

Pathways to the Presidency

The American Council on Education (ACE) produced the latest iteration of the American College President Study (ACPS) with generous sponsorship from the TIAA Institute. *The American College President: 2023 Edition* is the ninth iteration of ACPS, and the data it presents provide a comprehensive view of the demographics, challenges, and experiences of college presidents, including useful insights on pathways presidents take to the presidency and their plans once they step down from their leadership roles.

Aspiration, Application, and Appointment

6.8 years

Average length of time from presidential **aspiration to appointment**

3.3 years

Average number of years later than men that **women aspired** to the presidency

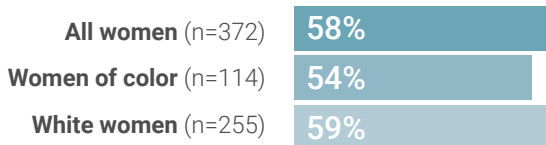
1.5 years

Average time **women** were appointed to their first presidency **after applying**

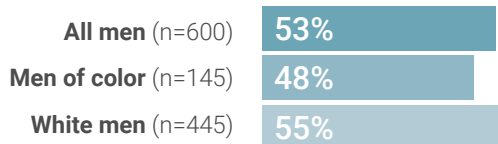
Stepping Down and Next Steps

More than **half (55 percent)** of presidents indicated they intend to step down from their current position within the next five years.

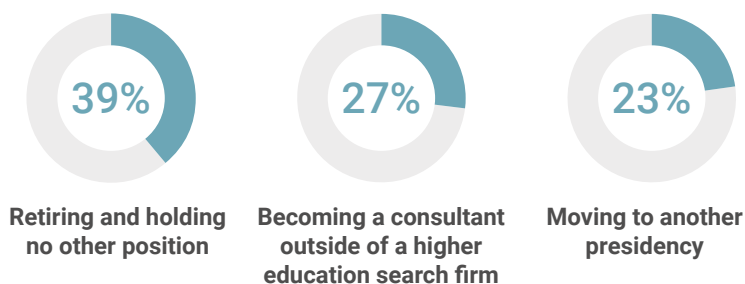
Women Presidents



Male Presidents



Top next steps for presidents who intend to step down from their current position within the next five years



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Educational and Career Pathways



Highest Degree Earned

The highest degree earned among presidents was a **doctorate (84 percent)**, followed by a **master's degree (6 percent)**, and a **juris doctor (6 percent)**.



Academic Backgrounds

Presidents primarily arrived to the presidency from an academic or faculty background, and women were more likely to come from this pathway.

Doctoral institutions were most likely to have presidents who arrived from an academic or faculty pathway.

Associate colleges had the highest distribution of career administrative leaders (e.g., student affairs officer, auxiliary services, finance) who were serving as president.

Special focus institutions had a greater variance of career pathways compared with other sectors.



Past Positions

More than **six in 10** presidents held their immediate past position at another higher education institution or system than the one they are currently leading.

Note: Presidents of color and White presidents may not sum to total of all categories due to some participants not disclosing their race and ethnicity.