character: American...

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness...
Peace, order and good government...
American...

As American as apple pie
As Canadian as possible under the circumstances!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMERICAN</th>
<th>CANADIAN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple and diverse institutions</td>
<td>Fewer, more homogenous institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix of public and private</td>
<td>Overwhelmingly public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia (28 universities)</td>
<td>Toronto (3 universities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide range of standards</td>
<td>Narrow band of standards</td>
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</table>
Even differences in books on university leadership


The “hero” approach to university leadership. Contrast with my own depiction of 11 of our best presidents where a more prevalent notion is that of coach or leading from behind
Some of our most successful presidents have come from the US

Martha Piper, UBC;

Paul Davenport (Alberta, Western):
Most of the very few presidents, Canadian or American, who have come to a presidency here without any prior experience in a Canadian university have not fared very well. This strongly reinforces the importance of culture and institutional fit.
1. Institutional Culture

- Brought in as change agents but need to understand the institutional culture first.
- More than 80% of Canadian university presidents appointed from outside their institution
- Honeymoon period and figuring the place out
- Move too soon?
- Move too late?
Recent increased failure rate among Canadian university presidents

- 25% in recent years have not completed their first term of office (David Turpin)
- Includes several who were apparently successful in one institution (renewed for a second term) and then bombed out dramatically in their second.
- The best explanation for this difference and these failures is “institutional fit”
In a survey of 114 presidents who have served in 47 Canadian universities since 2000, 74 have completed their terms.

18 (24%) served fewer than 5 years
34 (46%) served 10 or more years
22 (30%) served 5-9 years
“Unsuccessful presidents”

20/74 (27%) fired or left during first term for reasons other than higher appointment or completed first term but not offered a renewal
“Successful presidents”

54/74 (73%) completed two terms or more or left after 8 or more years for another presidency or retirement
Conclusions – how boards can work to reduce presidents’ failure rates

1. Continue to invest heavily in presidential recruitment
2. Put “institutional fit” at the top of the priority list in recruitment
3. Do not underestimate internal candidates – some evidence of a greater tendency to hire internally, especially in larger universities
Reducing presidents’ failure rates

4. Don’t assume the appointee knows everything – invest heavily in his/her professional development, provide mentorships and strong personal support
5. Crucial board chair/president relationship
6. Open and frequent communications between university leaders and their boards
Helpful theory on organizational culture and leadership
The six cultures of the academy

- Collegial
- Managerial
- Developmental
- Advocacy (or Negotiating)
- Virtual
- Tangible
Most of you know more about this issue than any Canadian university president because you are in more competitive entrepreneurial markets. That said, we’re catching up fast!

Most of the fiscal pressures on us have been positive – beyond a certain point of financial constraint, you have to confront your whole mission and mandate, who you really are and the way you do everything (eg. Windsor)
Principles of effective financial management

1. Most important financial decisions come from strong academic planning.
2. Financial decisions must be about the long-term fiscal health of the institution.
3. Some cost-cutting measures can have significant long-term consequences that cannot possibly justify the short-term gain.
4. Even in the most difficult times, it is critical to reserve some funds for innovation and investment.
5. Budget cutting is stressful for all – it requires open processes and constant communications.
1. President has the courage to define the institution more narrowly, avoiding a tendency to try to be all things to all people
2. Budget processes follow naturally from well articulated, broadly supported strategic planning
3. Institutional leaders thoroughly and very publicly engaged in identifying priorities both for investment and for cutting
4. Processes always open and all stakeholders have opportunity for input
5. Leaders tireless in their communications to all stakeholders
6. The importance of emotional intelligence -- a president who has the confidence and institutional commitment to make the tough decisions and give a clear, well supported rationale for each
7. The president is always looking ahead to the long-term needs of the institution and its students
3. “Technology’s the answer... but what is the question?”

- Title of my 1982 Musical Revue
- The prevailing technology keeps changing but the central issue has been the same for years: start with the problem, not the solution
- Wish we had learned as much about the management of technology as we have about technology itself over the past 5 decades
1960’s: Educational Television, Correspondence education supplemented by telephone tutoring
1970’s: Video- and tele-texting, e-mail
1980’s: Internet, mobile learning
1990’s: World Wide Web, blogs, wikis
2000’s: Web 2.0 technologies -- social media, cloud computing, MOOCs
Bates and Sangrà (2010):
• In depth study of 11 universities in NA and Europe
• 9 criteria to judge extent of technological integration
• Discouraging gap between hope and reality
• No convincing evidence that the investment in technology was leading to improved learning outcomes
• Rather than saving money, costs were increasing, especially in faculty workload, LMS, tech. support
• Biggest challenges are cultural, not technological
USA – a world leader in educational technology

- Unprecedented access to education at all levels
- Instructional design (from US military)
- World leader in hardware and software development
- Huge investment in new technologies
- Open educational resources (OER)
- MOOCs (although term coined in Canada)
BUT.....with that leadership come strong responsibilities

- Cannot just bung in new technologies -- must be integrated into the institutional core
- Start with the needs of the students and the discipline, not with the technology
- Pay attention to the research about which technologies are best suited to which teaching and learning challenges
- Recognize that the challenges are more cultural than technological (bringing everyone along with you)
1. What are the desired learning outcomes?
2. What can I learn from the research into the impact of various learning technologies?
3. What are the true costs of the technological innovation, including such issues as faculty development and student support?
4. What impact will this have on the culture of the institution and what strategies will be most effective in overcoming resistance to change and integrating the new technology into the mainstream of the institution?
CONCLUSION: The central challenge of the job today

Having the courage to deal effectively with:

Powerful forces for accountability and change emanating from sources not always sensitive to the core nature and function of universities

vs.

The resistance to change, both overt and passive, so characteristic of many campuses
The president’s ability to deal with these legitimate opposing forces

- Be reflective and strategic
- Pick issues carefully and work hard to bring boards, faculty and staff along with you
- Notwithstanding uncertain power base
- Requires strong, but sensitive leadership, unafraid of new directions, always working within the institution’s academic culture
- Aim for change that is real and deep, not short term and artificial
University president is the best job in the world:
- Raising hopes and opportunities for so many
- The privilege of working with such a diverse cross-section of creative and talented people
- Creating and challenging knowledge daily
- Learning every day
- Congratulations on what you do and thank you for having the courage and fortitude to do it. We’re sure in the right business!
Now it’s our panel’s turn...
a Southern response!

On-line Learning:
Donald Bobbitt, President, University of Arkansas system

Institutional Cultures:
Hank Huckaby, Chancellor, Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia

Financial Leadership:
Eileen Klein, President, Arizona Board of Regents

Moderator:
Flavius Killebrew, President/CEO, University of Texas at Corpus Christi
