



CONNIE J. GORES

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Transitions and Connections

Fall is a time of transitions marked by changing times and landscapes as well as settling into a new academic year. Transitions for some have meant new positions, new locations, and new opportunities, as is the case with Lisa A. Rossbacher, who served as chair of the ACE Women's Executive Council (WNEC) from 2012 to 2014. Lisa recently resigned as president of Southern Polytechnic State University in Georgia to assume the presidency at Humboldt State University in California. Lisa is a visionary leader who served the WNEC with distinction, and I am very pleased that she will continue to serve on the WNEC to ensure a smooth transition.

Perhaps you also recently moved to a new position—across the country or even closer to home—or maybe you have taken on a new role in your family or have reached a significant milestone in your life; regardless of your situation, no doubt you understand the value of reaching out to others and the importance of having a network of support. Connecting with others is necessary and important, especially in times of change and transition.

Regardless of whether we are extroverted or introverted, or whether we process information through interacting with others or primarily by ourselves, feeling a connection with others and staying connected with those who are important to us helps sustain us through the good times and the bad. I have always known the importance of connecting with others, but never before has it been more important than over the past several months since my mother passed away. My friends—professional and personal—have sustained me during this time and on many occasions I have been overcome by gratitude for all the support and love I have received from my women colleagues and friends.

Summer vacations, family reunions, special ceremonies, and shared rituals are memories from the summer that fade as we experience the new seasons of fall and winter. These times and celebrations all help to connect us with one another and remind us of our past as well as reinforce our connections to the present. Likewise, for those of us involved in our state and national ACE Women's Networks, we know firsthand about the value and significance of connecting with other professional women. When we seek a career change or when we experience a life-changing situation, it is helpful to connect with other professionals in our field. When we wish to share our professional values and interests with others, we have an available network of capable, talented, and resourceful women with whom to confer and build meaningful connections. Surely we are interested in staying abreast of current issues in higher education, and our state and national networks are the perfect places to get connected and be better informed on matters of local and national interest.

In this time of transition from fall to winter, from one phase of the academic year to another, it's the perfect time to renew our commitment to connect with women colleagues, to reach up and also reach back. We are still rising on the shoulders of those who have come before us. As we move up, it's important that we also reach back and help others along the way, so that we stay connected with one another on our journeys.

Thank you for your commitment to identifying, developing, encouraging, advancing, linking, and supporting (IDEALS) our women leader colleagues and thank you for your involvement in the ACE Women's Network. We are all better for it.

Connie J. Gores

Chair, ACE Women's Executive Council
President, Southwest Minnesota State University

From the Director



This season often calls upon us to reflect on our accomplishments to date and our plans for the year ahead. In the Office of Inclusive Excellence, this past summer we extended our time to capture your feedback on the great happenings of the past year through the State Coordinator's End of the Year Survey. This year we revised the survey in order to obtain more detailed feedback from you. The information you provided is guiding our work in supporting the networks. Our results reflected your commitment as we experienced greater participation. I would like to thank you for completing the survey. This summer also marked a major shift in focus for our Moving the Needle initiative (MTN).

Since 2010 we have convened each June to reflect on the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership roles in higher education, and how to change this reality. On June 16, 2014, the ACE Women's Network Executive Council hosted the Moving the Needle Call to Purpose Strategy Session. The meeting brought 55 individuals from a broad range of higher education associations, institutions, and private sector firms for an introduction to the four goals of the initiative:

- Generate a national sense of urgency, elevating the need for advancing women in higher education leadership positions
- Encourage governing boards and other higher education institutional decision-making and policymaking bodies to consider recommended practices for recruiting and hiring women for chief executive offices

- Achieve women's advancement to mid-level and senior-level positions in higher education administration by building capacities in women and in institutions
- Suggest recommended practices and models, and recognize success in advancing women in higher education

The meeting resulted in all participants signing up to advance a specific goal over this year. This step marks a pivotal moment in our work toward advancing women leaders in higher education. It represents an expansion of our commitment and includes new allies and partners in this work. The Inclusive Excellence Group is committed to supporting the forward movement of each goal group, and we are looking forward to acknowledging their progress at our June 2015 convening.

We are pleased that many of our ACE Networks around the country have begun to reflect on how to include the MTN goals in their programming. We acknowledge that the networks have been advancing women leaders in higher education for decades. The MTN goals presented here provide clarity and shared language for us as we raise awareness about our work and invite allies to join us. We are energized by this significant turning point, and look forward to sharing our progress in the coming months.



Director
Inclusive Excellence Group
American Council on Education



ACE Women's Network State Coordinator's Conference

March 14-15, 2015
Washington Hilton

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Network State Coordinator's Conference](#)

2014 VCU Doctoral Recognition Reception

The Women's Network at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) hosted its Annual Doctoral Recognition Reception designed to celebrate the hard work and accomplishments of women who received their doctorates during the current academic year. This event helped to mark the end of the academic journey for more than 150 women graduates.

Graduates and their guests were invited to share the culmination of their remarkable experience along with their advisors, deans, and other university guests. Nakeina E. Douglas-Glenn, director of The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute and a member of the Virginia Network Board of Directors, kicked off the event providing an overview of the Virginia Network and the Women's Network at VCU.

The featured speaker for the afternoon was Wanda Mitchell, vice president for inclusive excellence, and a member of the American Council on Education (ACE) Women's Network Executive Council. Mitchell highlighted the mission of the ACE Women's Network and the importance of identifying, developing, advancing, linking, and supporting (IDEALS): "I am happy to participate and support this annual event organized by Dr. Douglas-Glenn and the Women's Network at VCU. The celebration highlights and celebrates this major accomplishment of women earning doctorates at VCU. Nelson Mandela stated that 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.' I encourage each of you to begin making a difference in your field."

She went on to stress the value of creating strong networks and encouraged each of the women to connect with the network once she found her landing spot.

The graduates were also congratulated by F. Douglas Boudinot, dean of the Graduate School, who underscored the monumental achievements of the women: "VCU leads research institutions and all institutions nationally with 60 percent of its doctorates earned by women; [this is] truly an accomplishment to be celebrated."

Gordon McDougall, associate vice president for alumni relations, shared closing remarks with the graduates stressing the importance of staying active in the VCU community as alumnae.

Leah Michelle Thomas, who earned her PhD in media, art, and text, shared that she "enjoyed the reception and appreciates what the Women's Network is doing for VCU's women graduates." Each graduate was honored with words of encouragement and a token of congratulations from the university and the network. Before the close of the reception, each graduate had the opportunity to proudly share with the guests in attendance her plans for the future; many of them will be staying to contribute to education in Virginia.

"I am pleased that VCU continues to support this occasion year after year," remarked Douglas-Glenn. "It is just one of the many ways that VCU continues to demonstrate its commitment to women in academia. It sets a nice tone by which our graduates can begin to measure their professional value as they move forward in their careers."



Wanda Mitchell, vice president for inclusive excellence, and member of the ACE Women's Network Executive Council (left), with 2014 VCU doctoral recipients. Credit: Taylor Parker, The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute, VCU

Madlyn L. Hanes addressed the New England Networks of Women Leaders in Higher Education 12th Annual Conference, held at Assumption College (MA) on October 3, 2014. Her presentation provided the clarion call for the conference theme and the newly adopted initiative “Moving the Needle, the ACE National Agenda.” This article highlights the key points of her talk and the goals of this important agenda.



Moving the Needle—The Contours of the Problem

Moving the Needle is all about women’s leadership at its ultimate, i.e., women serving in the senior-most posts of our colleges and universities as presidents and chancellors. Moving the Needle is about attending to the pipeline of the next generation of women leaders and their readiness to assume presidencies. Moving the Needle is all about creating opportunities and preparing aspiring women leaders for increasingly greater roles in higher education.

Finally, Moving the Needle is about changing the culture within and across our organizations to internalize the social imperative, the important goal, and the associated organizational strengthening. The documented positive outcomes of having women serving our institutions in these senior-most positions and on the boards that recruit, hire, compensate, and retain them must be highlighted more prominently.

With that context, we can appreciate the contours that shape the problem.

- **Barriers to advancing women’s leadership prevail.**

Real or perceived, there are long-held beliefs—some held by women themselves—that what women leaders bring to the table, i.e., their experience, know-how, comfort level, and expertise, lies outside key areas of expectations for the president. As a result, what they are perceived to possess and bring to the presidency falls short of expectations. Among the imagined shortcomings are athletics, budget and finance, fundraising, risk and crisis management, risk taking, government and legislative affairs, and business acumen.

Another barrier is that women may not want to seek the job of president. Women in the chief academic officer (CAO) pool do not necessarily aspire to the presidency. Many view the job as overly demanding and anything but joyful. The CAO pool continues to be the most robust pathway to the presidency in a pool where women have made notable progress ascending to these roles (approximately 43 percent of women presidents served as provost or CAO prior to assuming the presidency, according to an ACE report).

ACE, through its Inclusive Excellence Group and its state networks in turn, does a good job with demystifying the presidency and showcasing the joys on very personal levels of the presidency. Leadership programs tap women presidents and chancellors to tell their personal stories, adding a human dimension to the job of the presidency and hopefully inspiring prospective women leaders to see the presidency as within their reach and within their aspirational goals.

- **Progress in advancing the numbers of women in the presidency has been incremental at best.**

In the decades in which the composition of presidencies has been studied (since 1986) we have seen slow or stalled progress overall. The number of women presidents has more than doubled over two decades—from 10 percent in 1986 to 23 percent in 2006. Numbers stalled in the mid-1990s. We have moved the needle three percentage points in the five-year period from 2006 to 2011; the latter reflects our most aggressive gains to date. Since we started counting, we moved the needle from 23 percent in 2006 to 26 percent in 2011, according to ACE’s report *The American College President 2012*.

To put this in the broadest perspective, you need to understand that among all industry sectors (journalism, business, entertainment, sports, military, government, and law) higher education, at 26 percent, fares best, according to The White House Project's 2009 report "Benchmarking Women's Leadership": The average among all industry sectors is a mere 18 percent.

The distribution of women holding presidencies across institutional types varies considerably. The percentage of women leading two-year colleges continues to dominate at 33 percent of the presidency among associate-level institutions.

According to *The American College President*, women leading four-year baccalaureate colleges and universities account for 23 percent of the presidency among four-year institutions. Women leading master's colleges and universities account for 23 percent of the presidency. Women leading doctoral institutions account for 22 percent of the presidency for that institutional type.

Concerning presidencies filled by ethnic and racial minorities, there has been little progress overall. In 2011, presidents representing racial/ethnic minorities made up 12.6 percent of the presidency. The percentage has remained almost unchanged, and is slightly lower, in fact, than in 2006, according to *The American College President*.

A disconnect between public perception and reality exists. Research findings documenting the organizational benefits of inclusion have had limited impact to date.

There is good research out there, but who is commissioning it? Who is asking the fundamental questions? And who's reading it? We are, and that's not enough. Dissemination is key; citation is key. We need a broader audience—a broader readership where self-interest and special interests cannot be second-guessed.

Good social science research that supports the value proposition for the good that can and will come to organizations by having women in the senior leadership mix is subject to the same rules of research as any other topical study. We know that. However, since we are asking the questions, we have the added responsibility of disseminating our findings into the larger marketplace to secure a broader readership for change to be realized.

- **Change (positive change) has been localized. The unintentional consequence of localized change is that it limits efforts to launch a national agenda.**

Individual organizations have indeed made progress by adopting deliberate practices that have moved the needle for their particular organizations.

What is missing is a coordinated effort that cuts across organizations and industry sectors to disseminate and exchange best practices, and to identify the programs and strategies in place to be shared, adopted, and assessed in terms of their impact.

Without coordination there is no scalability and there can be no national agenda. Certainly there can be no broad-scale sense of urgency, purpose, or imperative. No one organization can do this alone.

Women Leaders

In 2009, Marie C. Wilson and The White House Project produced *The White House Project Report: Benchmarking Women's Leadership*. The report provided national benchmarking across 10 industry sectors including academia, noting the percentage of women holding chief executive posts in each industry sector.

The report exposed the disparity/inequity of executive positions held by women.

On average, women account for 18 percent of CEO positions, with ranges that include 11 percent for military, 16 percent each for business, film, and television, and 17 percent for politics.

As I mentioned earlier, higher education leads the pack at 26 percent, followed by journalism at 22 percent, and nonprofits and sports each at 21 percent. The report also revealed that public perception of women's leadership and acceptance of women as leaders has evolved quite favorably.

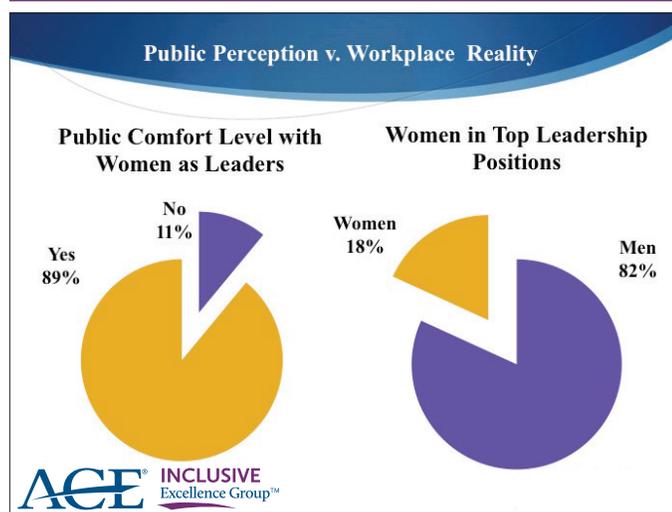
GfK/Roper polls commissioned by The White House Project in 2007 found that nearly 90 percent of the American public accepts women as leaders, up from 77 percent in 2002, and this acceptance extends to virtually all industry sectors. The reality of the workplace is quite startling. According to *Benchmarking Women's Leadership*, on average only 18 percent of women serve in the role of chief executive. There is a disconnect to be sure. There are assumptions that all is well and understandably, inertia sets in. This in turn counters change efforts. The report also presents a compelling business case for women's leadership: a better bottom line for organizations that have

greater diversity represented in their policymaking and decision-making ranks. According to *The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity*, a report by Catalyst, a nonprofit organization working to expand opportunities for women and business, Fortune 500 firms with higher percentages of women corporate officers realize a 35 percent higher return on equity and a 34 percent higher return to shareholders.

The White House Project Report was in many ways the catalyst that fueled ACE's heightened sponsorship of roundtable discussions that launched the Moving the Needle initiative in 2010. In June of this year, we held the fifth of such meetings.

The wider the participation in these roundtables, the bolder the initiative has and will become in setting a national agenda. It will do so leveraging mutual interests and resources of like-minded groups to create a sense of urgency and a blueprint for achieving gender parity. The good that comes from the collaborative temperament of women leaders is a powerful value proposition for all organizations.

Perception vs. Reality



This graphic from *The White House Project Report* shows vividly the disconnect between the general public's acceptance of women as leaders and the reality of the workplace.

This one particular graphic usually catches the attention of the audience members—it did mine when I first saw it. It captures the essence of the challenge in front of us—to actually move the needle.

I selected a few recommendations from *The White House Project Report* that I hope will resonate with you. They are simply stated, practical in nature, and informed by good social science research.

- **We need to set targets, collect and analyze data, and monitor progress.**

This is as important as it is difficult. It is difficult to sustain these efforts, so the efforts themselves must be a priority for organizations or they become ad hoc exercises, attended to on an occasional schedule.

In addition, if the idea is to work across organizations, it's more difficult still. To work across organizations there must be a shared commitment.

- **Another key recommendation is to improve the flexibility of workplace structures.**

Here we have national movement to adopt workplace flexibility practices that help women and men balance life and work as they advance their careers.

From the vantage point of Moving the Needle, such practices will secure a pipeline of women who often have their studies and careers truncated or interrupted by personal circumstances that call them away.

A promising, recent example is the partnership between ACE and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to launch a national campaign to promote work/life balance for faculty. There is good momentum behind improving workplace flexibility. This is a good model for us.

- **The final recommendation is to achieve a critical mass (at least one-third) of women in leadership roles, including women serving on our governing boards.**

The White House Project Report brought to light meta-studies that identified the noticeable difference that can be made when women represent a third of the leadership mix. This appears to be the tipping point. When they fill less than a third (30 percent) of leadership positions, women remain the exception—not quite full participants in the groups they serve.

According to the Association of Governing Boards, the percentage of women on governing boards hovers between 28 to 30 percent. We need to move the needle in this important arena as well. Our governing bodies shape our policies and direct the wherewithal for our institutions to advance their strategic priorities. Our trustees are central to our moving the needle as they hire presidents and chancellors.

There is opportunity and promise in the academy. We have moved the needle in the last five years as the number of women presidents has grown.

We will have significant turnover in the near term in the presidency. Fifty-eight percent of sitting presidents are 61 years or older, according to *The American College President*.

According to 2012 statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics, we have a healthy pipeline of women at the entry level:

- Women students represent 57 percent of our enrollments
- Women earn 59 percent of degrees conferred, including 52 percent of all doctoral degrees.

We would like to see a good number of them enter the academy as a career choice and join the professoriate.

Our professoriate is less advanced. However, with improved workplace flexibility, we may remove roadblocks to women achieving higher faculty ranks. This is an imperative.

Women make up about 26 percent of full rank and over 50 percent of the rank of instructor/lecturer, according to *The White House Project Report*. We need to turn this upside down or right side up.

Moving the Needle is a timely and important initiative with some lofty goals. If we leverage our collective strengths, we will live to see change in our time.

At our June gathering in Washington, DC, we held a strategy session as our call to purpose focused on finalizing our mission, vision, challenge, and value statements, plus action goals. They are yours to embrace on regional and institutional levels through your state networks. In fact, I implore you to take these on.

Our Mission Statement: Create parity in the academy for women holding the senior-most decision-making and policymaking leadership positions.

Our Vision: At least 50 percent of higher education chief executives are women. This ambitious and lofty goal is imperative for success. Incremental progress is just that—incremental. Without a lofty goal we will be inching forward. That is not good enough.

Our Challenge: To realize our vision by 2030. While perhaps audacious, we will have opportunities with anticipated vacancies and pipeline. If we want to move the needle, we cannot passively wait for incremental change.

Our Value Statement: We will create a national agenda as a critical imperative.

We will do so by collaborating with like-minded organizations, leveraging our collective strengths, and we will make a difference. And with continued excellent social science research, we will make a compelling case.

Moving the Needle

Goal One: Generate a national sense of urgency elevating the need for advancing women in higher education leadership positions

Goal Two: Encourage governing boards and other higher education decision-making and policymaking bodies to adopt practices for recruiting and hiring women for chief executive offices.

Goal Three: Achieve women's advancement to mid-level and senior-level positions in higher education administration by building capacities in women and in institutions.

Goal Four: Suggest recommended practices and models and recognize success in advancing women in higher education.

When I am asked to speak to higher education groups about women's leadership, I talk about the importance of developing a pipeline and providing opportunities for advancement. I end my conversations with both prospective and seasoned women leaders in my audience with two questions:

- How best can we leverage the collective strengths of our organizations and our various networks to Move the Needle?
- How will you be part of the Moving the Needle initiative?

Selected Sources

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Madlyn L. Hanes is vice president for commonwealth campuses and dean of the University College at The Pennsylvania State University.

Notes from the Editor

By Cynthia Smith Forrest



As the year continues to unfold, we await the arrival of yet another new season. This edition is a tribute to this new season of focus for the ACE Women's Network. Our four decades of work continues to center on our IDEALS for identifying, developing, advancing, linking, and supporting women leaders along the higher education pipeline. The networks in each state remain the central force for our collective success. The journeys of women are complex and require us to resonate with the many forces at work for women leaders in higher education. The approaches of each state network possess common practices that are tailored often to the uniqueness posed by the specific state's geographical challenges, network history, and organizational traditions. Continuing to assess the needs of women leaders in each state is important so that each network can have a vital place in the professional development and networking plans for each person. This outreach to the campuses where women live is critical. However, this edition focuses on the additional need to be active in the larger arena of the broader higher education community as well. In her article, Madlyn Hanes champions the new Moving the Needle initiative that the American Council on Education, through the Office of Inclusive Excellence, has launched to address advancing women to presidencies and chancellorships so that by 2030 women will hold 50 percent of these positions across the United States.

How we do this remains our collective challenge and focus. First, ensuring that our networks place this initiative on their action agendas is essential. During the past year, I had the privilege of working with my New England colleagues to plan our 12th annual regional conference. With my network colleagues Carol Moore, Susan Lane, Martha Shouldis, Henriette Pranger, Sharon Fross, and Christie Boronico, we welcomed our women colleagues from New England's six states to Assumption College (MA) on October 3 to focus on the conference theme: "Moving the Needle for the Advancement of Women in New England." This event, as well as my visit later in the month to the New Hampshire Women in Higher Education Leadership conference, highlighted the work and words of Madlyn Hanes featured in this *NetworkNews* edition. Her presentation served as the source of information and inspiration. She was one of two keynote speakers for the New England Networks of Women Leaders in Higher Education fall conference, outlining the mission, goals, and action plan. I utilized her slide presentation as the central focus for my New Hampshire Network remarks. As Vicki Escalera, New

Hampshire Network state director, indicated, the theme for New Hampshire's programming this year echoes this urgent and impatient call: "Women's Leadership—Are We There Yet?"

The Virginia Women's Network highlighted another important initiative focused on celebrating the achievements of women who completed their doctorates. This program supports the advancement of women by highlighting the importance of the terminal degree to the process of leadership progression within the academy. So these models offer ideas for our networks across the country to join in securing our 2030 goal for 50 percent of U.S. presidencies and chancellorships to be held by women.

To inform our collective action, I encourage all of us to have the facts on the tip of our tongues so we can speak about the data that prompt us to adopt and promote new achievement goals for women and higher education. Additionally, I encourage you to read the book *The New Soft War on Women* (Tarcher/Penguin) co-authored by Caryl Rivers, professor of journalism at Boston University, and Rosalind Barnett, senior scientist at the Brandeis University (MA) Women's Studies Research Center, and recognized by Oprah Winfrey's book club. At the New England Networks Conference, Rivers, as the featured afternoon keynote speaker, shared her research about the ways in which women's successes have been reframed and over-stated as a way to perpetuate the myth that women have arrived despite data to the contrary. Rivers herself is a pioneer whose career has spanned four decades. She has been recognized as the recipient of the 2007 Helen Thomas Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Society of Professional Journalists. She is a pioneer whose career has spanned four decades. As a nationally known author, journalist, columnist, media critic, and professor of journalism at Boston University, she has been reporting about—and commenting on—American life and politics first as a Washington newspaper correspondent covering the civil rights movement and the Kennedy presidency. Over her career, her writing for U.S. newspapers and magazines has centered on such issues as the Vietnam debate, the women's movement, the rise of the political right, the battles over political correctness, and the divides over race, class, and gender that have challenged the nation. Rivers's leadership, work, writing, and wisdom are important reminders of our past, present, and future roles and responsibilities for advancing women and ensuring that the IDEALS of our ACE Women's Network are experienced by the women whose journeys we share.

Smith Forrest is vice president for student affairs at the University of New England (ME).



**Location: Scottsdale Marriott
at McDowell Mountains
Scottsdale, Arizona
April 28-May 1, 2015**

This three-day leadership program is for mid-level women administrators (typically department chairs, directors, and assistant/associate deans) with high potential for advancement in higher education administration.

Visit www.acenet.edu/leadership to register.

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This three-day leadership program is for senior-level women administrators (typically deans or above) seeking a college or university presidency, vice presidency, or major deanship.

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