

# THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF THE COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL SPOUSE

by

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(Under the Direction of J. Douglass Toma)

## ABSTRACT

No matter the level of involvement a college presidential spouse chooses, they are a reflection of the college community. The board of trustees often does not discuss or fully recognize the ways a spouse serves. Presidential spouses play a vital role not only in encouraging the president, but also in college entertaining and community relations, which are the essence of the college presidency. These roles translate into wooing prospective students, attracting potential donors, and garnering the support of the local community. Yet, very few presidential spouses are given the opportunity to discuss the expectations of these various roles, how their own talents and interests can benefit the college, or even participate in a formal interview.

In this study, I examine the role and influence of the college presidential spouse, using a mixed methods approach. As the literature review indicates, this topic has received little attention. This oversight ignores the significant contribution that spouses play in shaping and supporting presidents and institutions.

Because there are expectations of the spouse, boards of trustees must take seriously the selection of the presidential team. Spouses are more than just an added benefit. The board must recognize how often the presidential spouse becomes an embodiment of the institution and is

important in the success of the college's development efforts. The interview during the selection process should reflect the presidential spouse's role on campus by allowing for a trustee-initiated conversation about the board expectations of the presidential spouse. The outcome of that conversation should be a two-sided dialog that captures the interests of the board while valuing the interests and abilities of the presidential spouse. The result of this conversation is a set of expectations that can be used to guide the spouse in the important work s/he takes on for the institution.

INDEX WORDS: Presidential Spouse, Spouse, Higher Education Management

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## DEDICATION

I lovingly dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Jennifer Thompson – the woman who plays the most important **role** in my life, while always **influencing** me to be the best that I can be.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The spouse of a college president is significant in the life of the institution. He or she serves in ways that are often not fully recognized. Presidential spouses play a vital role not only in encouraging the president, but also in the entertaining and community relations which are the essence of the college presidency. These roles translate into wooing prospective students, attracting potential donors, and garnering the support of the local community. Indeed the constituency of an institution commonly sees the presidential team – not just the president – as figureheads for the institution (Ostar, 1991). They are the living logos that express the ideals and aspirations of the institution to its varied constituents (Reisman, 1986).

Like the presidency, the role of the presidential spouse is difficult. Both the president and his or her spouse spend numerous hours planning, attending, and traveling to college events. Given the unrelenting pressure of the presidency, many of the responsibilities of the president's family fall to the spouse, as do many of the tasks associated with the couple's entertaining and social engagements (Stoke, 1959; Plante & Caret, 1990). For many presidential spouses, the president's role and responsibilities become a way of life (Stoke, 1959; Nason, 1980; Ostar, 1986; McLaughlin & Reisman, 1990; Plante & Caret, 1990; Basinger, 2000). However, institutions cannot assume that in hiring a president they are getting "two for the price of one." Institutions are increasingly discovering the need to both recruit and support the presidential spouse.

Moreover, just as institutions are increasing in complexity and the job of the presidential team is growing more challenging, there is a concern that those individuals – and couples – with

the ability, interest, and stamina to lead our institutions are declining (Basinger, 2002b). While many factors contribute to this decline, the constant pressure and demands of the 24-7 nature of the role of the college or university presidency and the lack of personal privacy are likely deterring many from applying (Stoke, 1959; Plante & Caret, 1990). Moreover, there is a “graying” among current senior administrators (Cotton, 2004), with many presidents and provosts, who have held these positions for years, nearing retirement. Couple this with presidential tenures that average barely seven years (Kerr & Gade, 1986; Basinger, 2002a) and you have a churn of positions that only adds to the stress of finding strong candidates and creates a quandary for boards of trustees (Kantrowitz & Friday, 1991; Basinger, 2002a).

No longer is it realistic for boards to expect that people will be enticed by the ideal of working for the “cause” of higher education or even a hefty paycheck. In fact, those who may pursue the presidency for the first reason may be too idealistic to be effective, and those who fall into the latter category may only be interested in their best interest and not the institution’s. Accordingly, boards of trustees must examine holistically the presidential search and not focus on recruiting a president alone. Instead, as appropriate, institutions must concentrate on recruiting a presidential team – president and spouse. Part of this holistic approach includes appropriately addressing the expectations of the presidential spouse and providing him or her with the adequate resources to fulfill these expectations.

To enhance the field of candidates and tenures of presidents – not to mention recognize the importance of both members of the presidential team – boards of trustees cannot trivialize the happiness of the spouse. Researchers and writers believe there is a high correlation between the length and quality of a presidency with the happiness and support of the presidential spouse. In

order to ensure longer tenures, the spouse's role must not be overlooked, taken for granted, or considered free.

Additionally, colleges should have a better understanding of the role the spouse plays in influencing not only the president, but also the institution. While, in general, there is a deficiency in the literature on presidential spouses, researchers have also ignored the idea of influence up until this point. The exclusion of influence as a topic in the literature seems to indicate that spouses are merely ancillary to the presidency. Much evidence exists to indicate this is not the case.

I examine these topics and make recommendations to spouses, presidents, and boards of trustees to best leverage the influence of the presidential spouse. After surveying 130 presidential spouses at Council of Independent College (CIC) affiliated institutions and conducting six in-depth interviews with current presidential spouses at CIC-affiliated institutions, I conclude that presidential spouses are, in fact, critical to the life of their institutions in all of the ways described above. Presidential spouses, both paid and unpaid, working off-campus and those not, male and female, are committing substantial amounts of time to the life and success of the institution. They provide counsel to their president, edit speeches, take part in alumni and donor relations, organize campus-sponsored events, host people in their homes, and serve as an institutional representative in almost any arena into which they enter.

In addition, boards of trustees must do a better job to both recognize presidential spouses and clarify the expectations of the presidential spouse for the college campus. Because of the power differential in the relationship between the board and the presidential spouse, the trustees are the ones who must initiate such conversations. To leave a presidential spouse without a true set of expectations and understandings is, at a minimum, unproductive for all involved. By

empowering presidential spouses through role definition, issuance of both monetary and non-monetary recognition, and advocacy for the work that is done, boards of trustees create an environment that not only attracts, but retains valuable leadership at the institution. The importance of attracting and retaining these leadership teams is vital to the continued success of not only private higher education, but also for all higher education institutions.

I focus on understanding how presidential spouses interpret their role and influence the life of their presidential partner and the institution in which they serve, asking these five research questions:

1. What framework do presidential spouses use to determine who they are and what role they play and are expected to play on the college campus?
2. In what ways, if any, do presidential spouses resist external pressures in normalizing the execution of their role and identity as the presidential spouse?
3. How has society influenced acceptable and unacceptable behaviors as a presidential spouse?
4. How does their association with their marital partner equip them to best support the institution and their spouse?
5. How do they differ in their understanding of their role and its subsequent influence on the institution and the president?

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **The College Presidential Spouse: Myth or Myth-understood<sup>1</sup>**

The role of the corporate executive's spouse remains a myth. The myth posits that this woman has married an intelligent and capable man. She is happy to manage the home, raise the family, and host occasional dinner parties. Why does this myth exist? Despite years of the woman's movement and the recognition of the efforts of both sexes, people continue to believe that corporate executives are men, they attain their levels of success on their own, and the spouse is lucky to have what comes from his success. The lack of research in the field perpetuates this myth. The role of the chief executive's spouse receives little scholarly attention. Who is the executive spouse? What role does he or she play in the partner's success? In what way does he or she contribute to the president's idea creation and personnel decision-making?

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<sup>1</sup> The literature, most of which was written prior to 1991, has a propensity to refer to the presidential and executive spouse as "her" or "wife." In regards to accuracy, none of these references have been changed. When appropriate in a historical context, the writer has also used feminine references. Today's context, however, is different. While institution type affects the statistics, today some estimate that about twenty percent of presidential spouses are men, which is up from about four percent in 1991. For this reason, the writer generally takes a more neutral position when referencing the gender of the presidential spouse.

The term "spouse" may eventually become out-dated. There are gay and lesbian presidents with partners and single presidents in non-married relationships. These companions may also be doing the role of spouse. Despite this, at this point the term "spouse" still seems to be the most commonly accepted term.

For a sense of consistency, the writer has also made several decisions in relation to word choice. The term "institutions" is used to refer to a college or university. Spouse is used to refer to the husband or wife of someone. The term "constituents" is used to refer to anyone who has an interest in, or relationship with, an institution, i.e. students, faculty, staff, administrators, their family members, local, state, and federal government officials, alumni, and donors. Quotations from the literature have not been changed to conform to this use of terminology. However, all attempts have been made to clarify any meanings that may be unclear when the quote is read outside the context of the original document.

Interestingly, many members of the public have created a job description for the executive spouse based on myth. They continue to allow themselves to believe that an executive's spouse is simply a wife, hostess, and raiser of the executive's children. Jean Baudrillard would claim that society has created a simulacrum of the executive spouse. This simulacrum is a false reality created to cause order in one's mind. It is a modern-day myth. Clifford Christians further elaborates on Baudrillard's idea, "in what Baudrillard ([*Simulations*,] 1983, p. 32) calls 'the precession of the simulacra,' we create cybernetic models to organize reality, but in actuality a reversal occurs and reality arises from them instead. 'The real is produced from miniature units, from matrices, memory banks and command modules' (p. 3). We float anchorless in a sea of electronic images" (Glasser & Salmon, 1995, p. 161). This simulacrum does not allow one to see or judge reality. Instead, the viewer judges what it wants to be the reality. For this reason, when a corporate spouse is more than just wife or hostess, the spouse often loses in the court of public opinion. To combat this current executive spouse simulacrum, I endeavor to update the definition of the role of the spouse, which will allow public opinion based not on outdated concepts, but instead based on the actual practices and understandings of executives' spouses.

The enlightened world of higher education is not exempt from believing the myth, or creating a simulacrum. One of the singularly most underappreciated and an unexamined role in higher education is the role of the college president's spouse. This position, today filled by both men and women, plays an important role in the life of not only the college president, but also in the life of the institution. Despite the role's more than three-hundred-fifty-year history in the United States, this topic receives little attention. "Not much has been written about presidential spouses. This is a curious fact in light of the extremely important role that she or he plays on

every college or university campus in America. But then most of these spouses are used to going about their daily work without much fanfare” (Cotton 2003, p. C5). For this reason, the role and the persons who fill these positions have become a bit of a myth themselves. Who are they? What do they do? What effect do they have on the college? In this research, I examine the role of the college presidential spouse. In so doing, I look at the college presidential spouse as a paid or unpaid employee of the institution, whose influence on the institution is guided by public perceptions and opinions of the role and the presidential spouse’s execution of that role.

As noted, a minimal amount of scholarly literature exists on this topic. As a result, a thorough understanding may only exist by placing the research in the context of the broader field of executive spouse research. The two main areas of literature are on the topic of (1) corporate executive spouses, and (2) spouses of the presidents of the United States. College presidential spouses share much in common with each of these comparison groups. All of these spouses have often made personal and familial sacrifices in support of their spouses’ ambitions; they work long hours for no, or little, pay; their contributions are found behind the scenes and are rarely known or appreciated; they must use public opinion to succeed in the work they do on behalf of their spouse; their role as advisor, counselor, and confidant to the executive are often minimized or ignored by the general public; they have a lot to contribute to their communities and society as more than a presidential spouse. For these reasons, I begin with an examination of the literature of corporate executive’s spouses and First Ladies of the United States, which will allow for a context for *demythifying* the role of the college presidential spouse.

Scholarly attention to this topic has come in waves. Considerable attention was paid to the topic of the executive spouse’s role in the 1950s through the mid-1960s. It is important to note that these works relate only to females as spouses. The liberation of women through the

advent of the women's movement appears to have stymied the continuation of the research. Many of the later writings seem not to know what to do with the *modern woman*.

A second wave of research exists from the late 1970s and early 1990s. It is during this time that research begins to re-emerge on the role of the executive spouse. Again, this is mostly a review of *woman as spouse*. A change from the previous wave, however, is who does the research. The answer to studying and understanding the modern woman in this area of research is to allow the subject to study herself and her peers. Much of the work is research and personal accounts from executive spouses themselves.

At about the same time, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, scholars realized that the history, role, and influence of the First Ladies of the United States were overlooked areas of scholarship.

Prior to the advent of the women's history as a discipline in the early 1970's, biographies of First Ladies seldom depicted them as significant players in their husbands' administrations, but rather emphasized their skills as White House hostesses or their winning personalities and charm. . . . Women's historians, themselves, often underrated First Ladies and avoided serious research on them. Prevailing scholarly opinion held that these women had 'achieved' not in their own right, but only by virtue of marrying a man who eventually became President. In addition, for many First Ladies, little documentation of their life and non-social activities in the White House has survived (Mayo, 1993, para. 4-5).

The field was flooded with research within a period of five to ten years from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Then, the whole field of executive spouse research enters another time of relative silence on these topics. Now is the time to re-engage the topic – to examine it anew. To look at



it not in a mythical way – not merely spouse as hostess – but in a way that recognizes and acknowledges the more complete role of the spouse.

## **Public Opinion**

A foundational concept in understanding executive spouses is the importance of public opinion management. Executive spouses are in almost all circumstances living logos of their corporation, country, or institution of service. Since these spouses work generally without contracts or job descriptions, they have little leverage or direction. A key factor in the success of executive spouses is recognizing the importance of garnering positive public sentiment. Wise spouses have determined how to harness the use of positive public opinion to advance their role and influence in their realm of work.

In order to examine the presidential spouse's role in public opinion, the term requires a definition. The study of public opinion has formally existed for more than a hundred years. Despite the length and extent of the research on this topic, there is little agreement on a definition for public opinion. Almost every public opinion scholar feels compelled to define the term and its use in his or her research. Susan Herbst has noted, "One way to approach the history of public opinion is to avoid discovering the true meaning of the phrase, and simply grant that the definition is fluid. It changes with transformations in social structure, economic and political reform, and technological advances" (Glasser & Salmon, 1995, p. 92). However, for the purposes of this research, it is important at the outset to create a definition that grounds the work and places us all at the same place in understanding the literature. In public opinion, as in most fields, there are writers whose ideas ebb and flow in popularity. One such writer is Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. Her work, however, and its association with the role of public opinion outside

the context of just a political nature, is important to this research's field of inquiry. In understanding the role of the college presidential spouse, we must agree that one who lives in a public role is the subject of constant evaluation. People form opinions of those in the public based on what the viewer believes, values, and finds acceptable. Therefore, Noelle-Neumann says:

Opinion, according to the democratic-theoretical concept, is primarily a matter of opinions and arguments, whereas the concept of public opinion as social control applies it to a much greater area, in fact to everything that visibly expresses a value-related opinion in public, which may be directly in the form of opinions, but also indirectly in the form of buttons and badges, flags, gestures, hairstyles and beards, publicly visible symbols, and publicly visible, morally loaded behavior (Glasser & Salmon, 1995. pp. 46-47).

Her definition allows the researcher to realize that the public opinion of a college presidential spouse results from direct and indirect actions. This makes the role of the executive spouse so difficult. There are no formal criteria for a presidential spouse. Almost no company, college, and definitely not the U.S. government, tell the executive spouse about expectations they have of them or upon what standard of actions success will be determined. Instead, everyone in society develops his or her own mental standards of evaluating the person in the role and then subjectively approves or disapproves of the actions taken by the spouse. For this reason, it appears that no topic is off the table for developing the public opinion of the spouse. The public forms an opinion of these individuals on not only what they do, but also how they do it and what they are wearing when they do it.

The difficulty, then, is for the presidential spouse to create a favorable public opinion, not only of him or herself, but also of the president and the institution to which they are tied. The presidential spouse is required to determine the expectations of the college's constituents. This constituency is diverse – students, alumni, trustees, member of the local community. Each public has different expectations of not only the spouse, but of the institution itself. The spouse must determine what the constituencies want from the spouse of the president. “Generally speaking, individuals will intend to perform a behavior when they evaluate it positively and when they believe that important others think they should perform it” (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975, p. 6). Added to this complexity is the reality that the spouse may not agree with the expectations others have of him or her. Severin and Tankard (2001) define this as dissonance.

Dissonance theory postulates that when an individual is placed in a situation where he or she must behave publicly in a way which is contrary to that individual's privately held beliefs or attitudes the individuals experience dissonance from knowledge of that fact. Such situations often occur as the result of a promise of a reward or the threat of punishment, but sometimes it may be simply as the result of group pressure to conform to a norm an individual does not privately agree with. Role-playing is one such example (p. 162).

In order to garner a positive public opinion, the spouse must constantly perform and produce a self that is acceptable to the institution's many publics.

Therefore, management of public opinion is a key underlying factor in the work of spouses. With this understanding in place, I now examine what the literature has to say about corporate spouses and U.S. first ladies. Following this, I will examine the existing literature on college presidential spouses.

## Corporate Spouses

To delve into the corporate executive spouse literature is to open a time capsule of a by-gone era. The nostalgia wafts out of the musty old books that appear not to have been touched in decades. The world explored is a world not known today. It appears to be a world of high hair and high balls. One cannot help but imagine Donna Reed in her heels and pearls catering to her husband's needs. The spouse defined here is one of polished perfection. She seems to know her place and is comfortable working to make the home and family a showplace for her husband and his business associates. "The wife of an executive and his home must reflect his position and socio-economic status, but give some indication of his ambitious nature. Her clothes, hairstyle, manners, perfume and jewelry are all conspicuous objects for the observers. The home, its furnishings, paintings, music, literature, china, silverware, and linens are further evidence of their 'life style'. Granted, some of these things are more important than others, each is nevertheless important" (Pahl & Pahl, 1971, pp. 180-181). In her 1965 study of executive wives, Margaret Helfrich found that wives at all levels held the following beliefs, "the wife of an executive should possess all or most of the following qualities if she is to fulfill the expectations of the role: (1) tact, (2) sociability, (3) adaptability, (4) patience and understanding, (5) reserve, (6) intelligence, (7) a sense of humor, and (8) good physical and mental health and stamina" (p. 30) for "not only is she expected to entertain in the afternoon and evening, but also to entertain weekend guests" (p. 6). However, one cannot simply dismiss Helfrich's research as outdated. She, and her study participants, realized that there was much pride in the work of these women and that the role of the spouse was changing. "As the structure of society changes, social roles change. The role of the executive has changed in our society as the structure of our economic system has changed. So also, the role of the executive's wife has changed" (Helfrich, 1965, p.

83). Since the mid-1960s, America has emerged with a diverse landscape of people, occupations, career paths, and family relationships.

By the 1980s, researchers and writers recognized the changed landscape. Executives were no longer just men, although predominantly still so. Despite this, the wife's career and interest remained secondary. "(T)he male executive and his professional wife (and make no mistake, the wife of an executive, or other top leader, must become professional at *that* job, whatever career she may pursue outside the home)" must work together in order for them to succeed in his career (Kozmetsky & Kozmetsky, 1981, p. 118). However, researchers did give a nod to the changing times and the shifting demographics. "When the wife is the executive, and the husband the partner who must adjust, equal enthusiasm and commitment is required. The role of professional husband is a new one, less perfectly understood either by society or by those who find themselves occupying the role. It will be interesting to observe the ways in which our society will change to prepare boys to become men who will perform comfortably in this emerging social position" (Kozmetsky & Kozmetsky, 1981, p. 119). To understand how well society has done at preparing boys to become such men will require more research.

It would, of course, be unfair to dismiss this work as placed in nostalgia. Just the examination of it challenges what society believes and why it believes it. In these two periods of writing, one finds the root of the simulacra. In addition, glimpses of reality exist in understanding the executive spouse's role in public opinion. "But all spouses know that anything they do or say might be used against their mates. The pressure is on to put a well-pedicured best foot forward" (Berry, 1985, p. 171). Michael Maccoby (1976) expertly captures the true importance of the spouse of a successful man: "It is unusual for someone to get ahead in the corporate world if his wife does not support him" (p. 261). While the role and definitions

may change, research clearly indicates that corporate success ties closely to marital partner support and assistance.

### **Political Spouses**

The world of politics is no different. Men who have succeeded to the highest political level in the land have done so almost exclusively with the aid of a partner. There have only been two men elected to the presidency as bachelors and they did not fare well with public opinion (Caroli, 2003). Nevertheless, a wife does not necessarily make for a popular and successful president. Few positions in any area of life have figured out a way to leverage their public opinion on the backs of their spouse as presidents have through the first ladyship. However, until recently, the role of the first lady received little attention. “The historical record is filled with examples of a power operating behind the throne of the presidency, a power that the public, the White House press corps, and presidential scholars have either overlooked, minimized, or been completely unaware of” (Watson, 2000, p. 3). Part of the struggle for the presidential spouse is trying to determine what her role is and how to perform it within an acceptable limit of public taste. Wertheimer (2004) describes the challenges faced by the first lady:

In many ways, the position of first lady is more difficult to perform than the position of United States president. Like Ginger Rogers dancing with Fred Astaire, she must follow his lead, doing whatever he does only backwards and in high heels. While the president is elected and his duties are spelled out in the Constitution, the first lady is neither elected nor given any constitutional or legal guidelines to follow. For better or worse, the basis of her service is her marriage,

although she may turn to the precedents established by her predecessors for guidance (pp. 2-3).

He continues, “Although the American public cannot articulate with one voice what they want from a first lady, many are quick to point out what they as individuals do not want once she performs that action” (p. 4). What a difficult role!

Despite this, the first ladies, especially of the twentieth century, have become experts in playing a role in shaping the public opinion of the White House and their presidents. Most members of the president’s West Wing staff support this, because they are “concerned with public opinion ratings and value the boost in approval and visibility a popular first lady can bring to the presidency” (Watson, 2000, p. 151). Caroli (2003) has called the first lady “one more weapon in the [president’s] battle for public approval” (p. 323). One would be naïve not to realize the effect a first lady can have. Many laud Hillary Rodham Clinton as a new breed of First Lady. “Yet Mrs. Clinton is but the latest in a long line of politically astute women who have been intimately involved with their husband’s political careers and Administrations. It is sad and telling that the press and public alike are unaware that Presidential wives since Abigail Adams have been wielding political influence. Further, it is disheartening to find that virtually every First Lady who has used her influence has been either ridiculed or vilified as deviating from women’s proper role or has been feared as emasculating” (Mayo, 1993, para. 3). We will return to this topic later as we examine acceptable societal roles of college presidential spouses.

Constant assessment of public opinion of the first lady occurs. In a comprehensive study of former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barbara Burrell (2001) found that the four major polling organizations conducted 63 polls on Mrs. Clinton’s approval ratings in just her first two years in the White House. Today’s first lady realizes the role and influence she can have. For

this reason, most first ladies become perceptive managers of the media. “The media is the avenue by which first ladies shape their image, and in turn, the media shapes the nature of the office. . . . It has been through the media that modern first ladies have established the power of the white glove pulpit” (Watson, 2000, p. 159). This wordplay on the Roosevelt quote about the presidency as the bully pulpit, unfortunately seeks to keep the first lady in place as a domestic partner. However, “a new view of the first lady as an activist political partner is beginning to emerge as we recognize the power that has been operating behind the throne of the U.S. presidency. Such awareness is certain to influence the way the public sees the president’s spouse, the nature of the first ladyships, and, quite possibly, the role a spouse plays in determining the electorate’s vote in future presidential elections. In the words of Bill and Hillary Clinton, voters may recognize that they are in fact getting ‘two for the price of one’” (Watson, 2000, p. 205). Several researchers have acknowledged the presidency as one position with two inhabitants, referring to it as “co-careers” (Watson & Eksterowicz, 2003, p. 9) and “tandem careers” (Caroli, 2003, p. 370).

### **College Presidential Spouses**

The idea of “two for the price of one” is not limited to U.S. presidents and first ladies. It is also true, although only recently acknowledged, in the world of higher education. Since the founding of Harvard in 1636, society has expected the wife of the president to perform certain duties for no pay. The trustees of Harvard appointed Nathaniel Eaton the first master of the college, and a few short years later named Henry Dunster the first president (Kane, Anzovin, & Podell, 1997). Despite the slight shift in titles, their wives set a precedent for college presidential first ladies. They created a history that began more than 140 years before the United States’



*Declaration of Independence* from England. Since many of the early college presidents had also been ministers, a life of service to the church became the model for the helpmate role for the presidential spouse. “According to David Riesman, . . . the ‘helpmate’ role of the presidential spouse dates back to the early religious colleges headed by ministers. Their helpful wives became the model for the position” (Ostar, 1986, p. 67). This tradition of ministers who became presidents continued until early in the twentieth century.

There exists a paradox between the helpmate role and the view that women were effectively the backbone supporting this new country. Despite the fact that women were not given equal legal standing until the ratification of the nineteenth amendment to the constitution in 1920, women were acknowledged as playing a key role in the life of the country well before this. Alexis de Tocquaville, in his famous tour of America, noted in 1831, “he was impressed with the mobility of the population, and with the extraordinary independence of American women, commenting that the women were essential partners to their husbands in their endeavors and that the wives of leading figures in the community played important roles. He also took note of the activist women, crusading for prison reform or other causes” (Ostar, 1986, p. 69).

de Tocquaville’s opinions can be juxtaposed against a perhaps more common opinion of prexy’s<sup>2</sup> wife:

We are apt to have a nostalgic picture of the old-time college president and his efficient and retiring spouse. If such a wife had misgivings about unused talents and unrecognized but well-fulfilled responsibilities, she not only kept them to herself, but she sometimes kept them from herself. In times when divorce was virtually unheard of, almost impossible to obtain, and severely sanctioned socially, even the most abused spouses generally accepted their fate. As we have

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<sup>2</sup> Prexy is a slang term for the college president.

been reminded by some excellent historical writing encouraged by the current interest in women's studies, only occasionally did wives prior to the First World War have sufficient training for a career and sufficient independence from judgments by kin and friends, to leave husbands who provided economic security and the umbrella of their own social status" (Reisman, 1984, pp. 158-9).

It is difficult to know if Reisman's comments are the norm or the exception. Based on many current readings, one might believe there was definitely a sense that many spouses played the cards they dealt them, while others relished their role as a presidential spouse. However, little documentation exists to tell us otherwise. We know that the presidential role has long been one that demands the efforts of both husband and wife.

A college presidency has both a ceremonial and functional role (Reisman, 1986). The president typically accomplishes the demands of both roles by sharing the burden with a spouse. Writers and researchers often refer to the presidency as a two-person career. Hanna Papanek (1973) coined this phrase to describe, typically, a husband whom is a full-time employee supported by his wife in managing other aspects of their lives, thus freeing him and, at times, her to be completely devoted to his success in the workplace. To understand the college presidential spouse is to understand the two-person career, where one spouse makes sacrifices so that the other spouse can reach the apex of higher education administration. "The two-person career developed in the first place because the size of the job and the demands it entailed were simply too big for any one person to successfully fulfill alone. The two-person career truly demanded the energies and services of two people because both were needed to carry out the job successfully" (O'Neil, 1984, p. 33). While sharing the burden may ease the life of the president, it does affect the spouse in pronounced and often unexpected ways. Karen O'Neil, wife of the

president of University of Wisconsin System, shares her struggles with fulfilling this role: “All of us who function in this role do so as the second person in what has traditionally been considered a two-person career. To be that second person at a time when expectations for women are rapidly changing, when the title ‘the wife of’ no longer carries with it a complete and satisfactory identity, presents a special challenge for those of us who find ourselves exactly in that position” (O’Neil, 1984, p. 30). As society changed, the women in these roles began to express a desire no longer to have the expectation of fulfilling a certain role, or even to take a back seat to their husbands’ careers.

While today, the presidential spouse is no longer required to cook meals and launder students’ clothes and bed sheets as Mrs. Eaton and Mrs. Dunster did, the spouse often has expectations to fulfill some public duties. “Spouses of college presidents in the past have been expected to plan and oversee parties, stand cheerfully for hours in receiving lines, schmooze with alumni in presidential boxes at football games, give speeches to community groups, listen patiently to students and faculty members, charm trustees, and maintain or oversee the maintenance of the presidential house. What’s more, spouses have traditionally done all that free of charge” (Basinger, 2000). By the late 1970s, however, the role of expected helpmate was becoming unacceptable for many spouses. Joan Clodius, wife of the president of National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, recognized that “spouses have worked as partners in a common enterprise – the university – and have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to their spousal role. Only, thus far, it has been all responsibility and no rights” (Clodius, 1984, p. 146). Many spouses began to wonder how these roles and expectations had been thrust upon them with little to no choice on their part. These spouses struggled to know why they lacked a choice in the role society expected them to play. Spouses

were held to unwritten codes that they had not agreed to abide by. Judy Ikenberry, wife of the president of University of Illinois, acknowledges the challenges in fulfilling the expectations of a presidential wife and the demands of the public in perceiving a successful and unsuccessful spouse.

Time was, in the not too distant past of academia, that the university president's wife stepped into an unwritten but real role as social leader of campus and community. She was expected to lead the entertainment, and serve the tea. She was watched to set a high moral and dress tone. She was expected to manage effortlessly the official residence. Virtually every campus of moderate age abounds with legends of first ladies who met the tests. Even better stories, unfortunately, are legends of first ladies who missed the mark of the communities' expectations (Ikenberry, 1984, p. 71).

While historical evidence identifies how the presidential spouse role developed, it does not explain why it remained a non-discussed code upon which spouses were quietly evaluated despite the fact they were never asked if they were willing to accept these criteria for evaluation. Most wives had no choice in the execution of their roles as presidential spouses. How can society continue to judge a spouse on undocumented expectations?

Much of the literature that now exists on presidential spouses came about during an era of change for women in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Some of the previously mentioned writings on executive spouses of the same era likely prompted the work on presidential spouses. Marguerite Corbally, a pioneering researcher and writer on the topic of presidential spouses, recognized how the new literature on the topic of the executive spouses was going to affect the role of presidential spouses. "Many recent books and articles have focused on the wife of a

public figure, and as a result of these candid reports a more accurate picture of their lives has been emerging” (Corbally, 1977, p. 125). In addition, another phenomenon began to occur; the first few male presidential spouses were taking office. While limited documentation exists, it is easy to conjecture that trustees did not ask nor assume these men would play the same role as their female counterparts. In an era of equality, one can only imagine that the female spouse began to wonder why she had to serve tea and he did not. They may have believed a new era was upon them. As Roberta Ostar, famous for her work on presidential spouses, and herself the spouse of the president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), said:

The impetus of the AASCU survey of presidential spouses, now in its third generation (1981, 1983, 1986), was the claim put forth by several spouses at the 1980 annual meeting that the day of the traditional helpmate wife of the university president was gone. Today’s presidential spouses, they pronounced, whether male or female, would pursue their own careers and while no doubt supportive of the goals of the president, would no longer devote extensive time or energy to the “volunteer” duties of the presidential spouse (Ostar, 1986, p. 110).

A change was occurring. Recognition and appreciation for *work done* was the hallmark of the day. Two years before Ostar’s comments, Sue Young, wife of the chancellor of the University of California, Los Angeles, noted that the conversation on spouses was having an effect:

The mere fact that this topic is being discussed here and now is a tribute to all spouses of presidents and chancellors. The commitment that they have shown throughout the years deserves recognition. The message is clear: A vital job is being done. If, as a result of this publication, university governing boards across

the nation become more informed on the role of the partner's spouse, they could act to see that future presidential appointments carried with them the choice of whether or not remuneration was in order for the president's partner (1984, p. 137).

Because of the growing conversation, some trustees did begin to recognize the work of the spouse. Beyond the recognition, though, these women found a sense of liberation in the mere existence of the conversation. These spouses felt in control of their destinies:

We are perhaps the first generation of women who have truly experienced a choice in making our private accommodations to our public roles, who are truly free to decide how much of our time and energy we feel comfortable in investing in the public part of our lives, and how much time we need to reserve for ourselves and for our own independent activity. If we are by and large an enthusiastic and satisfied lot, if we feel privileged and fulfilled in finding ourselves in a position to offer our energy and intelligence to the institutions we serve alongside our husbands, it is surely in large part because of our recognition that how we fulfill that commitment is a matter of choice. . . . We do not arrive at that choice by accident. Our predecessors paved the way for us by sharing some of the constraints they experienced at a time when their contributions were too often taken for granted and too rarely recognized (O'Neil, 1984, p. 34).

The early 1980s appears to be a golden age in the recognition of the work of the presidential spouse. These spouses, still mostly women, were able to discuss publicly their role and what was fair and unfair to expect of them. In the closing comments of her 1984 book on the presidential spouses, Clodius acknowledges that the recent focus on spouses had been an impetus

for change: “Rather, I think that the collection of case studies and case histories such as represented in this volume will gradually build a consensus that change is in order” (p. 147). Unfortunately, as I continue to examine, the change is slow in coming. These spouses may have celebrated too soon. For the following words, written by today’s preeminent writer on presidential spouse recognition and remuneration, Washington lawyer, Raymond Cotton, lead one to wonder how much has changed in twenty years. “The good news is that we are in a time of transition for presidential spouses, and slowly, boards of trustees are coming around to seeing the wisdom of this” (Cotton, 2003, p. C5).

I now turn to an understanding and outline of why the role of the spouse is important, and how the future role will be defined. The ideas that follow draw from both needs and desires expressed by spouses of yesterday and the eternal ideas of what is fair and ethical in our expectations of the men and women who fulfill the role of the presidential spouse.

### **Presidential Spouse Profile**

What does the typical spouse profile look like? The following three excerpts from writings and research in the late 1970s, the mid-1980s, and the early 1990s, help set the tone for the look and feel of an average presidential spouse. The writers share the background, responsibilities, ideas, and struggles of the presidential spouse.

*Corbally, 1977*

If an ‘average’ president’s wife could be found, she would be intelligent, well educated, sensitive, dedicated, conscientious, and capable. She works hard for her husband’s employer and resents being thought of as ‘pampered.’ She reveres the school and all it stands for and values the experiences which accrue to her as the

wife of the president. She is aware of the opportunities available to her but often feels she has “earned” them or that they are substitutes for the personal opportunities she has had to forego in the execution of her responsibilities to her husband’s job. She is subject to the usual range of human emotions, and her joys and sorrows are subject to public scrutiny and comment. She realizes that her efforts on behalf of the school may never be acknowledged and serves solely because of her own belief that she is filling an important role.

Some have urged that the participation of the wife not be taken for granted or advocated. Each couple must be free to develop its own division of personal and presidential responsibilities. The study shows that few women have been successful in remaining uninvolved and that even those who have their own careers are fitting university obligations into their schedule (p. 7).

*Clodius & Magrath, 1984*

There emerges from the survey findings a general spouse profile. The ‘typical’ campus spouse is female, over 50 years of age, and in a stable marriage situation. She is in a regular physical fitness program and is well educated. She probably does not work for pay outside the role of the spouse, but gives her institution 21 or more hours per week and donates five or more hours per week to a wide range of community volunteer work. Her husband previously served at another institution, but his current presidency or chancellorship is his first and the institution is public. More than likely the position does not have multi-campus responsibilities.



The spouse lives in an official house and accepts a multiplicity of responsibilities including the work of hostess, supervisor of staff, entertaining coordinator, director of the official house, food arranger, campus representative at national meetings, campus correspondent, community leadership roles, tour guide, and general public relations person. She might or might not have been included in the governing board interview process, but strongly feels she should have been. No one explained her position or the expectations of her role; she learned through on-the-job training, observing others, talking to predecessors, and by common sense. She enjoys the role of hostess and representational work, in large part because she enjoys people in general. Her greatest concern is for the president or chancellor, the pressures he experiences, and the lack of time with him and her family (p. 21).

*Ostar, 1991*

The female presidential spouse is typically 50 years old and has a master's degree (28 percent) or bachelor's degree (47 percent). More than 80 percent of the spouses answered "yes" when asked if planning and attending events on behalf of their institutions required a considerable time commitment. However, about 75 percent also say they chose this level of involvement – they were not "volunteered" (p. 3).

As noted before, these descriptions are now outdated in their single gender focus, although the issues and underlying principles may remain important. The role and sacrifices of presidential spouses are not consistent amongst male and female presidential spouses. Because of this, the myth of the presidential spouse begins to fray. One can no longer neatly typecast spouses as

older, white women with children and grandchildren. The expectations once placed on the spouse of a college president are not the same expectations when that spouse is a man. The simulacrum of the past begins to crack. The public generally feels that a man should not have to host parties for his presidential wife. Nor does the public feel that he must attend alumni events and college fundraisers. There are not expectations that a male presidential spouse give up his career.

So, what is the public expectation of today's presidential spouse? The answer does not exist in the literature. Despite more than three-hundred-seventy years of people serving in the role of presidential spouse across thousands of institutions in the United States, little exists about the role, expectations, or affects of these spouses on public opinion of the institution. To simply say the role is unimportant, or to reflect on it as trivial, is to ignore the research conducted on other executive or presidential spouses – business and political, and the body of college presidential spouse literature. More research is necessary to help define the effect a college presidential spouse can have on creating a good public opinion for a president and the institution.

The world of higher education, like business and politics, is different today than it was fifty, twenty-five, or even ten years ago. In the past, a college president spent about 80 percent of his time on campus matters. The issues ranged from academic to student disobedience. Conversely, the president of today spends 80 percent of his or her time on off-campus matters. Most of this time focuses on developing important relationships with government officials, trustees, and key alumni and donors (Cook, 1997). Presidents are now required constantly to secure funds to run the institution. For this reason, presidents spend a lot of time on relationship development. In order to be a success at this, much time is required away from campus. A spouse can be either an asset or liability in this role. The spouse's role is crucial not only in

maintaining the couple's personal matters, but he or she is also an asset in the cultivation of relationships. Institutions often look to the spouse to play important roles in "working the room" at events. The president is able to cover twice the amount of ground when his or her spouse/deputy is at the event socializing on his or her own with the guests.

The profiles above from previous generations of researchers highlights some key issues in the understanding of the presidential spouse. The profiles set up a list of broad factors that affect the lived experience of the presidential spouse. These factors fall into four broad categories: (1) public scrutiny that comes from being a living logo of the institution, (2) issues related to role recognition, (3) the existence or absence of spousal contracts, and (4) overview of the benefits that are available to presidential spouses. In the balance of this chapter, I examine these factors to create a richness of understanding to set the groundwork for my research that follows. Today's presidential spouses echo these themes. This historical overview proves to be the explanation of the vestiges that remain for many of today's presidential spouses' understanding of their role, their influence, and their success.

### **Living Logo**

Along with the president, the most important role of the spouse is embodying the institution. Whether expected or desired, the presidential couple is, what David Reisman has coined, the "living logo" of the institution (Reisman, 1986, p. 10). Almost every writer on the topic of the presidential spouse draws on the representational nature of the role and the challenges that come with being constantly evaluated and expected to meet certain standards (Corbally, 1977; O'Neil, 1984; Oden, 2004). "Presidents and presidential couples are identified so closely with their institutions that their 'private life' does not exist, except when they are off

campus, not on official business” (Ostar, 1991, p. 45). The challenge for the spouse is to find balance between being in the spotlight and remaining true to one’s own interests.

From the moment a president takes office, the president, spouse, and family become living logos (Kemeny, 1979). As a living logo, the president and spouse incur the expectation to be not just good front faces, but also “symbolic exemplar(s)” in their commitment to work and the institution (Dowdall, 2004, para. 6). Many presidential teams believe that they set the tone and character for the campus. Regardless of a spouse’s desire to be a representative for the institution. “Anyone who knows you are married to a college president will judge you as a representative of the institution your spouse leads” (Oden, 2004, para. 18).

Fredric Ness (1971), in his fictional anthology of advice letters from an aging president to his protégé, John, discusses the on-going struggle of being in the public eye:

This matter of dress, to be sure, is rather trivial, but it does lead into the broader and more serious subject of the president’s public relations. He is, after all, the symbol of the institution. No matter what he says or does reflects upon its image. So long as he holds the office, the President of X College is the President of X for every moment of his life when he is visible to anybody outside of his own immediate family. He can never act publicly in an “unofficial” capacity because no possible disclaimers can prevent people from thinking of him as the President of X.

“Incidentally, this imposes a heavy psychic burden on the president’s family as well. They, and especially his wife if he is lucky enough to keep one, may be his only real confidante – the only audience with whom he can really let himself go. But this entails a derivative obligation of discretion for her as well.

Caesar's wife must be above reproach! (Possibly this area of family involvement would justify a separate letter. Mary, please note!) (p. 40).

"Mary," the fictional wife of Ness's fictional president, does write to John's wife and tells about the need to be conservative in dress and closed mouth in sharing of opinions or information about the institution.

The presidential team is often the most sought-after couple in a community. Alumni, students, donors, and community representatives want the couple to attend their events. Ostar's 1986 survey results show that the average president, spouse, or both attend eight to fourteen events a month. When in attendance, the presidential team sits at a place of honor, which underlines their role of prestige and importance in a community (Corbally, 1977). "The simple presence of the president or spouse at the event reflects favorably on the university, just as their absence might be resented and subject to speculation" (Ostar, 1991, p. 9). Ostar goes on to note the number of events that the spouse attends alone, indicating just how important the spouse is in the role as the institution's living logo. Additionally, many couples will attend the same event, only to split from each other when they reach the front door so that they may cover more ground. They are able to talk to more key constituents (Kemeny, 1979). This tactic is effective, because many of the institution's constituents find talking to either member of the presidential team is the same as talking to the institution.

The idea of entertaining excites many spouses. "If I had told someone when I was growing up in Middle Tennessee that I would one day be entangled in tea parties, grabbing and grinning (aka shaking hands), and party favors, I would have been laughed right off the farm. But here I am, planning seemingly endless events, welcoming hundreds of guests to campus each year, greeting countless freshmen, and hobnobbing with VIPs I never dreamed I would meet, let

alone have dinner with” (Kepple, 2005). However, other spouses soon come to realize the demands of so many engagements can become overwhelming. Corbally notes: “Most women come to this job expecting to do a great deal of entertaining. One woman says her home is ‘the front door of the university.’ Wives accept willingly the responsibility for entertaining guests of the university, but it is apparent that their official responsibilities add a new dimension to their entertaining” (1977, p. 105). Kemeny elaborates on how the idea of going out takes on a different connotation as a presidential couple. “Once – and it seems a very long time ago – going out meant relaxing. A good time to have fun and let off steam. We knew that the Presidency would change our lives drastically. We were prepared for an enormous number of public appearances for the College. But we naïvely believed that every so often we could count on an evening out with friends, and let down. It is just not possible” (1979, p. 183). In addition, to not having relaxing nights on the town, the presidential couple is “on” whenever they attend an event, let alone host it. Vivian Shapiro, wife of the president of the University of Michigan, notes, “getting up the energy night after night to meet people who are strangers can be exhausting” (Toll, 1984, p. 46). Ostar supports both Kemeny’s and Shapiro’s comments, noting that for many spouses, the incessant entertaining eats into not only time with friends, but also much needed personal and family time (1991). It is important and necessary for the presidential couple to take breaks from college entertaining.

I must emphasize this point: these are college, not personal events. A main function of today’s presidential team is fund raising. They must cultivate the donors who are able to endow scholarships or build buildings. The mechanisms for developing these relationships are receptions, dinners, and alumni events. When the living logos entertain, they do so not for personal enjoyment, but collegiate growth. As one president noted, “All events benefited the

institution directly. All functions centered on the institution through its various constituencies – students, faculty, alumni, boards, friends, community”, the general benefit of most events is the long-term ability to raise money for the institution. This president concludes that his \$350 million campaign was a success because of these events. “Most of the monies were an outgrowth of entertainment originally” (Ostar, 1991, p. 19).

Fund raising by philanthropic organizations comprises the third sector of American society (Lord, 1996). All institutions of higher education, whether they are private or state constituted, rely on fund raising. “. . . (P)hilanthropic support is critically important to any college or university that seeks to be one of the best of its type within the United States” (Shilling, 1995, p. xi). In today’s atmosphere of rising costs and diminishing government support, fund raising is important to *all* institutions.

There is no shortage of literature that discusses the leader of an institution’s fund raising efforts is the president (Ness, 1971; Corbally, 1977; Fisher, 1980; Sammartino, 1982, Fisher & Quehl, 1989; Gearheart, 1995; Shaw, 1999; Budig, 2002). The president must set the tone, focus, and be the one to cultivate and call upon key donors. Fund raising, especially at the larger gift levels, is about personal relationships. The spouse of the president is indispensable in this role of developing personal relationships (Toll, 1984). Deborah Toll, wife of the president of the University of Maryland, says, “Successful fund raising depends heavily on the board having an understanding of the wife’s role and the provision of adequate resources to do the job” (1984, p. 50). An old adage in fund raising is *people give to people* (Lord, 1996; Rosso, 2003). The most effective fund raising is that which is done person-to-person (Lord, 1996; Rosso, 2003). “Often, it’s not a question of the ‘right person,’ but of the ‘right people’ – a team of two working

together. As it is written in the Talmud, ‘If two logs are dry and one is wet, the kindling of the two will kindle the wet one, too’” (Lord, 1996, p. 78).

Since fund raising is about relationships and person-to-person connections (Toll, 1984), the spouse of the president allows these relationships to be developed. The first step in fund raising is friend-raising. The spouse allows the president more naturally to build relationships with donors.

Some donors won’t give until they know the president personally, become friends, and get the approval of their spouse. The spouse of the president plays a large role in this personal transaction. One president’s spouse points out that the president could take a donor out to a restaurant without her, but she was expected to attend if the donor was being entertained in the president’s home. Another spouse reports good results from accompanying her husband on trips. Female donors respond particularly well to her, she says (Ostar, 1991, p. 14).

This sentiment remains true more than ten years later. “One cannot minimize the importance of the spouse in dealing with the trustees and potential contributors. Board members today still want to know and be comfortable with their campus president and spouse, and likely donors, almost always older and more traditional in their view, want to see the ‘complete package’” (Budig, 2002, p. 78).

The spouse helps with the identification, cultivation, and active fund raising of donors (Toll, 1984). This is because “(t)he president’s wife is in a position to know everyone of importance in the state if she chooses. She can organize useful combinations of people, from these combinations benefits can accrue to the University” (Toll, 1984, p. 49). In this manner, spouses can use their connections to cultivate donors in a different manner than the president.



“Presidential spouses have been known to woo donors on their own as well. One presidential spouse from a large, private university entertained a group of potential donors’ spouses at a prestigious local department store’s fashion show. Another initiated an annual event honoring women leaders in her university community . . .” (Ostar, 1991, p. 14).

The work can be consuming and exhausting, especially when extensive travel to key donors and alumni gatherings is involved (Kemeny, 1979). Spouses may do this work for a number of reasons – personal fulfillment, support for the president and the institution, or a belief in the cause of higher education. Regardless, the rewards are tangible for the institution (Toll, 1984).

To underscore the importance of the involvement of the spouse in fund raising, Toll notes, “in the 20 top universities that raised the most money in 1981-82, only four presidents’ spouses worked full time. Five spouses worked part time for pay but spend the majority of their time on the university” (1984, p. 46). As noted before and addressed again later, fund-raising efforts of the college do not have to involve the spouse. Nor do they have to be involved in any efforts of the institution. However, presidential spouses and boards of trustees must agree upon expectations.

The spouse, in addition to providing support in many areas, is critical to the establishment and maintenance of friendly relations. Indeed, how well the spouse succeeds in this will have an important bearing on the president’s success or failure. The spouse will succeed or fail largely on the basis of her commitment, her personality, and her ability to relate to people, but it is important that board, spouse, and president have an understanding of the role of the spouse in the

presidential partnership, and that there be some generally agreed upon set of expectations (Olson, 1984, p. 63).

In addition, the board must discuss with the spouse any needs for training in this area of work that might be beneficial (Ostar, 1991; Huang, 1999).

Fund raising is, at its heart, cultivated through entertaining. It is about details, and meticulously planned gatherings. It is more about planning than execution (Seiler, 2003). “The solid professional, for example, will ensure that all names are spelled correctly – because experience has taught that in fund raising, small details and grand design must come together” (Lord, 1996, p. 102). In this manner the spouse plays a pivotal role in entertaining, especially in the president’s home. “Most presidents and spouses insist on final approval of guest lists. Even the most professional and experienced development officer and alumni director won’t be privy to the wealth of information on community and campus leaders and donors collected by the president and spouse. For this reason, the president and spouse are an incalculable resource in planning university events” (Ostar, 1991, p. 21). In addition, much of the entertaining that a presidential couple does relates to fund raising. “Fund-raising, in fact, is the major purpose of social functions hosted by the president and/or spouse. Of all presidential entertaining, 17 percent in the public sector and 26 percent in the private sector is aimed at raising funds for the university. The other social events ‘sell’ the university to its own – faculty, students, and alumni. These events build pride and friendship and eventually lead again to fund-raising” (Ostar, 1991, p. 18).

Due to the important nature of entertaining, many spouses take this role very seriously. “Most spouses still initiate, plan, and manage advancement events for the institution. The current survey reports 82 percent of the spouses, whether working or not, carry on traditional

spousal activities on behalf of their universities” (Ostar, 1991, pp. 3-4). This work is quite time consuming. Even with assistance from college staff, spouses generally spend a minimum of five hours planning each event (Ostar, 1991, p. 19). The work many spouses do is unmatched by anyone else on the campus. The spouse has access to information on many donors and constituents of the institution. They keep track of who should sit next to whom and what drink he or she would like (Kemeny, 1979). As mentioned before, these small details are essential for gracious entertaining and eventual fund-raising.

A central location to presidential entertaining is the president’s home. As a requirement and expectation of some boards of trustees, and to meet the requirements of the Internal Revenue Service that a home is used for the benefit of the institution and not merely the presidential couple, spouses maintain extensive lists of events in the president’s home. As Kemeny (1979) reports: “Each quarter I must list the number of guests entertained; the type (student, faculty, foundation officer, visitor, etc.); the kind of event (breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon, cocktails); the cost of extra help for large functions; the amount of liquor bought; and plants, bulbs, candles, mop pails, a new lamp – any item purchased for the President’s House. All receipts and invoices must be saved and attached, otherwise we are not reimbursed” (p. 147). This is an unexpected concern for many spouses who must use their own personal effects to entertain on behalf of the university, when the budget is too small or the trustees too frugal (Ostar, 1991, p. 21). (I return to the issues of the presidential home later in this chapter as it relates to presidential spouse benefits.)

Leaving campus and the entertaining behind, presidential spouses are often the representatives of the college to the community through volunteer work and board memberships. Many spouses use their position as a way to serve the community and earn goodwill on the part

of the institution. In 1986, Ostar found “(m)ore than 80 percent of presidents and spouse give their time to such activities as hospitals, clinics, youth activities, libraries, civic associations, symphony boards, social service agencies, and on and on” (p. 68). By her next study in 1991, the percentage had grown to 91.5 percent of spouses doing community service work. One can imagine the positive effect this can have for the public relations efforts of an institution in the community in which it exists.

The idea of the living logo is important in understanding the nature of the spouse in effecting the public opinion of the president and the institution, “not only because the old-fashioned grapevine carries more messages, but also because the media, too, may carry messages” (Reisman, 1986, p. 10). In many communities, the media is as likely to comment on what the president says, as what his wife wore, at an event (Ostar, 1986). One president clarified the importance of the spouse’s role in the public perception of the president in his comments to the 1986 Ostar survey, “The presidential spouse plays a key role on campus and in the community. Often the perceptions of the spouse lead to success or failure of the president” (Taylor, p. 34). The challenge for presidential couples is that success and failure depend upon “subtle feedback, rather than clearly stated expectations” (Reisman, 1986, p. 11). What an amazing struggle: success or failure determined by unwritten guidelines and social morays!

## **Recognition**

Presidential spouses work within these social guidelines, often as unpaid employees. “As Dr. Riesman put it, ‘The spouse may in fact be employed, although not personally remunerated, as, in effect, the institution’s second most visible public relations officer’ (Ostar, 1986, p. 67). As spouses realized the demands placed upon them, many spouses recognized that they were not

recognized. It is one thing to select this lifestyle and expectations; it is something else to have it thrust upon you with no remuneration, title, or other benefits. Clodius and Magrath phrased it well in their book title, *The President's Spouse: Volunteer or Volunteered*. One approaches a task differently when you select it, as opposed to when forced upon you. This is the position taken by many spouses who completed surveys and wrote monographs in the golden age of presidential spouse research. These spouses recognized that as men and career-minded women began to fill the role of presidential spouse, that they had an option as to whether or not they would have a role as the presidential spouse. Additionally, when most of the “new-style” spouses chose to have little or no role, their institutions hired people to do the work that had once been “assigned” to the spouse (Horn, 1986; Bassigner, 2000). This period in the mid-1980s became the turning point on issues of recognition and compensation for the vocal members of the presidential spouse cause. As Daniel Preska, spouse of the president of Mankato State University, Minnesota, notes:

Anyone who does volunteer work, no matter how mentally or physically demanding, will agree that their work is not valued the same as if they were being paid for it. No matter the level of the volunteer's commitment and dependability, people generally think that if one isn't paid, one doesn't have to perform the task or do it well. Join this statement with the fact that institutions hire staff to manage the public role of the presidency if there is no spouse or if the spouse declines involvement. Why shouldn't the willing spouse be paid for 'working' for the university (1986, p. 50)?

Especially when Ostar's study showed, "(e)ighty-two percent of presidential spouses, women and men, whether employed in their own career or not, volunteer enormous amounts of time for their institutions" (1986, p. x).

In the 1980s, a new conversation and movement was underway: recognition for all. However, what was unclear was what defined recognition. Of those surveyed, many felt that their efforts went unrecognized and unappreciated and that the president was generally the recipient of any recognition (Fisher & Koch, 1996). As a 1991 respondent said, "The unspoken conviction is that the spouse is held to a different standard of behavior than others on campus . . . Unlike others who labor on behalf of the institution, she is expected to do so without any thought of reward, without any representation, and without desire to change either of these conditions" (Ostar, 1991, p. 40). So when the spouse does desire to change the conditions, what kind of recognition is sought? Kemeny of Dartmouth, an early writer on the topic, said that she did not want pay; although she did wish that her work would be recognized in her husband's paycheck. Instead, she pondered how a lack of recognition for her role led her to feeling like a non-entity on campus. "What type of recognition should a working president's wife insist on as an alternative to pay? I am not an officer of the College; I am not listed in the College Directory, which lists every file clerk; I don't even have a College Identification Card – issued to *all* employees and students. I exist and perform very unofficially" (Kemeny, 1979, p. 36). She eventually did receive a College ID. But more important to her was the unofficial recognition she received both publicly and privately (Kemeny, 1979, p. 37). Later writers recognized that the answer on recognition would vary based on an institution's type, size, region, and budget. However, that did not let the institution off the hook. "Every college and university has different circumstances and different resources, but each one could applaud the efforts of its presidential

spouse, and that's where the help, the support, the 'glory' for the role really begins – with recognition” (Ostar, 1991, p. 44). Ostar further fleshed out the opinions of her survey respondents.

When spouses were asked what rewards they would devise for themselves, the word most often mentioned is “appreciation.” Recognition and understanding of the demands of the spouse's public role, status and respect concomitant to their commitment, material and nonmaterial rewards – all can improve the quality of life for the presidential spouse. Presidents and their spouses are dedicated to what one called ‘the greatest cause’ – education. They will devote themselves to their cause regardless of the specific circumstances in which they live and work. Their efforts can be enhanced, however, if governing boards, sensitive to their concerns, take action (1991, p. 53).

Many boards of trustees have found ways to recognize presidential spouses without actually paying them. These methods include: entertainment budgets (Corbally, 1977); family use of facilities and payment for tuition (AASCU, 1996); babysitting (AASCU, 1996; Ostar, 1991); day care for minor children (AASCU, 1996); travel reimbursements for university business (ACE, 2004; AASCU, 1996); “some presidential spouses who also are professors on the campus may receive a lighter teaching” load (Cotton, 2003, p. C5); investment in presidential spouse's retirement plan (Ostar, 1986); health insurance (AASCU, 1996). Lloyd Watkins, president of Illinois State University, said his wife, Mary, “considers a nice home and good help as compensation for being the ‘unpaid partner’” (Watkins, 1986, p. 30). However, many spouses would disagree with Mary Watkins. The university house and staff are there to meet the needs of the institution, not the presidential spouse. The house and staff would exist whether the

presidents was married. In fact, as noted earlier, more staff would be necessary if the presidential spouse did not exist or was not interested in fulfilling a role at the institution.

For many spouses, the forms of recognition mentioned above are adequate (Ludwig, 1986; Ostar, 1986). They do not think spouses should receive a salary. Many believed that compensation of spouses would cause more problems (Ostar, 1991). “Why is it, then, that 80 percent of those surveyed did not believe that they should be paid for their work as spouses? In enumerating some of their specific reasons for rejecting remuneration, the key word used in the survey responses was ‘flexibility’” (Young, 1984, p. 132). For others, they did their work for the greater cause of higher education and service to their husband – an idea that follows the previously mentioned tradition of the minister’s wife (Ostar, 1991). Many spouses did not like the idea of working for, or receiving an evaluation from their spouse, the president (Young, 1984; Ostar, 1991). Some spouses worried that if they were paid, then other volunteers on campus would feel a need for pay, as well (Young, 1984).

This debate is not limited to spouses opposing payment. Other constituents of institutions have voiced concern with paying spouses. In fact, some of the conversation, as recently as 2000, still drew such a firestorm that organizations looking to address the issue of spousal compensation had to defer the conversation (Basinger, 2000). Some worry that paying the spouse equates to nepotism and could lead to closer inquiry of presidential compensation on the part of the Internal Revenue Service (Basinger, 2000). “Other critics, particularly female presidents – who may be less likely to have a spouse willing to take on the traditional duties of a presidential partner – worry that compensating the spouse would create expectations that a presidential candidate have a partner who would take on the job” (Basinger, 2000, sect. 4, para. 4). While at the same time, many trustees do value and recognize the work of the presidential



spouse. Cotton notes, “I have found, in discussions, with dozens of trustees around the country, that by and large they are not opposed to compensating the president’s spouse. However, many board members, especially at public universities, are not willing to risk public criticism for doing so. What they often say is that while they would approve a stipend for the president’s spouse, they do not want to do so if it would ‘harm the university’” (2003, p. C5). This reality illuminates the bind in which many boards find themselves.

There is, however, a cadre of presidential spouses who make a persuasive argument for compensation. The first person to make this argument was Clodius in 1984. She directly addressed the concerns of trustees listed above. “. . . (T)here is an attitude, unfair and unjust though it may be, that supporting the chief executive’s role by supporting the spouse’s role and making her more effective as partner is somehow unethical when done with public funds” (p. 143). She believes that by comparing the role and duties to other jobs in the open marketplace would create a fair and equitable level of compensation.

If we use a little common sense and ask the market about what can be hired and what cannot be hired, we can separate out the office or “public” from the marital – the official being related to maintaining the house, entertaining, representation and public relations. The official or public job is one that any qualified person might hold, or the functions might be divided among a number of persons hired by the university. In practice, the job is not defined, and the functions are executed by the president’s spouse. On the other hand there is the marital, legal partnership which the spouse holds by contract and carries out in the functions of nurturer of the family, supporter and confidant of the chief executive, neighborhood solicitor of causes, the link of communication to the extended

family, and the other, myriad things eloquently described in this volume. At the present time I believe the only real ‘partnership’ in the executive suite is the marital partnership and the future lies in gaining recognition for and setting expectations relative to the official functions in the chief executive’s office (pp. 146-7).

She outlines a reasonable argument. An underlying truth of her argument is the need for a job description, for one cannot receive pay without an acknowledgement of the expectations for remuneration.

However, who are the spouses that want compensation? In 1986, Ostar’s study found: non-employed spouses interested in compensation had demographic age group distributions of “33% 35-45 and 41% 45-55 and 25% 55+,” and institutional demographics of “31% at institutions with enrollment from 5,000 to 9,999,” and community demographics of “44% in small communities with populations up to 25,000” (Ludwig, 1986, p. 108). More recently, Cotton’s informal anecdotal surveying indicates that younger spouses are more insistent on compensation (2003). He also noted, a Council for Independent Colleges’ study that found “23 percent of the members’ spouses were receiving some level of compensation for the work that they did on their college campus,” which he believes indicates that independent schools and colleges are at the forefront of this issue (Cotton, 2003).

Regardless of the public sentiment, some spouses see the salary as representing more than payment. It is recognition. There is a sense of recognition and appreciation associated with a salary being offered, even if it is not accepted (Huang, 1999). As early as 1977, Corbally summarized the compensation issue best: “More than one of the respondents wrote in favor of a salary for the wife. Some feel they need the sense of worth a salary would provide. Others feel

that a salary would bind them in a way they might come to resent but that support services, such as baby sitters, paid travel, and adequate staff, should be provided. Others would get a needed lift if their husbands recognized and showed appreciation of their efforts” (p. 139). We will return later to the idea of presidential support and expectations of the spouse.

When trustees do decide to pay a spouse, what is reasonable? Ostar gave the following opinion based on one of her respondents to the 1991 survey: “Another believes that the managerial job she does as a volunteer would be a \$50,000 to \$60,000-a-year job if compensated at corporate rates. The task of planning events for between 1,500 and 5,000 guests a year is a managerial task of immense proportions” (p. 19). Generally, though, the basis of comparison is not corporate rates, but non-profits and other higher education institutions. Many advisors to boards of trustees recommends that the salary should be based on the spouse’s previous salary (the opportunity cost for not continuing to work outside of the presidential spouse role), the standard rate of pay for a development officer at the institution, or the rate of pay of spouses at a peer institutions (Huang, 1999). The latter two options may be the more preferable when it comes to documenting the salary to the Internal Revenue Service, who has taken a keen interest in executive compensation in the light of the Enron and WorldCom scandals of late (Basinger, 2002).

Of institutions who have decided to pay the spouse, the amounts vary. Some spouses receive a stipend of just \$5,000 while others are receiving a salary of \$75,000 (Cotton, 2003). However, “few institutions provide compensation to spouses . . . A 1998 survey on presidential compensation by the College and University Personnel Association (now the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources) found that among the 894 institutes that responded, about 21 percent reported they gave some form of assistance to a president’s

spouse, including a car allowance, support staff, and salaries. Only 4 percent said the president's spouse earned a salary for working as a partner" (Basinger, 2000). The results show that those institutions that do give stipends/salaries tend to be larger, four-year institutions.

Of course the question becomes, when is no salary, a stipend, or a salary appropriate? The next section will look at how the trustees and spouse should make this determination with a formal contract between the institution and the spouse.

### **Contract**

By now, the reader realizes that an essential element for the spouse is the idea of recognition and appreciation for the role he or she accepts as a presidential spouse. All people, though, want to be valued for the work they do (Siegel, 1986). In addition, most spouses are industrious and hard working people, either in an on-campus or off-campus career. "People who demand a lot of themselves look for ways to evaluate their accomplishment" (Corbally, 1986, p. 41).

As noted earlier, the fact that most spouses work in an environment with unwritten rules and expectations complicates the role of the spouse. A contract helps address both the need for recognition and develops the basis for the expectations of the spouse in this role at the institution. Sue Young, says, "Until their responsibilities are formally spelled out, few spouses can expect to be taken seriously in a bid for recognition of the professional level of their services" (1984, p. 134). While not all spouses push for a contract (Ostar, 1986), there is an ethical belief that to not discuss the role and expectation with the spouse is both unfair and unjustified (Basinger, 2000). "When a person enters a new job, he or she ordinarily is given either a written or a verbal statement describing that job. An important rule in personnel administration is that job

satisfaction is directly and positively related to the degree to which a person understands the requirements of the job, understands the criteria which will be used in evaluating their job performance, and knows who will be applying those criteria and under what circumstances” (Corbally, 1977, p. 59). If the spouse wants no pay and limited involvement, then it is only appropriate that the board and spouse agree to that arrangement. Conversely, if the board wants an active spouse and does not communicate this expectation to the spouse, then the board of trustees judges the presidential spouse on hidden expectations. Clodius recognizes the challenges inherent in writing a one-size fits all contracts (which is not being recommended here),

To accommodate the variation we find among spouses on the labor supply side, and to accommodate to the greater variety of circumstances that are found on the university side, one must write job descriptions with a great deal of sensitivity to the circumstances and a great deal of flexibility in what is done and how it should be done. It would be possible to write a flexible job description in terms of *goals* and *expectations* rather than in terms of tasks and duties and to evaluate the incumbent relative to the former and not the latter. These expectations already exist in many cases and they need merely to be codified” (1984, p. 145).

In 1977, Corbally reported that less than seven percent of her respondents had any discussions with the board about her role prior to the husband’s hiring as the president. In 1991, Ostar reported, “About a third of the spouses at public and private four-year institutions say that their boards had considered the role of the spouse. More than 90 percent of spouses at these institutions agree that expectations had been expressed only informally” (p. 33). In reaction to limited discussions by boards of trustees, some state public institution systems have created

state-wide contracts, expectations, salaries and benefits, for presidential spouses. These states include California, Utah, and Indiana (Ostar, 1991). The actions of such states and other individual institutions that have developed a contract brings with it a challenge – with the codification of the role, there is an acknowledged expectation of the spouse. In 1996, Fisher and Koch, reported, “Some campuses have formally codified such a relationship and have identified the spouse as a paid employee of the institution. In such cases, the spouse cannot gracefully decline to be involved in a social event. In addition, inevitably, some of the institution’s employees will resent the spouse’s ‘interference’ and perhaps criticize the spouse’s efforts. Some spouses are reluctant to accept a ‘salary’ and would rather see their contribution reflected in the husband’s compensation package” (p. 105). This finding indicates that blanket contracts are not necessarily the best direction for a board to take in establishing expectations for a presidential spouse. Instead, the board is wise to include the soon-to-be-selected presidential spouse in a conversation that recognizes the needs and interests of both the institution and the individual spouse, in much the same way the presidential contract develops between the board of trustees and the soon-to-be-selected president (Ostar, 1986).

Of course, the challenge of these contracts is that the spouse must now be supervised and evaluated when there is a contract. The contract should address how an evaluation will occur and by whom. In addition, to whom does the spouse report? Most would recommend against the spouse reporting to the president, instead suggesting the head development officer or a special committee of the board of trustees (Huang, 1999). Further, the board and spouse must agree on what occurs when the spouse fails to meet the expectations of the contract. The answer to this is different if pay is involved. While the spouse could technically be fired, he or she is likely not going anywhere as long as his or her presidential partner remains at the institution. In

the case of failure to meet the obligations of the contract, the board of trustees can renegotiate the contract and decrease or remove pay. Likewise, if a spouse decides to pursue non-spouse endeavors, then he or she will need to approach the board about re-evaluating the contract and expectations. Such a decision is likely to occur over an extended presidential tenure, as the spouse's needs and interests change. Finally, the board and spouse must discuss what happens if the couple divorces or the president dies. The contract should address these issues. While one hopes never to have to deal with them, they are easier to address in advance, than during the days of a public divorce or the grieving of a lost spouse.

When the board of trustees and the presidential spouse discuss and agree upon the terms, then the board of trustees must create the formal contract and job description. Here is recommended boilerplate verbiage that to use, especially for a spouse who has some experience in the field of higher education:

The director for special institutional relations is a new position established by the trustees of the university. This position is responsible for assisting in the development and maintenance of the institution's relationship with key constituencies, including alumni, faculty, students, parents, and community leaders. The director also assists senior administration on special projects to help build long-term institutional capacity. Representing the university on special occasions and travel on university business is required. In addition, close coordination with the offices for development, alumni, and government relations is necessary. Oversight for this position is provided by the vice president for institute relations (Huang, 1999, p. 3).

Remember that it is the board of trustees' responsibility to approach the spouse about the development of the contract. During an interview and selection process, most spouses will not approach the board about his or her role for fear of jeopardizing their presidential-hopeful spouse's chances of selection (Corbally, 1977; Davis, 1984, Reisman, 1984).

## **Benefits**

In addition to the expectations of the presidential spouse, the contract should also address the spouse's compensation, title, what support staff will be available to assist the spouse in his or her role, what benefits the spouse will enjoy, such as travel reimbursement for college-related work, tuition remission, retirement investment, and insurance coverage. Another significant matter for many spouses is the college housing situation. Generally, the president's contract details the requirements to live on campus, if there will be a charge of rent for on-campus residence or a stipend paid for living off campus, the number of staff members assigned to the house, and the budget available for the maintenance and upkeep of the house. However, many campuses expect the presidential spouse to play a key role in the management of the presidential house. For this reason, I address the issues associated with the presidential house in this section on presidential spouse's benefits.

What is in a name? Well, for spouses, it says a lot about how the trustees view the role of the presidential spouse. The title is the expression to the public of the expectations and value of the role to the institution (Huang, 1999). "Consider, for example, the title given to Alice Huang, wife of David Baltimore, president of the California Institute of Technology. She is special assistant for external affairs – a title designed to send the message that she is not the person to see about issues regarding the internal administration of the university" (Cotton, 2003, p. C5).



Since many spouses are vital to the role of external public relations, such a title is appropriate. Some institutions have gone with Special Assistant to the President, but the acronym of this title may not be the right message (Huang, 1999). Whatever the title selected, it is necessary that it both conveys the role of the presidential spouse, and indicates trustee appreciation for the spouse's work.

Another way to recognize the often enormous task of the presidential spouse in hosting, entertaining, and corresponding with key constituents is the assignment of staff to assist him or her. Typical staff assigned to the presidential spouse includes the housekeeper and groundskeeper for the presidential home, live-in babysitters for the presidential couple's children, and secretarial assistance. The irony is that for many years the college paid all of these people to support the presidential couple and the college home, but they reported to the non-paid presidential spouse (Kemeny, 1979).

On the topic of the need for spousal assistance, Ness recommends to his fictional protégé's wife, Mary, "Among other things, be sure that you demand adequate household help as one of the perquisites of the job. No matter how tight the college budget may be – and always is – you are an integral part of the president's job and have as much a right to one or two full-time helpers as he does to his secretarial staff" (1971, p. 98). This sense of right to assistance may be what prompted Corbally to include a question in her 1977 study. She determined from her 246 respondents,

Most presidents' wives have some staff assistance available to them, although for the most part that assistance appears to be irregular and changeable. About half a dozen wives have full-time staff of five or more, with some of the staff living on the premises. Twenty-eight wives have no assistance whatever. An additional

108 have no full-time staff. Seven have help with the garden only. Fifteen who have some household help are paying for it from their own funds. More than half of those with no staff entertain frequently at home, doing all of the work themselves. One wife does very little entertaining, and the rest entertain often in their homes with the help of a caterer.

Ten families have a live-in sitter for their children. Seven women have drivers available to them. Six have their own secretaries. Many women call on the president's office staff when they need secretarial help. Forty-one have gardeners, and the rest are served by university grounds crews on a campus schedule. Most have some help with housecleaning, and many rely on university food service for occasional assistance in preparing and serving parties" (p. 120).

Regardless of the institution, the board and spouse should discuss the need for assistance for the presidential spouse. The expectations of the role influence what the trustees should reasonably offer and what the spouse should request.

Another benefit often provided to spouses is travel reimbursement for college-related work. One might argue this is not truly a benefit, since the cost is associated with a regularly occurring expense of the institution. However, since many institutions do not provide coverage of travel expenses, some spouses and trustees may consider it a benefit. It is important to note that when the college reimburses the spouse for travel it is because the spouse has a function on the trip. As we discussed earlier, many spouses serve as a key member of the development team. They provide an invaluable service in support of the president of soliciting funds from donors (Corbally, 1977). When the spouse has a contract – regardless of level of salary or stipend – and thus an employee – either voluntary or paid – then the cost of travel is non-taxable. In addition,

in many instances, having the spouse as an employee allows him or her coverage by worker's compensation if something should occur in a work-related situation (The California State University, 1998).

One of the most commonly requested forms of compensation is investment in a retirement program and insurance coverage for the presidential spouse (Ostar, 1986). This may stem from two reasons: (1) an increasing rate of divorces in American society (Young, 1984), and (2) many spouses outliving their presidential partners and having no additional income available to them at their retirement. For most boards of trustees, health insurance is a rather easy benefit to determine and offer. The more difficult insurance is life insurance. "The amount of life insurance required to adequately insure a non-working spouse is viewed by some advisers as a difficult calculation. While some clients view protecting the breadwinner's income and debt levels as a necessary evil, they remain unconvinced of the need to protect their spouse" (Anderson, 2005). Regardless, boards of trustees must consider this issue and determine the cost associated with such coverage, especially if it is important to the presidential spouse.

Retirement investment accounts are less difficult, but still somewhat tricky. Due to the increased interest in presidential spouse compensation in the late 1980s, "(t)he Teacher Insurance and Annuity Association – College Retirement Equities Fund in 1990 began offering a special annuity for the spouse of college presidents, but soon abandoned it because only a few colleges participated . . ." (Basinger, 2000). Even without TIAA-CREF as an option, other retirement programs exist if such a benefit is of interest to the presidential spouse.

The final topic in the area of presidential spouse benefits relates to the presidential home. It is again necessary to point out (1) many spouses do not consider the college home to be a benefit of the presidential spouse (since the president would be offered the accommodations

whether or not the president was married), and (2) the home is often a focal point for campus business and entertaining that it is not necessarily a benefit to anyone other than the college (Corbally, 1979), thus the reason that many presidential contracts make residing on campus a requirement as a “convenience of the institution, not a perk of the presidency” (Ostar, 1991, p. 29). The latter reason is why most presidents who live on campus do not pay taxes on the house, since the government does not consider it a personal benefit. Additionally, the home is often seen as more a responsibility of the spouse than as a benefit, but nevertheless, now is an appropriate time to cover the topic.

We will first begin with a discussion of on-campus college homes for the president’s family. In 1986, “(s)eventy-two percent of the respondents live(d) in a university-owned houses and 14 percent of those couples pay(ed) rent” (Ludwig, 1986, p. 103). According to a study in 1990, the percentage slipped to approximately 50 percent (McLaughlin & Reisman, 1990). Despite the numbers, the house – and what it represents – is a significant issue to the inhabitants. We find yet another area of presidential life guided by unwritten expectations of what can and should be done.

Whether the institution is public or private, this dwelling is usually regarded as luxurious, and its public rooms enjoyed (and its inner rooms often invaded) by envious faculty and staff and local and distant community people. There seems to be no commoner or quicker way for a president to get into difficulties than to ask for changes in the presidential mansion, even when these changes are designed to facilitate official entertainment by the president, and certainly if the changes are regarded as decorative luxuries (McLaughlin & Reisman, 1990, p. 326).

It is necessary to note that twice as much entertaining occurs in the presidential home compared with other campus facilities (Ludwig, 1986). Presidential couples understand the role of the house. If they do not, they learn quickly. As noted above, if the presidential spouse extravagantly redecorates or refurbishes the house, the institution's constituents may protest noisily, whether or not there is a need for the work. The trouble is that many individuals connected with the house misinterpret its function.

Some think the existence of such a place [President's house] creates an easy life for the wife and an extravagant padding of the president's salary. This is far from the truth, and the presence of an official house is often viewed by presidential couples as a mixed blessing. Many remarked that they could not meet all of their obligations without the assistance offered by a house and its support services. One wife commented that her husband no longer had time for cutting grass or making repairs around the home. Therefore, those jobs would not be done unless university staff were assigned responsibility for them (Corbally, 1977, p. 86).

A college designs a presidential house (1) for entertaining and (2) often, to be a source of constituent pride. For this reason, "(l)ocal citizens view these buildings with a mixture of pride and envy – pride that 'their' president lives in such a grand place, and envy of the lucky couple who reside in such a fine establishment. In such cases, the house the president lives in gives a distorted view of his affluence and comfort" (Corbally, 1977, p. 87). As discussed earlier, the home is also a necessity of fund raising. There is an air of importance connected to it. Key constituents consider it an honor to be entertained in the president's home (Ostar, 1991).

There are, however, hidden dilemmas to the presidential house. The homes tend to be larger and older, making them a significant cost for maintenance and upkeep. Most institutions

do not adequately budget for these expenses, often leaving the presidential couple to cover the costs or to go without (Corbally, 1977; Ostar, 1991). In addition, since the house is a focal point, security for the presidential family may become a concern. “During the period of student-faculty turbulence, and still today on some politically alert campuses, the presidential family, living on campus, become an easy target. The telephone may bring threats; the house may be surrounded by agitated students” (McLaughlin & Reisman, 1990, p. 327). Beyond demonstrations and prank calls, security of belongings is at times an issue. Many constituents have a sense of ownership of the home and will take home “souvenirs” from the presidential home (McLaughlin & Reisman, 1990; Ostar, 1991). Of course, the trouble is that some of the stolen belongings are the personal effects of the first couple and not the property of the institution (Gordon & Gordon, 1996).

These dilemmas of the home make it necessary that the presidential couple, through support of the board of trustees, help constituents understand the representational role of the president and his or her spouse. Trustees may do this in a number of ways. “The wife of the former president of the University of Wisconsin met this problem with rare good temper and understanding by showing her assistant hostesses, before each official reception, exactly which rugs, chairs, pictures and beds were ‘ours’ and which belonged to the university in order that, as hostesses, they might answer the questions of the guests” (Stoke, 1959, p. 28). Whatever the appropriate tactic is for a particular community, the presidential couple and trustees must help the institution’s constituents understand the role of the presidential home in the life of the institution.

In addition to being a showpiece for the campus and community, the house is a tool in raising funds for the institution.

Presidents and spouses realize, but do not seem to communicate adequately, that a guest's or donor's overall impression of the institution may be shaped largely by their first impression of the president's home or office. If carpets are worn to the nub, upholstery is shabby, and drapes are rotting in the sun, they assume, possibly correctly, that nobody's minding the store and that the leadership has no pride in the institution. Trustees and legislators must understand the extent to which the house and office are an extension of the public role of the presidency (Ostar, 1991, p. 30).

As such, the college must maintain these facilities. This is an issue for trustees to address with their incoming candidates. The contract should clearly discuss the requirements of the president to live on campus and the budget designated for house staff and maintenance (Gordon & Gordon, 1996). If renovations are needed to the home to bring it up-to-date or simply to make it more accommodating to the presidential couple, all of these issues should be addressed in advance (Corbally, 1977, Ostar, 1991, Gordon & Gordon, 1996). In 1996, AASCU created a list of recommendations for boards and presidents-to-be to discuss. The list includes issues related to who pays which bills, housing decoration allowances, lawn care, and staff maintenance and management availability.

As a closing comment on the topic of on-campus presidential homes, it is necessary to note that the home – as are almost all personal matters of the presidential family – is the domain and responsibility of the presidential spouse. For this reason, “(t)he board ought to keep in mind that living in an ‘official’ house, as most couples are required to do, automatically places the wife in the position of being involved in the university business” (Corbally, 1977, p. 43). As such the board should be sensitive to these responsibilities by providing someone to work with

the spouse to discuss funds available for work to occur, to whom household staff reports, what the campus budgetary procedures are, the role of the presidential house in the life of the institution and community, and the necessary contacts to make the house more comfortable (Corbally, 1977).

Campus life, however, is not for everyone or every institution. “Several couples have elected to remain in their own homes when appointed to the presidency of a campus they were already serving. They remark that this ensures family privacy and routines, while providing a greater sense of security owning their place and being surrounded by their own things” (Corbally, 1977, p. 88). Other presidential couples have experienced on-campus homes in previous administrations and opted for off-campus housing, “because of the restrictions on family life and the problems of visibility resulting from living in a public building” (Corbally, 1977, p. 88). For the spouse, there is generally less house maintenance demands placed on his or her time in an off-campus home – typically four hours less per week (Corbally, 1977). In addition, presidential couples have also realized that by living on campus they may not own a home or property anywhere and thus are faced with two challenges and the end of presidency: (1) they have not built equity in real estate during their tenure (Ostar, 1991) and (2) they have no logical place to move when they leave the presidency. Presidential couples who live on campus may invest in a second or vacation home somewhere else to overcome these two challenges.

Living off campus, however, does not minimize the amount of entertaining the presidential couple does within the home. “Presidents living in their own homes entertain university guests there almost as much as their counterparts housed in university quarters. The median number of events hosted by presidents of public four-year universities living in university-owned houses was 60 per year, 52 for those living in private houses. In private four-



year schools, the median for those in university-owned houses was 49 events a year, compared with 37 for those in private houses” (Ostar, 1991, p. 22). Despite the on-going demands of in-house entertaining, couples believe they have more control and safety in an off-campus home. The institution’s constituents are less likely to have a sense of ownership of an off-campus home, and students are less likely to travel to an off-campus home to protest or play a prank.

Regardless of how or why a couple comes to the decision to live off campus, the board of trustees must discuss the issues of the home with the couple, especially if there is any expectation that the home will be used for college entertaining. If the presidential team will use the home in this way, then it is reasonable that the college bear some of the expenses of the home. AASCU created a list of topics for discussion by the board and the president-to-be, similar to the one created for institutions where a campus-owned home exists, only with more of a focus of what if any college funds are available to support the private presidential home (1996). I will address all of these issues related to contracting and remuneration further in Chapter 5.

Therefore, the role of the presidential spouse is not a well-chronicled existence. Researchers have paid scant attention to the thousands of women who have served in this role over hundreds of years, or the men more recently taking on the mantle as presidential spouse. We should no longer ignore these hidden ambassadors of institutions of higher education. As the research in Chapter 4 shows, the contributions of presidential spouses are significant and their efforts have far-reaching effects.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, I examine the role and influence of the college presidential spouse, using a mixed methods approach. As the literature review indicates, this topic has received little attention. This oversight ignores the significant contribution that spouses play in shaping and supporting presidents and institutions.

With more than 3,500 colleges and universities in the American higher education marketplace today, I chose to limit the scope and focus of the study to private colleges and universities that self-select to be members of the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC). According to the mission statement on the CIC Web site, the organization:

is an association of independent colleges and universities working together to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance private higher education's contributions to society. CIC is the major national service organization for all small and mid-sized, independent, liberal arts colleges and universities in the U.S. CIC is not a lobbying organization, but rather focuses on providing services to campus leaders as well as seminars, workshops, and programs that assist institutions in improving educational programs, administrative and financial performance, and institutional visibility (CIC, 2006a).

Due to CIC's mission, it has an ideal organizational membership to use as a research study for two reasons: (1) there is already an interest in enhancing the work of university leadership

(which includes presidential spouses) and (2) the majority of all previous research has focused, instead, on state institutions. There is a need to examine whether or not there are differences today between this study and prior study groups, which is the difference between independent versus state-controlled institutions.

By using a mixed methods approach, I was able to apply the strengths and advantages of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Researchers, in a variety of fields, have found that the use of only one approach – qualitative or quantitative – does not fully allow for the exploration of a topic. Quantitative and qualitative research can both serve the purposes of a particular research question (Crotty, 1998). The application of the two styles helps to reduce the limitations of each; the biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of the other method (Creswell, 2003). In the concurrent mixed methods approach I simultaneously collected and analyzed both the qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2003). For this reason, the results do not influence the shaping of the other as in the sequential method, but instead are used to cross-validate and corroborate findings (Creswell, 2003). In addition, it is necessary to note in mixed methods research that the research design is more of a guide than a strictly prescribed plan (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In my proposal, I outlined study participants and the practices I would use, but the research evolved, as appropriate.

Having selected an approach, I evaluated and determined a rationale for who, what, when, where, and why of the population to be studied (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). One of the most effective ways to do this was through a pilot study. A pilot study justifies the importance of the topic or format, assists in determining appropriate sample size to adequately collect needed data, and allows for practice of interview questions and formats (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2001). I had the unique opportunity to share the preliminary learnings of a pilot

study survey with the CIC presidential spouses at the CIC Presidents Institute in January 2007. During the presentation, I received feedback from those in attendance about the results, their thoughts on what the survey results meant to those in attendance, and suggestions for needed improvements to the survey.

Throughout the process, I remained sensitive to the ethical issues connected to the research. General ethical concerns included not further marginalizing or disempowering study participants, not putting participants at risk, protecting the privacy of participants, safe and reasonable maintenance of data, accurate write up of data, and the use of non-discriminatory language (Creswell, 2003). The Institutional Review Board safeguards ethical behavior using informed consent. In this process, the participant had a right to participate voluntarily, know the purpose and procedure of the study, ask questions, and leave the study at any time (Creswell, 2003).

I conducted a quantitative survey of the 379 presidential spouses of record at CIC member institutions using the Web surveying tool SurveyMonkey.com (CIC, 2006b).<sup>3</sup> Using this Web site, respondents were able to log-on and complete the survey confidentially. I received the results in a manner that maintained the confidentiality of all participants. I sent the on-line survey link to the 236 e-mail addresses listed with CIC. Three weeks later, I sent a second e-mail notice to those non-respondents. From these e-mails, there were 92 responses (38.5%). Of the 236 e-mail addresses from CIC, some e-mail messages bounced back. For those with bad e-mail addresses or no e-mail address listed, I sent 143 letters with the link. Three weeks later, I sent a follow-up reminder postcard. From these direct mail contacts, there were 38

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<sup>3</sup> While there are 570 CIC-affiliated institutions, not all institutions have a presidential spouse, due to a vocational calling, personal choice, or widow/er-ship.

responses (26.5%). The total number of individuals contacted, by either e-mail or mail, was 379. There were a total of 130 responses or a 34.3% response rate.

The survey focused on capturing information on spouses based on several factors including type of institution, geographic data, and influencing characteristics, such as residential based, religious, and institutional size. I asked the participants to comment on their lived experiences – how a presidential spouse interprets his or her role and influence. Finally, the participants answered questions related to their role as a presidential spouse. I based selected questions on previous research conducted in the field and augmented with questions designed to probe areas that previous research had not captured. The literature in the field was extremely helpful in shaping the survey questions.

At the conclusion of the survey period, I compiled the quantitative data, and then analyzed the data to create a deeper understanding of the results. I analyzed the quantitative results in tandem with the results of the qualitative in-depth interview. I compared the demographics of the participants and some of the responses to a recent national survey on college presidents and spouses conducted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. While *The Chronicle's* survey focused on both public and private institutions, I found appropriate parallels in the study learnings. This fact, coupled with the extant literature, provided this researcher with confidence that his survey had been representative of the population of CIC-spouses.

While I conducted this mixed method study sequentially, the interview results did not influence the development of the on-line survey. The time required to transcribe and receive feedback from the interviews prevented this influence. Therefore, it is best to look at this research as concurrent triangulation strategy allowing for the simultaneous analysis of the data

gathered (Creswell, 2003). With this method, I was able to synthesize the data of the survey and integrate it into the understanding of the interviews.

In order to be successful in my research, I utilized a common practice of seeking a key informant to assist in determining interview participants. A key informant at CIC recommended the six CIC-affiliated spouses to participate in the in-depth interviews. I sought to have a fair representation of men and women, varying lengths of service, and different geographic areas of the country. This selection process allowed for a purposeful sample of presidential spouses. The commonalities of their responses, across various different demographic data points, underscored that those selected for interviews were reflective of the broader presidential spouse experience.

I contacted the spouses in the fall of 2006 about participating in the research. I conducted all interviews during a three-day period, in January 2007, at the CIC Presidents Institute. During the interviews, I asked the participants to describe their role at the institution and with their presidential partner. I intentionally designed many of the questions in the interview to parallel the survey, however, not all questions were. The parallel questions allowed me to confirm that the interviewed spouses were truly representative. However, the non-paralleling questions were important, because they allowed me to probe topics in ways not easily achieved with a static survey.

Interviewing participants allows the researcher access to large amounts of data quickly, the ability to immediately follow-up and clarify, and for understanding people's everyday activities. However, interviews also can have drawbacks, such as when the interviewed person does not cooperate, lies, or does not supply long narratives. In addition, the researcher may misunderstand the response (Creswell, 2003). The interviewer must realize that participants can tend to forget, delete, embellish, or ignore their role in a story. Further, the researcher must

determine if the story is the first one to come to mind, the most vivid, representative, or the most influential (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). To balance these drawbacks, I used the intentional selection criteria mentioned above when speaking with the key informant at CIC to help select representative interview participants.

Following the in-depth interviews, the transcripts were typed. I sent the interview participants the transcripts of their individual interview to review, edit, and revise. Following this, I made the appropriate changes to the transcripts. The text from those interviews is an amalgamation of the spouse's edits and appropriate edits on my part to protect the confidentiality and identity of the participant and others referenced.

In data analysis of qualitative and mixed methods research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analysis occurs as the researcher identifies themes and exists along a spectrum between technical and intuitive (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Analytic procedures fall into six typical phases: (1) organizing the data; (2) generating categories, themes, and patterns; (3) coding the data; (4) testing the emergent understandings; (5) searching for alternative explanations; and (6) writing the report (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Using these survey results and interview transcripts, I conducted data analysis and entered the final phase of the research process – writing.

The write-up of the dissertation or research is generally the final step in the process. I synthesized all the proceeding sections and included recommendations and implications of this work (Toma, 2004), which are found in chapter 5. During this step, I drew conclusions from the work that had occurred. Research may not be orderly, but the writing must be orderly to allow for explanation to the reader (Crotty, 1998). In mixed method and qualitative research, the writer

can view his/her role from several perspectives: artist, interpreter, and/or transformer (Glesne, 1999).

Validity, the ability to replicate a study, and the ability to generalize study findings are all concepts associated with quantitative research (Toma, 2005). While these are less important to qualitative and mixed methods of research, reliability, triangulation, and credibility are the areas of focus (Creswell, 2003). In mixed methods research, generalizing the research becomes the responsibility of the reader, not the researcher (Toma, 2005). For this reason, I am comfortable examining a different constituency than was used in previous studies of presidential spouses. While there are commonalities between the experiences of all presidential spouses, there are also differences based on institution type and gender.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS

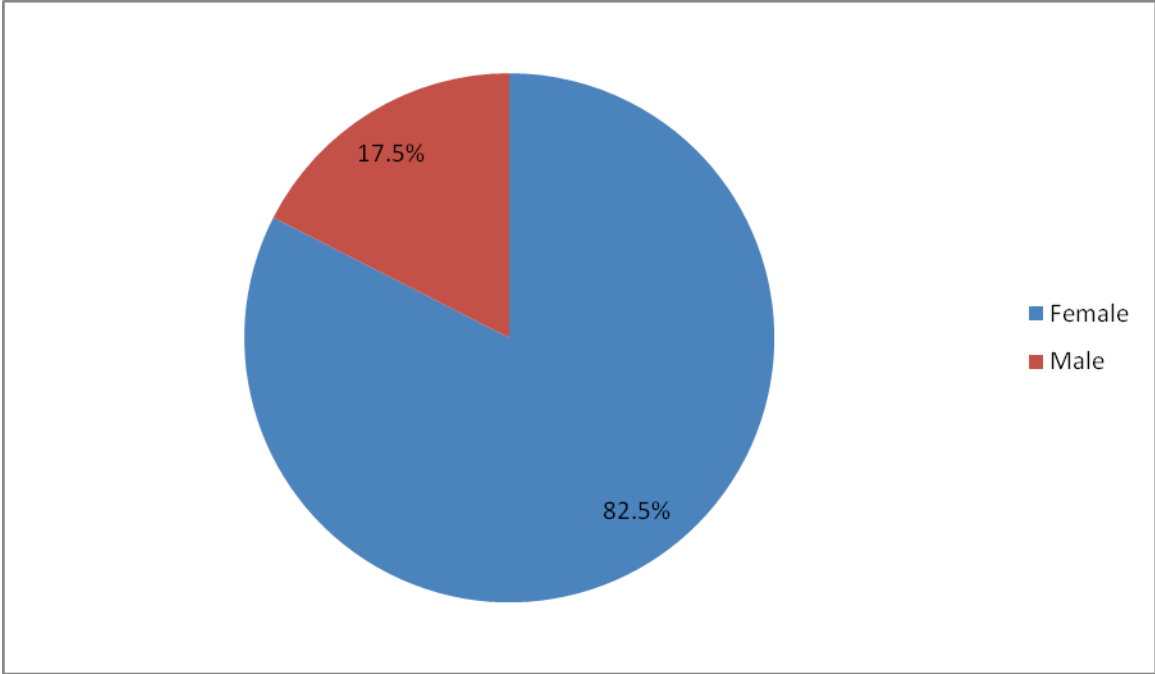
This chapter focuses on analysis of data collected through this mixed methods study of presidential spouses at CIC-affiliated institutions. I open with a snapshot view of the spouses who completed the on-line survey, followed by a brief biography of each presidential spouse interviewed. For the privacy and confidentiality of the spouses interviewed, I refer to each spouse by a moniker.

#### **Snapshot of Those Surveyed<sup>4</sup>**

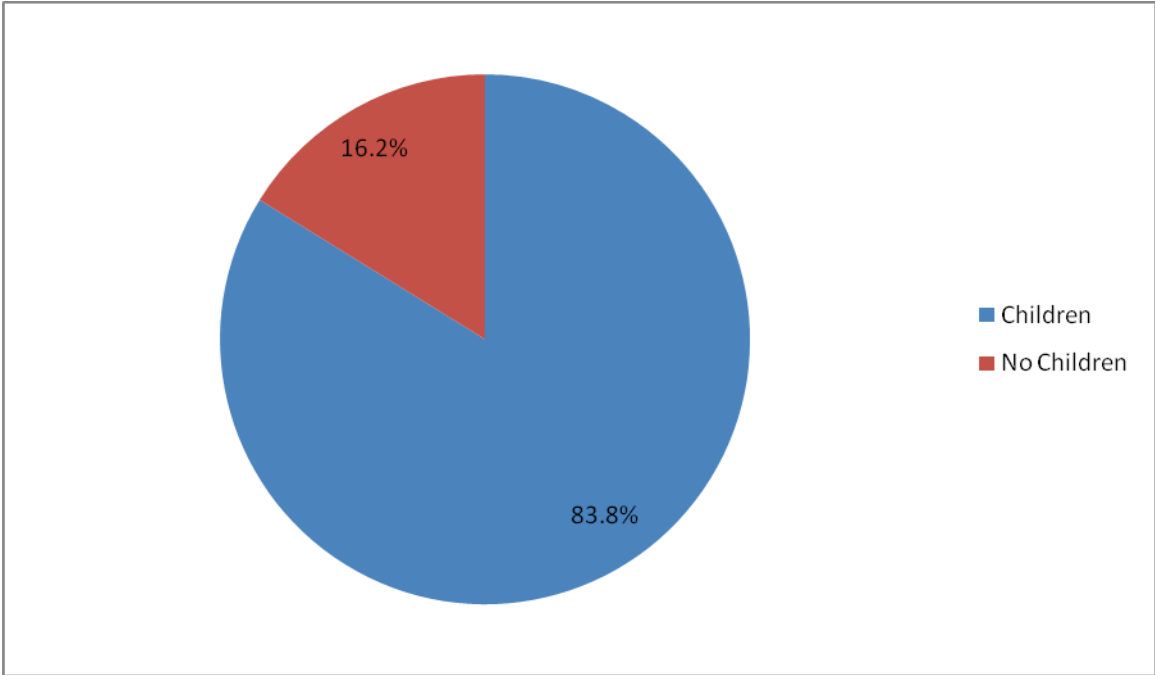
There were a 130 responses received from presidential spouses at CIC institutions. One hundred four spouses (82.5%) are women and 22 spouses (17.5%) are men (four chose not to answer the question) (see Fig. 1). Of the 130 respondents (see Fig. 2), 109 spouses (83.8%) indicated they had children or stepchildren, 4 spouses indicated they had no children, 1 indicated s/he had a son who had died, and 17 did not indicate, which based on the way the question was written indicates that they do not have children. Of the 109 who have children (see Fig. 3), 25 spouses (19.2%) have at least one child living at home with them (some also indicated that they had at some point in their tenure as a presidential spouse had children living with them).

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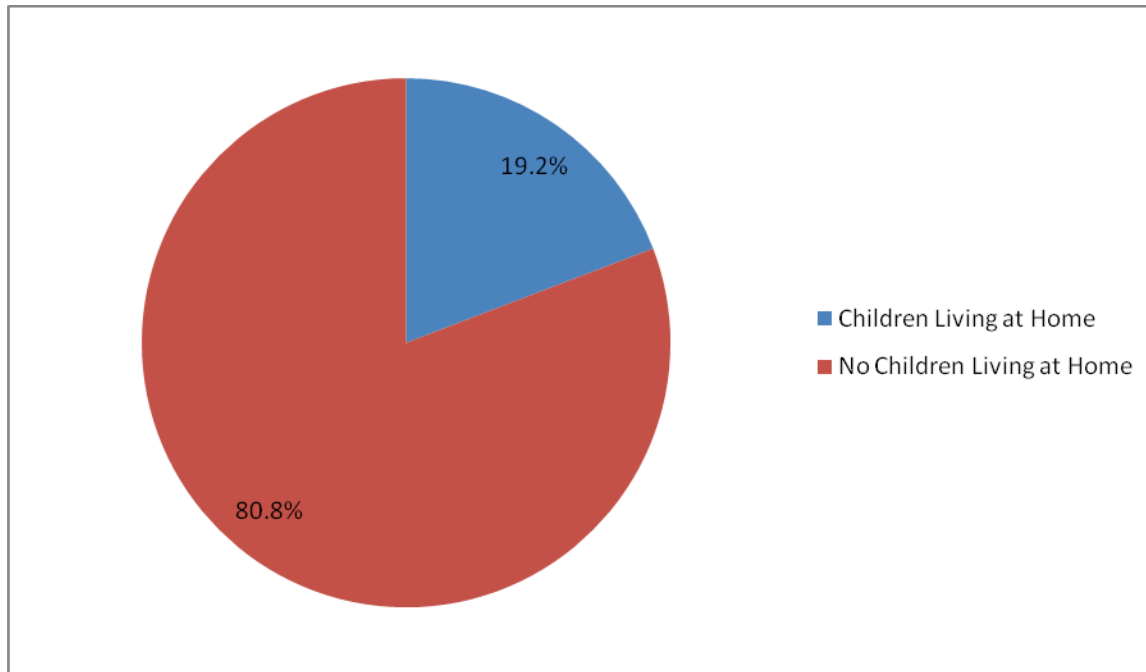
<sup>4</sup> All percentages are based on the number of people answering a particular question.



**Figure 1: Presidential Spouse Gender**



**Figure 2: Presidential Couple with Children**

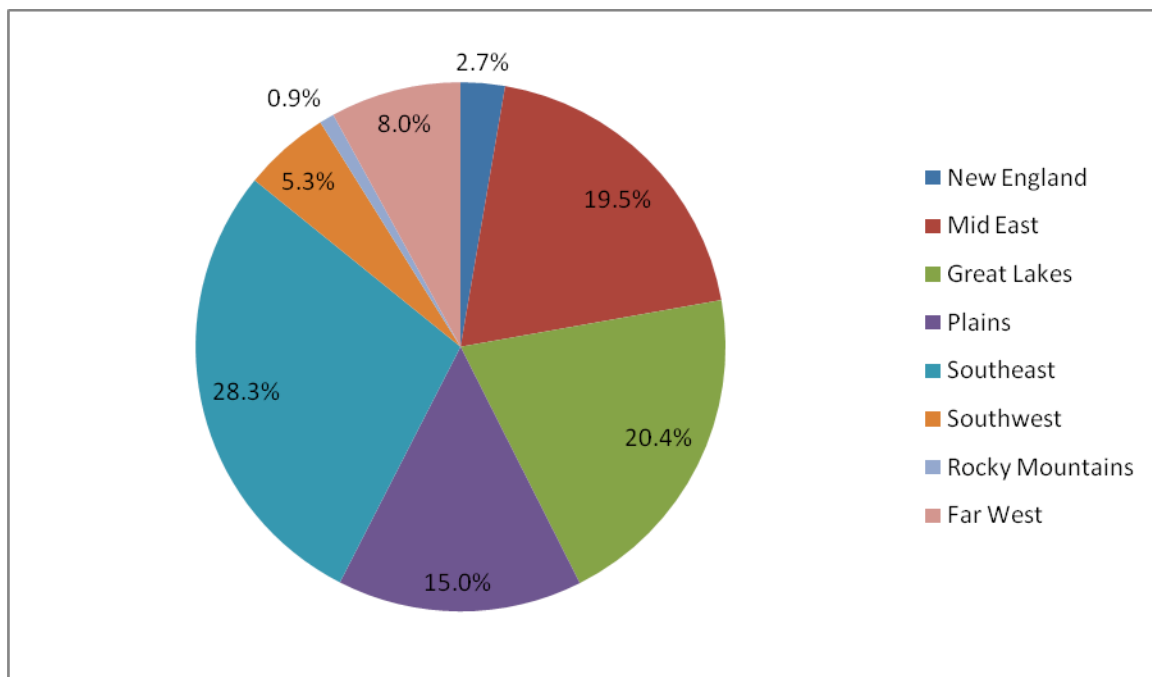


**Figure 3: Children Living with Presidential Couple**

In addition to children living at home with the presidential couple, 7 spouses (5.4%) indicated they had members of their extended family living with them for all or part of the year. These family members include mother of the presidential spouse, nephew (listed twice), elderly parents of the president (listed twice), father of the president, and mother of the president. One spouse indicated that they have four, female-college students living with them – there was no indication as to why.

Presidential spouses at CIC-affiliated institutions across the country completed the survey. The responses were dispersed as follows (see Fig. 4): 3 responses (2.7%) from the New England region (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont); 22 responses (19.5%) from the Mid East region (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania); 23 responses (20.4%) from the Great Lakes region (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin); 17 responses (15%) from the Plains region (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota); 32 responses

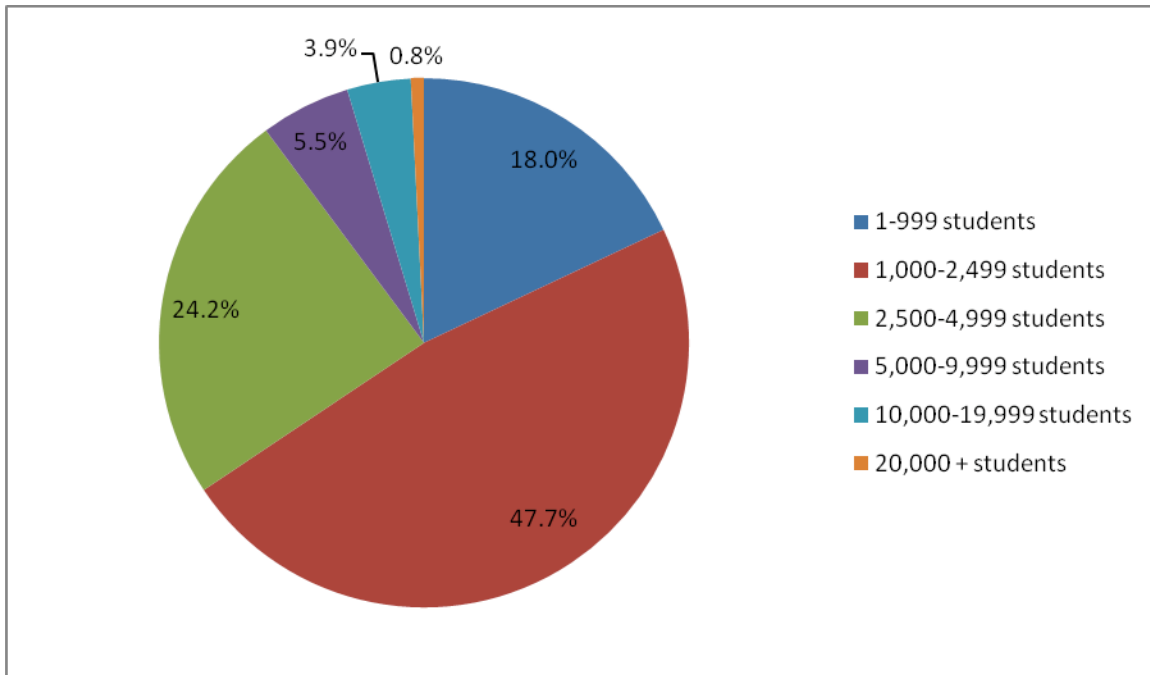
(28.3%) from the Southeast region (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia); 6 responses (5.3%) from the Southwest region (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas); 1 response (0.9%) from the Rocky Mountains region (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming); and 9 responses (8%) from the Far West region (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington). There were no responses from the outlying areas of Guam, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.



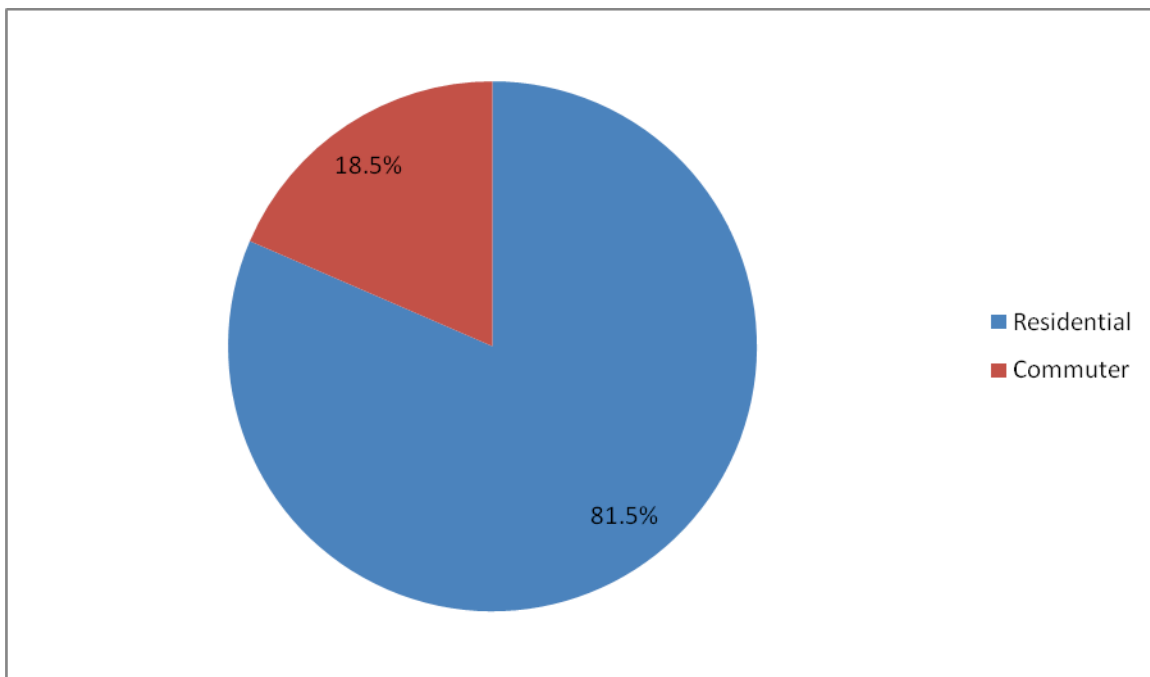
**Figure 4: Regional Location of Respondents**

The institutions of service were diverse in a number of factors relating to the students served. The population of the campus were as follows (see Fig. 5): 23 (18%) of the institutions served less than 1,000 students, 61 (47.7%) served 1,000 to 2,499 students, 31 (24.2%) served 2,500 to 4,999 students, 7 (5.5%) served 5,000 to 9,999 students, 5 (3.9%) served 10,000 to 19,999, and one (0.8%) institution served more than 20,000 students. A majority of the

institutions was primarily residential based (81.5% residential versus 18.5% commuter) (see Fig. 6).

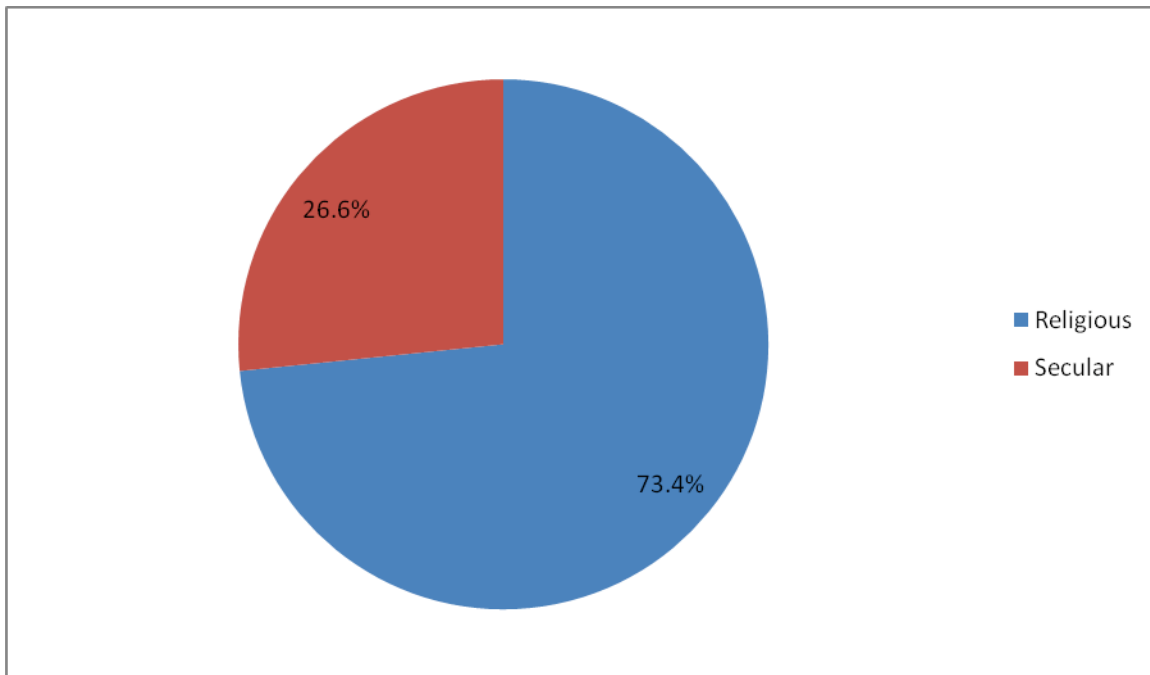


**Figure 5: Student Enrollment of Respondents**

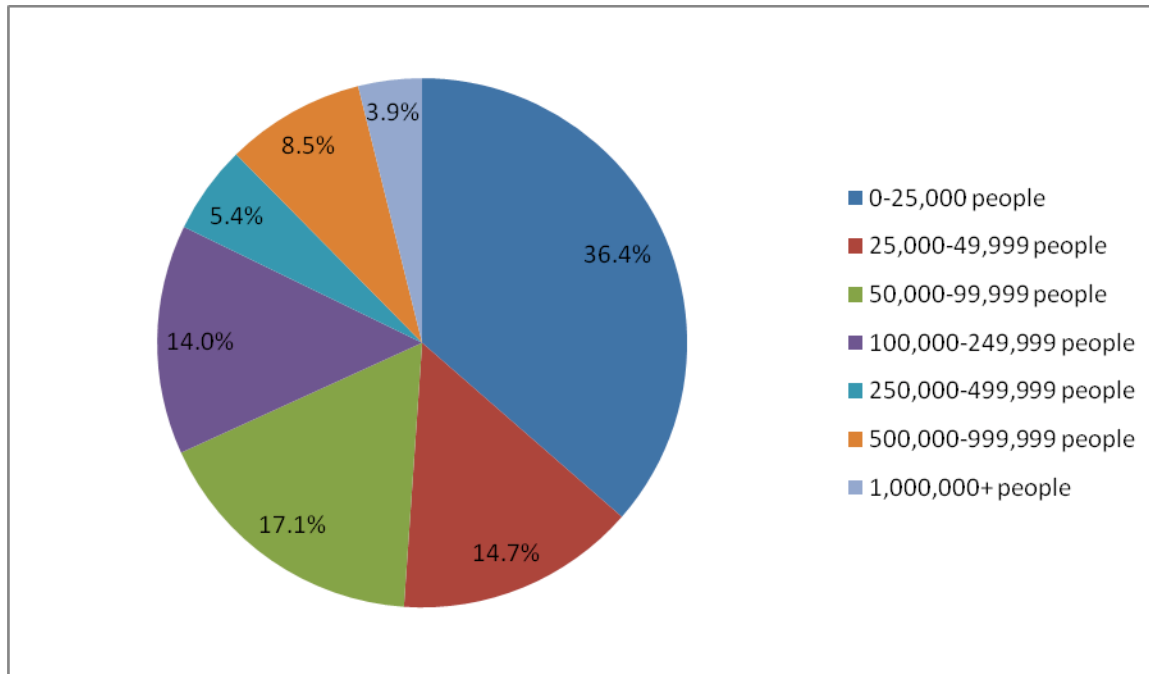


**Figure 6: Student Characteristics**

Most of the represented institutions were religiously affiliated, all were controlled by their own board, and many were in small- to medium-sized communities. There are 94 religiously affiliated institutions (73.4%) represented in the survey. Thirty-four institutions (26.6%) are secular (see Fig. 7). Two respondents skipped this question. All respondents who answered the question confirmed that the institution is controlled by its own board (126 respondents; 4 did not respond). The host community of the institution is best described by the community's population (see Fig. 8): 47 institutions (36.4%) are in communities with less than 25,000 people; 19 institutions (14.7%) are in communities with 25,000 to 49,999 people; 22 institutions (17.1%) are in communities with less 50,000 to 99,999 people; 18 institutions (14.0%) are in communities with 100,000 to 249,999 people; 7 institutions (5.4%) are in communities with 250,000 to 499,999 people; 11 institutions (8.5%) are in communities with 500,000 to 999,999 people; and 5 institutions (3.9%) in communities with more than 1,000,000 people (1 respondent skipped this question).



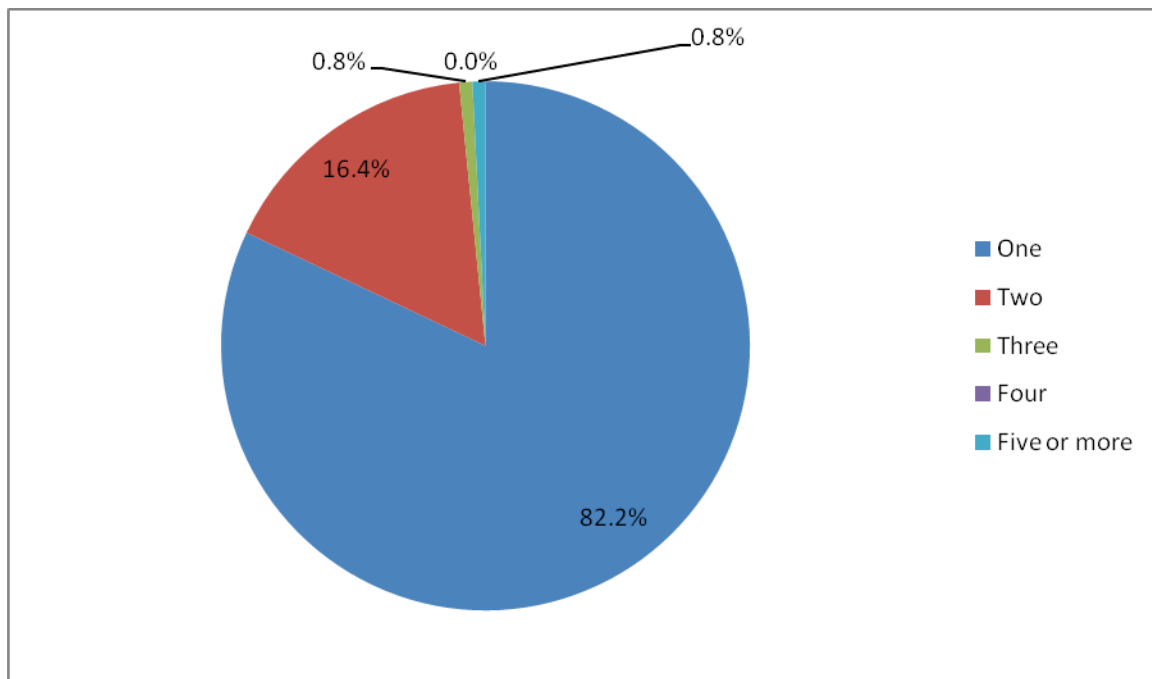
**Figure 7: Institutional Affiliation**



**Figure 8: Population of the Host Community**

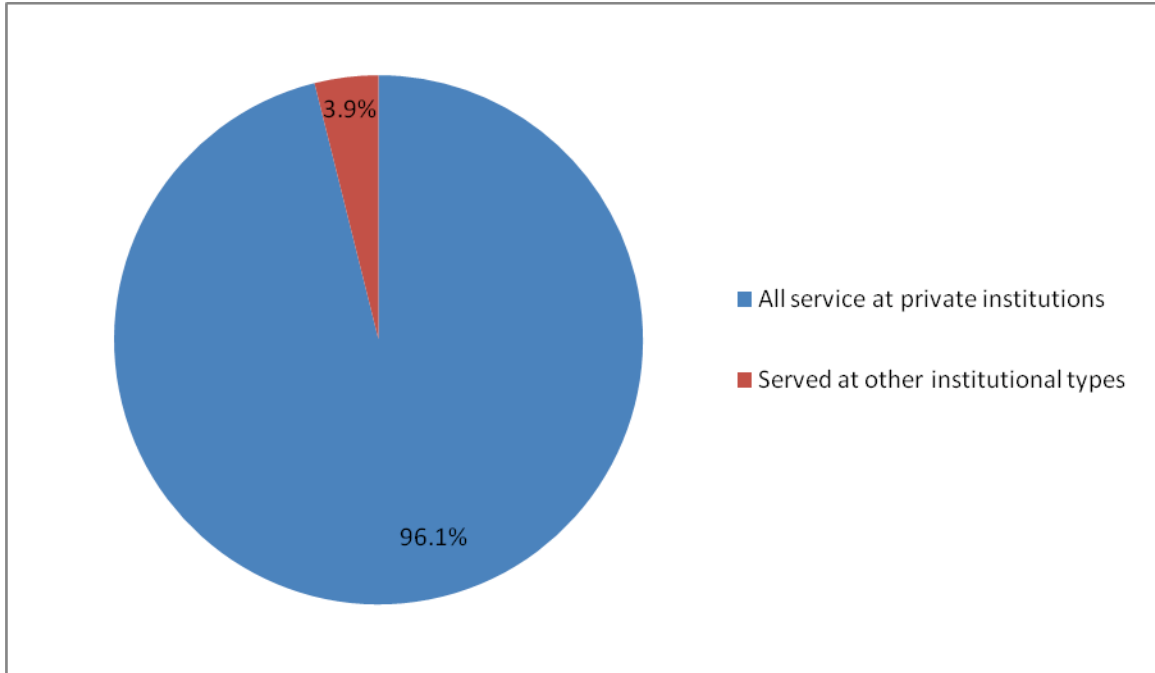
The presidential spouses in the survey are primarily serving at their first institution and nearly all have only served at private institutions, more than half have been a presidential spouse for more than eight years, and most of their presidents were in academic administrative positions prior to arriving at their current institution. The presidential couple is predominantly serving at their first institution (see Fig. 9): 106 couples (82.2%) are at their first institution; 21 couples (16.3%) are at their second institution; 1 couple (0.8%) is at their third institution; no couple (0.0%) is at their fourth institution; 1 couple (0.8%) has worked at more than five or more institutions; and 1 person did not indicate prior service. These couples have served mostly at private institutions (see Fig. 10): 122 couples (96.1%) have served only private institutions; while 5 couples (3.9%) have served at other types of higher education institutions (3 people did not indicate prior institution types). Tenure of presidential spouses varies widely (see Fig. 11): 3 spouses (2.3%) have served in this capacity for less than one year; 26 spouses (20.0%) have served for one to three years; 34 spouses (26.2%) have served for four to seven years; 27 spouses

(20.8%) have served for eight to eleven years; 21 spouses (16.2%) have served for twelve to fifteen years; 19 spouses (14.6%) have served for more than fifteen years. The prior work of the presidents varies, but most served as administrators at other institutions before coming to the presidency (see Fig. 12): 3 presidents (2.3%) were previously pastors; 90 presidents (69.2%) were previously administrators at other institutions; 8 presidents (6.2%) were administrators in the non-higher-education, non-profit sector; 6 presidents (4.6%) were in executive positions in the private business sector; 18 presidents (13.8%) were administrators at the same institution; 3 presidents (2.3%) were previously faculty members; 1 president (0.8%) was retired; 1 president (0.8%) was a public school teacher.

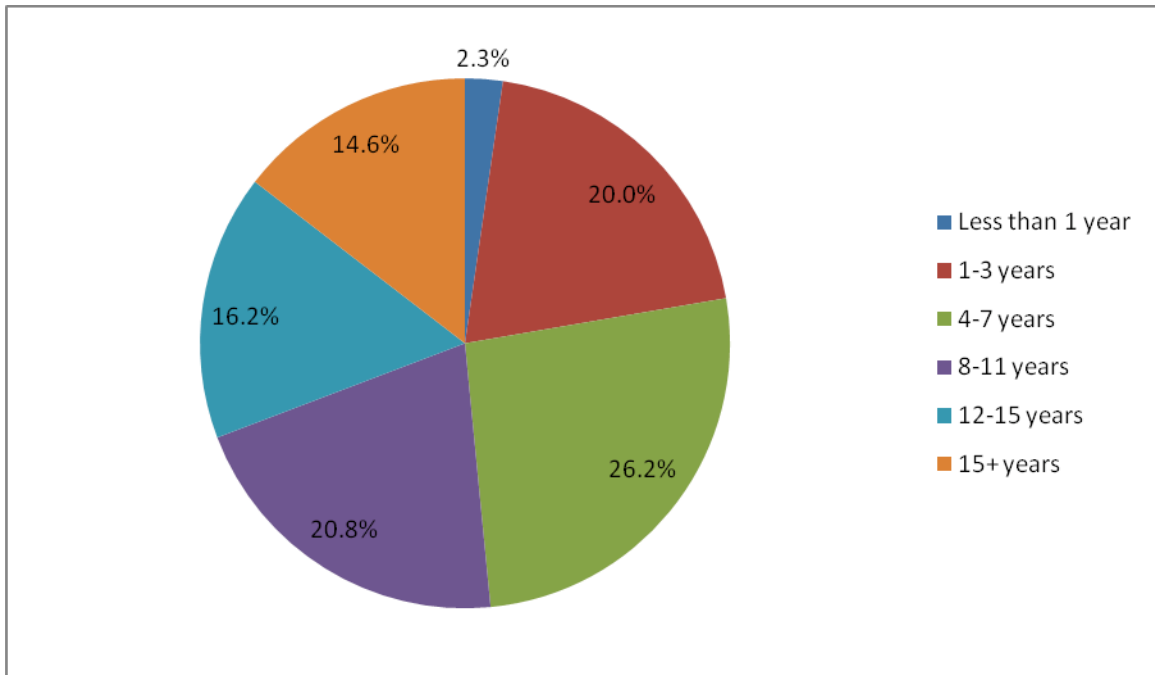


**Figure 9: Number of Institutions Served**

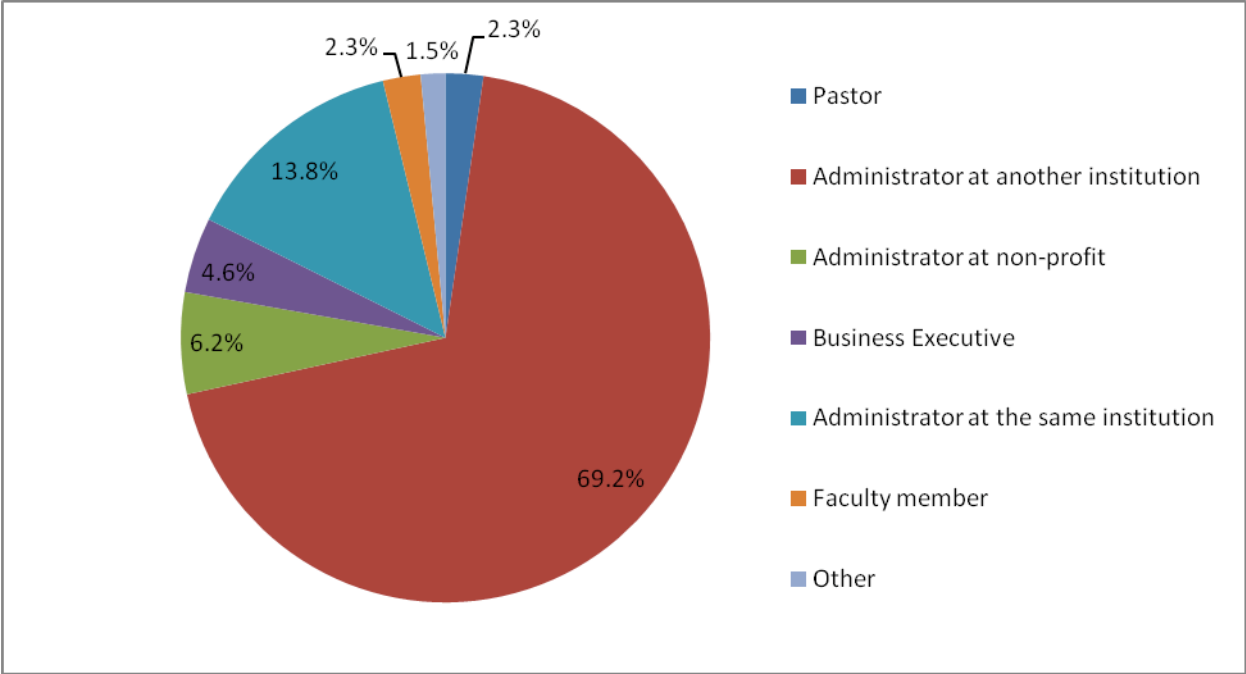




**Figure 10: Type of Institutions Served**



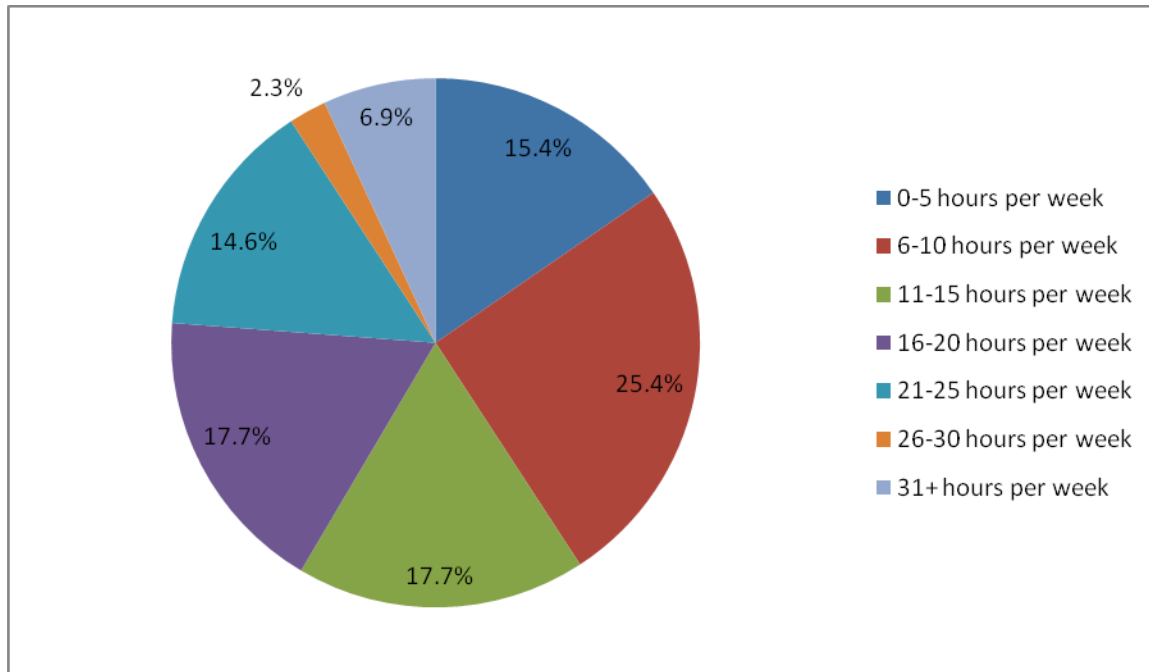
**Figure 11: Years as a Presidential Spouse**



**Figure 12: President's Prior Position**

Finally, spouses estimated the average number of hours per week they devote to activities required of the president’s spouse, including events that s/he plans, hosts, and expects to attend as a guest. It is clear from the results that most spouses are committing a portion of their time to the work of the institution.<sup>5</sup> Those surveyed reported the following number of hours in service to the institution (see Fig. 13): 20 spouses (15.4%) reported 0-5 hours per week; 33 spouses (25.4%) reported 6-10 hours per week; 23 spouses (17.7%) reported 11-15 hours per week; 23 spouses (17.7%) reported 16-20 hours per week; 19 spouses (14.6%) reported 21-25 hours per week; 3 spouses (2.3%) reported 26-30 hours per week; and 9 spouses (6.9%) reported 31 or more hours per week.

<sup>5</sup> While the survey structure did not define all uses of time beyond the three activities listed above, it is reasonable to conjecture that a number of spouses also spend time writing notes, following up on development calls, and being involved in community organizations. If those hours had been counted the number of hours of service reported may have increased.



**Figure 13: Average hours of service to institution**

Much as Corbally (1977), Clodius and Magrath (1984), and Ostar (1991) did, I present a composite of the “average” presidential spouse surveyed: the presidential spouse is a woman with children (but those children are most likely old enough to not be living at home); she lives east of the Mississippi River in a community with less than 50,000 people; has served at only one institution (but if served at another institution, it was also private). This woman is currently serving at a religiously affiliated institution, with less than 2,500 students, and with a predominantly residential population. She has been a presidential spouse for 4 to 11 years and typically works less than 15 hours per week doing the responsibilities of a presidential spouse. Prior to becoming a president, her husband was most likely an administrator at another institution.

This quick snapshot and the previous overview of the demographics of the survey participants provide a perspective for comparing the average survey respondent to the individual spouses interviewed. Before looking at the biographies of the interviewed spouses, it is helpful

to compare the demographics of the survey participants to those data points of comparison captured in the most recent *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* (2007)<sup>6</sup>. While the data collection ranges are not consistent for every characteristic, the information allows for a sense that the data collected in this survey is comparable to another national survey of presidential teams. It is important to note that the *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* focused on all degree-granting, regionally accredited institutions, while this study only focused on small- to medium-sized CIC-affiliated institutions. The chart below shows significance in the comparisons of demographic data. This comparison affirms that the data collected in this study generally matches with a larger national study, which assists in validating the findings in this study.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>This Study</b>		<b>CHE Almanac, 2007</b>	
<i>Presidential Gender</i>				
Male		82.5%		77.0%
Female		17.5%		23.0%
<i>Years in Current Position</i>				
Less than 1		2.3%	Less than 1	2.8%
1-3		20.0%	1-3	20.6%
4-7		26.2%	4-5	14.4%
8-11		20.8%	6-10	31.2%
12-15		16.2%	11-15	17.7%
15+		14.6%	16-20	8.0%
			20+	5.2%
<i>Number of Prior Presidencies Held</i>				
0		82.2%	0	72.4%
1-2		17.1%	1-2	23.8%
3		0.0%	3-4	3.2%
4+		0.8%	4+	0.6%
<i>Place of Prior Position of President</i>				
Same Institution		13.8%		27.9%
Different Institution		69.2%		63.9%
Not Applicable		16.9%		8.3%

<sup>6</sup> Note from the CHE Almanac: “Totals may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding or multiple responses. The figures are from a 2006 survey of presidents of 3,396 degree-granting, regionally accredited colleges and universities. The response rate was 63 percent.”

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Now, let us turn to the brief biography on each presidential spouse.

*Spouse 1*

Spouse 1 is a woman serving in her first institution as a presidential spouse. She has been the spouse of a college president for six years. Spouse 1 is in her early fifties. She and her husband have been married for 30 years. This is the first marriage for both of them. They have several children, and are empty-nesters. Spouse 1 has a full-time career not associated with her husband's institution. On average, she estimates that she spends more than twenty hours per week fulfilling the needs in the role of presidential spouse, in addition to a forty-plus hour per week job as a high-level administrator. The couple does not live on campus, but in a private home for which they receive a stipend to cover some of the costs as they use the home for college entertaining. Spouse 1's college is in the Midwest.

*Spouse 2*

Spouse 2 is a woman serving in her second institution as a member of the presidential couple. In total, she has been the spouse of a college president for 28 years. She and her husband have been married for nearly 40 years. This is the first marriage for both of them. Spouse 2 is in her sixties, has a doctorate, and is currently a full-time volunteer for the college and the community, but has had a full-time career previously. She and her husband have grown sons, with families of their own, and grandchildren. They live in a college-owned home on the campus of their institution, which is in the Northeast. Spouse 2 spends twenty to thirty hours per week on college-related work.

*Spouse 3*

Spouse 3 is a man serving his first institution as a presidential spouse. This is his twelfth year as a presidential spouse. He has served at only one institution. He and his wife have been married

for nearly 25 years. It is the second marriage for both of them. He has children and a stepchild. He is in his sixties, has an undergraduate degree, and currently works full-time. Spouse 3 lives in a college-owned home, which is in the Mid East region. He currently spends about four hours per week on presidential spouse work, but through the first half of the presidency, it was probably closer to 16 hours per week. He receives no compensation for his role as a presidential spouse.

#### *Spouse 4*

Spouse 4 is a man serving his first institution as a presidential spouse. He is two-and-a-half years into a first presidency at a Mid East institution. He and his wife are in their first marriage and at the time of our conversation had just celebrated their thirtieth wedding anniversary. They have grown daughters. They live in their own home and receive a small budget for house-related expenses, since they do institutional events at the house. Spouse 4 is self-employed and is therefore able to set his own hours. On average, he spends 15-20 hours per week on presidential spouse responsibilities.

#### *Spouse 5*

Spouse 5 is a woman serving her first institution as a presidential spouse and has done so for thirteen years. She is in her late sixties. She and her husband have been married for more than 40 years. This is the first marriage for both of them. She has an undergraduate and masters degree. Prior to coming to this institution in the Southeast region, she worked full-time in her field. Spouse 5 is now a full-time, presidential spouse. She has a contract with the institution and a title for the work she does as a presidential spouse. She and her husband have grown children. They live in an on-campus home owned by the institution.

### *Spouse 6*

Spouse 6 is a woman serving at her first institution. She has a college degree and worked full-time in her career until retiring a year after moving to this institution. She is now retired and is in her late fifties. Spouse 6 is in her fifth year serving at an institution in the Southeast region. Both she and her husband were previously married to others. He has a grown, married daughter from a previous marriage. Spouse 6 and her husband have been married for 23 years. The couple lives on campus in an institution-owned home, and Spouse 6 works as a full-time volunteer for the institution.

I will now examine the survey findings, with insertions from the transcripts of the interviewed presidential spouses. This concurrent analysis allows for increased understanding of the presidential spouse through exploring the findings of both the qualitative and quantitative data. It is important to note, however, that the questions of those interviewed do not completely correlate with the survey questions. I designed the research questions in this way in order to secure a more robust understanding of the role and influence of the presidential spouse. To assist in the flow of the analysis, I present the information in intentional chunks.

### **Presidential Spouse Role Definition**

Many spouses articulate that defining and understanding their role is one of the most important factors in what they do and how they represent themselves to their constituents. Spouses are influenced in role definition by perceptions of self and gender, expectations of their spouse and the institution, and the work of the predecessor. Therefore, understanding the

presidential spouse's perceptions of their role is an appropriate place in which to begin the analysis.

I asked the surveyed presidential spouses to identify some of the factors that were important in determining the identification of the responsibilities associated with being a presidential spouse at the institution in which s/he serves. Eight factors (including the category of "other") were available as options to the surveyed spouses, and respondents were asked to put these options in rank order.<sup>7</sup> For the 130 respondents, they ranked these factors of influence in the following order of importance: the president received a ranking of 6.92; the presidential spouse's own past experience received a ranking of 6.15; association meetings received a ranking of 4.94; documented traditions received a ranking of 4.17; governing boards received a ranking of 3.73; publications received a ranking of 3.47; and the presidential spouse's predecessor in the position received a ranking of 3.23. The category for "other" received a ranking of 5.37, but due to the variety of the answers, the number has no significance in this ranked context. Answers for the "other" category, included the following factors: community/city residents; other presidential spouses at conferences, at previous institution, and in the neighboring communities; staff at the institution, including the president's assistant, development officers, event coordinator; graduate work in higher education administration; and observing others in the role. A male spouse commented that as a man, "traditional expectations did not fit." (We will return to this topic later.)

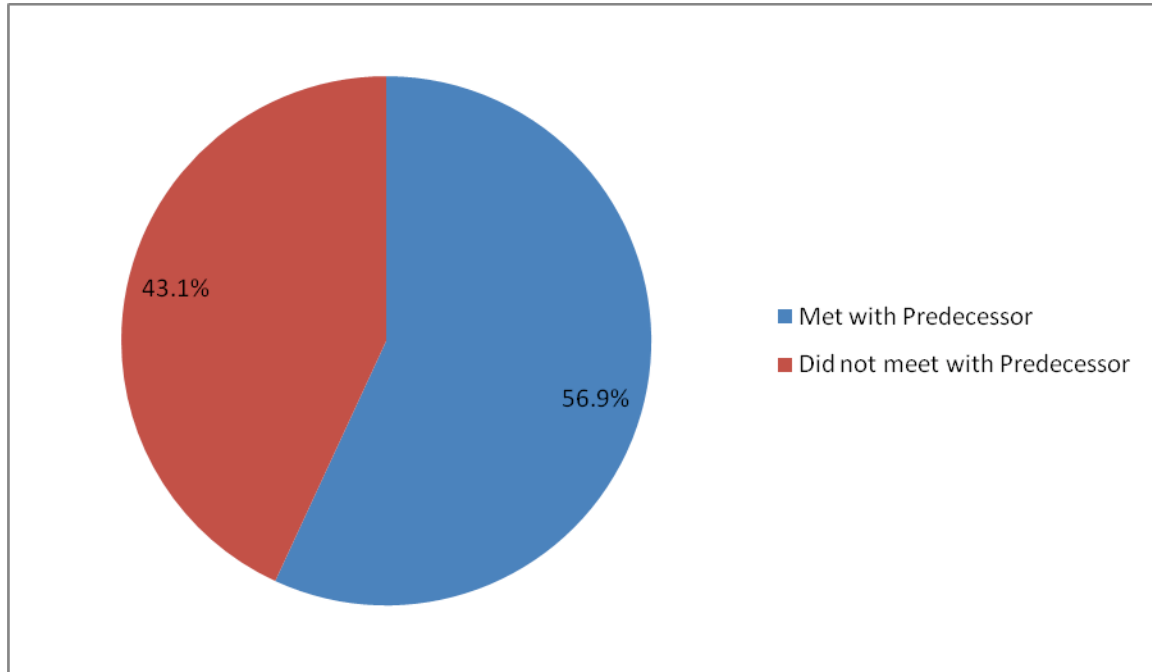
When asked specifically about their predecessor's role in understanding the responsibilities of the presidential spouse, 98 spouses (75.3%) indicated that their predecessor had some influence on their understanding of their responsibilities. However, only 74 spouses

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<sup>7</sup> Eight is the highest importance and 1 being the lowest importance. I weighted these factors based on the number of responses per answer.



(56.9%) met with their predecessor (see Fig. 14). This means that for 24 of the spouses who did not meet with their predecessors the influence of the predecessor must have been inferred based on comments from others in the community or documented events that had occurred and were expected to be continued. The remaining 56 spouses (43.1%) did not meet with their predecessor. The survey did not document the reason.



**Figure 14: Met with Predecessor**

Of those who did meet with their predecessor, 50 presidential spouses (52.6%) spoke specifically about their predecessors experience as the presidential spouse at the institution. This means that two-thirds of those who met with their predecessor also sought their comments about what the lived experience was like at this institution. It would be merely conjecture to try to determine why the other one-third met with their predecessor, but did not ask about their experiences. Logical guesses might include, the new presidential spouse may have been a presidential spouse at a previous institution, the predecessor and spouse were leaving the institution on difficult terms, the time of the meeting with the predecessor was limited and only

allowed for mere courtesies and more business-related conversation, or it did not occur to the new presidential spouse to ask his/her predecessor about these experiences. Due to the reflective nature of this section's topic, I give a bulk of the analysis to the words of the interviewed spouses drawing on quotations from my follow-up questions to enhance the understanding of a presidential spouse's perceptions of his or her role.

In meeting with the interviewed spouses, they had the following to say about their experiences with their predecessors, as well as their plans for interacting with their successor. Spouse 1 says that her predecessor still lives in town. The college pulled her predecessor and her husband out of retirement to run the college for a number of years. Because of this, the expectations on the preceding presidential spouse had been less. Spouse 1 said, "So it was a totally different expectation than what they had of her. The other thing I'm careful of is: that couple still lives in town and he sits on the foundation board. And my predecessor's predecessor still lives in town, but her president is deceased now." Spouse 3 did not meet with his predecessor, but met with a presidential spouse who was a colleague of his wife's. "I sat with her and she gave me some indication of what to expect." Spouse 3 went on to talk about what he will do for his successor. "As a part of the exit interview I will champion with the board and be very strong. If I'm given the opportunity to say something to the search committee and not only the search committee, but to the search firm, I'll say, 'You need to have clear understandings and clear expectations and have a clear conversation.'" About interacting with her successor, Spouse 5 simply said, "Get out of town. We love the community, but we can't stay around." The truth is that it may be difficult for a new president and presidential spouse to be successful if they are living in the shadow of a long-time, former presidential team. So despite loving a community and the people in it, many presidential teams move so that the new leadership may not feel

hampered about how to do the work before them. However, Spouse 2 does not like that approach. “One of the issues that I think is really scratchy for a spouse, as well, is traditionally the out-going president has moved away – moved out of the town with the idea that it’s only fair to the incoming president that you don’t hang around and second guess his decisions. I don’t want to move away. I’m heavily involved in this community and one of my sons lives here with my grandchildren. And I don’t see how we can move away and I don’t want to. And I think, ‘Ooh, this is really a difficult decision’ – that would be the hardest decision, I think, is where will we live: will we live in the town or will we go somewhere? I don’t have anywhere else to go.” However, Spouse 1 was less committal on her plans for her successor, saying she will leave it up to him or her. “I will be gracious and assist them in that transition, but some people may not want the help. So you have to be sensitive to both.” This comment may explain why some percentage of the surveyed spouses did not meet with their predecessors.

As the survey responses indicate, not all presidential spouses met with their predecessors, the interviewed spouses were asked about whether or not they role modeled anyone as a way of determining who they wanted to be or how they wanted to be perceived as a presidential spouse. Spouse 6 responded, “Not anyone who was a presidential spouse, because I didn’t know any. I have a friend who is an older woman whose husband used to be a senior executive at an Ivy League institution. And I thought about her because I thought she was so cool. She was so gracious, wholesome and was a chemist by training and had given up her career to raise her children and support her husband. So I thought of her and will always remember her advice she gave me when we left that institution: she looked at every new place as an opportunity to not make the same mistakes she made at the previous one. When I ran to her complaining about my husband’s next move, after I had only been in that town for 3 years, I hadn’t realized that she had

moved 29 times. But it wasn't like, 'Oh, grow up – let me tell you my problems.' She just gave me that advice and said, 'Oh, this is a wonderful opportunity here.' So, I've always remembered that. So the next move we make, whenever that comes, I'll think of all the mistakes I've made here and try not to repeat those in the new home." In addition to this advice, Spouse 6 called together some staff members to provide her guidance about what to do. "When we first moved here, I asked the person who was my husband's assistant at that time and the Ombudsman for the university, to come have lunch with me and give me some idea of my role: you know there are no guidebooks for the spouses and I succeeded a person who had been First Lady for over 15 years and their departure was not a very pleasant one. She didn't appear to be hospitable in that regard [i.e., in helping me to adjust to this new role]. So I asked the Ombudsman and the assistant to come over and basically give me a calendar of activities in which they thought I was most likely to participate. I needed to know how many people were going to be there, the attire, any expectations (like public speaking) on my part, etc. But basically, I was following in the footsteps of my predecessor." These comments show that many spouses reach out for feedback on their new role – to a friend, people at the institution, or their predecessor.

Some people, like Spouse 2 turn to role models that influenced them early in life, including their mothers. "My mother was a teacher back when women were not – she was the only person who worked among her friends. So yes, I suppose I had that role model in my mind to be a professional woman. Neither of my daughters-in-law work and don't want to. So there's a new movement now I think among younger women to stay home and raise their children, but in my generation if you stayed home there was something wrong with you. You had to get out and work and I wanted to. I didn't feel like I had to do that. I wanted to do that. So, I can't think of anybody or couple of bodies that I said, 'I want to be like them.' And part of it was we didn't

come through academia. So, we didn't have that presidential spouse when you were academic dean you were looking to see how they do it. We didn't have that and in business you don't know the personal life of the boss. So we didn't have any of that." Spouse 2 also talks about the fact that she and her husband are serving as a presidential team at their second institution and that also has an effect. "The first presidency was interesting because it was a state college. It was a great opportunity for my husband to get involved in college life and for me to get involved in college life with him. I thought it was a very busy life, but I didn't realize compared to a private college how un-busy life was. Having lived through two presidencies and kind of knowing what goes on on a campus, of course, yes, I'm a lot more confident than I was when we first came into the job. On the other hand, I've learned a lot because as I've said the different expectations have helped me grow slowly. Fortunately, I have not had one of these harsh lessons that some of the wives talk about, because I kind of kept my mouth shut and looked around and watched. I sort of grew into the job the first place where we were. Of course, when your spouse is successful and accepted, it's easier to become confident. I'd hate to be the other person in a situation – when half the trustees want him fired. I'd be drawing in myself, too. I'd be suspicious and afraid: who's on my side and who isn't. In this way, confidence is only because it's easy."

For Spouse 1, role modeling was not a single person, but a process of picking the aspects of several people she liked and admired. "I can't say that there was any one person. I took from a lot of different behaviors, decided what made sense for us and the complexity of what I can make work." For Spouse 4, he found few male role models because at their previous institution, he was one of only two male spouses in the upper management of the institution and the president was not married. "So there wasn't much to model there. But it was mostly just being

in those situations and I'm a pretty attentive guy. I pay attention to details and I'm visual and tactile and it just worked out for me." Being observant is what helped him to find his way. Spouse 5 talks about two influences in determining how she would handle the position: her upbringing and other presidential spouses. "I thought about the role. The first year in the presidency I never put on a pair of jeans – never! I never left the bedroom without makeup and combed hair and everything. But I was raised one of several children living in a small house with one bathroom for all of us – living in the fishbowl has never bothered me. My mother couldn't watch all of us at the same time so she would say, 'God sees everything you do.' So I was raised, if He sees everything I do, the rest of you might as well too. So the fishbowl totally, truly does not bother me, never has. I talked with a lot of presidential spouses just for their helpful hints before I came to the college so that I wasn't totally blindsided. People just kept saying, 'Be whoever you are, that's who they want to know and who they want to see. And you know who you are better than anyone else.'" These spouses seemed to have found their way in this new role through observation of others, rather than direct conversations, and by paying attention to their inner voice about what a presidential spouse should be.

In assuming the role as a presidential spouse, there are numerous new roles for one to assume, such as traveling, speaking for the institution, meeting with donors, planning and hosting an event, speaking with the media, or simply being a part of a community as first lady or first man. Many times a presidential spouse is thrust into roles and responsibilities that he or she may not be prepared to handle. The interviewed spouses discussed how they had to rise to the occasion of the role of presidential spouse. For Spouse 5, she believes that her life up until that point had led her to the presidency. "Looking back we see a lot of things in our past that were preparing us for just this particular presidency." Spouse 6 discussed that while her own

personality did not seem to mesh with what the expectations were of the position, her previous experiences helped prepare her to handle it. “I had the Myers-Briggs instrument a couple of times before moving to this new institution. So I basically knew what my personality was like. My husband doesn’t believe me, but I am an introvert. Most people that work in the line of work I did are introverts, but we’re all close because we understand each other. I knew what my limitations were. I knew how I would have to force myself to walk into a room and strike up a conversation with people. Years ago I used to be petrified when my husband left me alone and I would sink into myself. Now I’m comfortable with that. The presidential spouse role is a very steep learning curve, but in my case, it was not totally unrelated to other experiences I had.” Spouse 1 talks about the shock of moving into the presidential role. “I don’t think anyone is ever totally prepared unless you have grown up in academia. But I think that there are always things that cannot be anticipated. It is critical that you and your spouse openly communicate. You’ve got to have constant and consistent communication.” She goes on to comment about attending the CIC Presidents Institute and realizing all that she did not know about being a presidential spouse. “I remember going to my first CIC, and wondering, ‘What have I got myself into?’”

The interviewed spouses were asked to further discuss how they came to understand what they were going to do and how they were going to handle the demands of the role. Spouse 1 talked about how it was a conscious process. “Well, I kind of thought about it on my own first. I need to have a clear idea of what I’m thinking before I present it to someone else. Even my husband. And so I did, I sat down and evaluated the options and what was feasible. There were a couple of board members that I talked to as well. We had lunch and talked about the role. As I said before, my predecessor was pulled out of retirement – this poor couple. So for me it was a conscious effort, because I thought I can’t host 100 events a year in our home and still have any

semblance of home life for us and our children. But having said that, part of the expectation is entertaining. So, how do I make that work for us? And the other piece is that with working a full career outside of the University, what support systems do I need in place?” For Spouse 4, it was about being conscious of how he was perceived, so he spent time thinking about it. “I did consider it and it was, I think, more the way people perceive me visually and socially, a little bit. I feel very comfortable in my skin socially. So, I wasn’t too concerned about interacting with faculty, or staff, or alums or whatever, but appearance-wise, I was very conscious early on that I had to be a little more formal than, I think, the college expected me to be. And so that was the way I was – conscious of how I was going to be received, but I had to buy a couple of suits that were a grade above what I’ve had before. And I’m very conscious, too, of wearing things that compliment the college’s colors.” In addition, Spouse 4 realized that visibility was an important part of the role. “And so we go to athletic events. We go to as many art show openings, we go to as many readings, plays, musical events, everything we can go to, and that’s part of being the presidential couple.”

The interviewed spouses believe that the role is different for husbands and wives filling the presidential spouse role. Spouse 5, a woman, believes there may be differences, but she can only speak for her lived experience. “I only know the skin that I live in so I would imagine from what I hear among the presidential spouses that it would be different. But I am a female and I do what I as a female wish to do. So I don’t feel put upon in any way, shape, or form.” Spouse 6, a woman, said, “I think a male with a similar background as mine would probably feel very uncomfortable ‘losing his job,’ even though he had retired. I was forced to retire. Whereas for me I just don’t see how I could have continued to balance both a full-time job and the role of presidential spouse. When I was working outside the house, I was the last one to come home at



night. There was always something for me to do. I had worked for one employer for over 30 years. I think for the average male, he would have difficulty leaving his job in support of his wife's. At the same time, it could also be a sense of freedom for the men." Spouse 2 believes that there are inherent differences for male and female presidential spouses. "I think the trustees would just have to do it differently if it was a male spouse. Most particularly I think a lot of male spouses choose to continue their own career and choose not to go to dinners and travel and are much more forgiven by everyone for choosing not to – 'after all, he has a career.' But I tell you, if I didn't travel with my husband a lot and there's some – I don't go with him every place – he goes alone, but I go with him a lot of places and I know, I know, if I had the reputation of not going, because I have a career, that would be frowned upon. I know there is a double standard. It's not that they would go to the next board meeting and say, 'She doesn't travel with him.' It would be, 'She's not really as committed as, you know – we really need somebody who is a little more committed.' Whereas they would never really say that for a male spouse who worked at a local corporation for example, and didn't come over to any of the things on campus."

Spouse 3's comments imply not only that the change is different because he was male, but also because he was not preceded in the position by a spouse, "I was the *first* first man, there were no expectations. The previous president was single. There are more working spouses today and you have to accommodate that issue. I don't recall a specific conversation with anyone before I was hired. If there were expectations, and remember I was the first man, they were wise enough not to suggest that I would sit and pour tea. I don't worry about advance details for an event. I never did. I never have. I show up and thank staff." Spouse 1, a woman, asserts that there are differences between the expectations on male and female spouses, "I think the expectations are different. I don't think the entertaining would even be an issue." Spouse 4

explains how his situation and gender have played out as differences in the expectations for him as the presidential spouse, including the fact that he also does not play a role in event planning. “Quite frankly, the fact that I am a male, people have different expectations. I’m much more of an enigma in this world of executive and spouse, than the male executive and female spouse. Even in a time when you would expect that people would be more cognizant that a spouse has a life of one’s own. I’m expected to have a life of my own, whether I do or not, I’m expected to have one, because I’m a guy. Being a man makes it a little bit different than for the traditional welcoming wife, which has been the model for so many years. Being at an all women’s college where the majority – close to three-quarters of the board – are women, means the husbands are less likely to come to campus. I’m not the type that wants to organize anything from museum trips to book readings or coffees or stuff like that. So, I’ve responded to the spouses and the board in the same way I do to any development project or any development that’s done by my wife and her VP for development. I go along to be supportive of their job of representing the college. I’ve developed a passion for the place. I understand issues now on the campus and I’m not hesitant to speak up about things, but I let them lead the conversations. And if a spouse comes to campus, I make sure that I make myself available to them. But out of 35 or 40 board members, if we get 2-3 spouses that’s about an average number. But if it’s somebody I know and I know they want some company, I’ll figure out something to do, but it’s not on a regular basis or a planned basis.” Whether gender plays a role in the expectations, it appears that these interviewed spouses define themselves as being welcoming. Maybe that is the key to understanding the role. It may not be about gender, maybe spouses are just doing what comes naturally as a gracious person – making people feel comfortable and welcome. These gestures

are important in developing relationships that support the cause of the institution that provides employment for the president.

Some aspects of being a presidential spouse are the same as being the spouse of anyone – only amplified. For many spouses, one role is to be a sounding board for the president when he or she comes home. As Spouse 4 indicates, “I am the kitchen cabinet, as most presidential spouses are anyway. If there is something bugging my wife, I’m going to hear about it.” Spouse 2 echoes this idea of sharing the demands of work. “Work comes home and I guess I want that, because I feel like then I’m part of his life. I give advice all day for a living and he gets advice for free.” For Spouse 2, it is also the work of editor and reminder: “And he’ll bring home speeches and I’ll give suggestions. He sometimes follows them; sometimes doesn’t. And I’ll say I’m pretty good at seeing typos, so I sometimes proof stuff like that: ‘Oh, here you forgot to mention this person. Don’t forget to say thank you to that one.’ That sort of thing.” Spouse 1 tells how she supports her president and is supported by him, but her role is different than Spouse 2’s experience. “Oh, I don’t edit his speeches. He does a really good job with those. He’s a really good writer. There are things we talk about. If there is something bothering either one of us, we sit down and talk about it – that’s part of the marital relationship. I will say to him – and have done this over almost 30 years now – ‘I really need to talk to you about something. I need you to listen and tell me what you think.’” Spouse 3 explains, “I am the listening post; I am not the counselor. I am not the opinion maker. When I come in the door or I am on the telephone, it is the outpouring of my wife’s day – the issues – that I hear about. I don’t offer counseling or suggestions. She needs – and that’s the way our relationship has been – she needs someone to hear, not advise. She has plenty of other sources of advice.” Spouse 5 has a similar role, “He talks some issues over with me, but also there are some issues that he does not want me to know

so that I'm not waking up in the middle of the night as he does. But I know when there is something troubling him, because I know him well enough. It's important to him that I am physically there with him and that gives him support. When he leaves his office he always calls to say, 'I'm on my way home.' If I don't answer, he'll stay at the office. He does not want to come to the house unless I'm there."

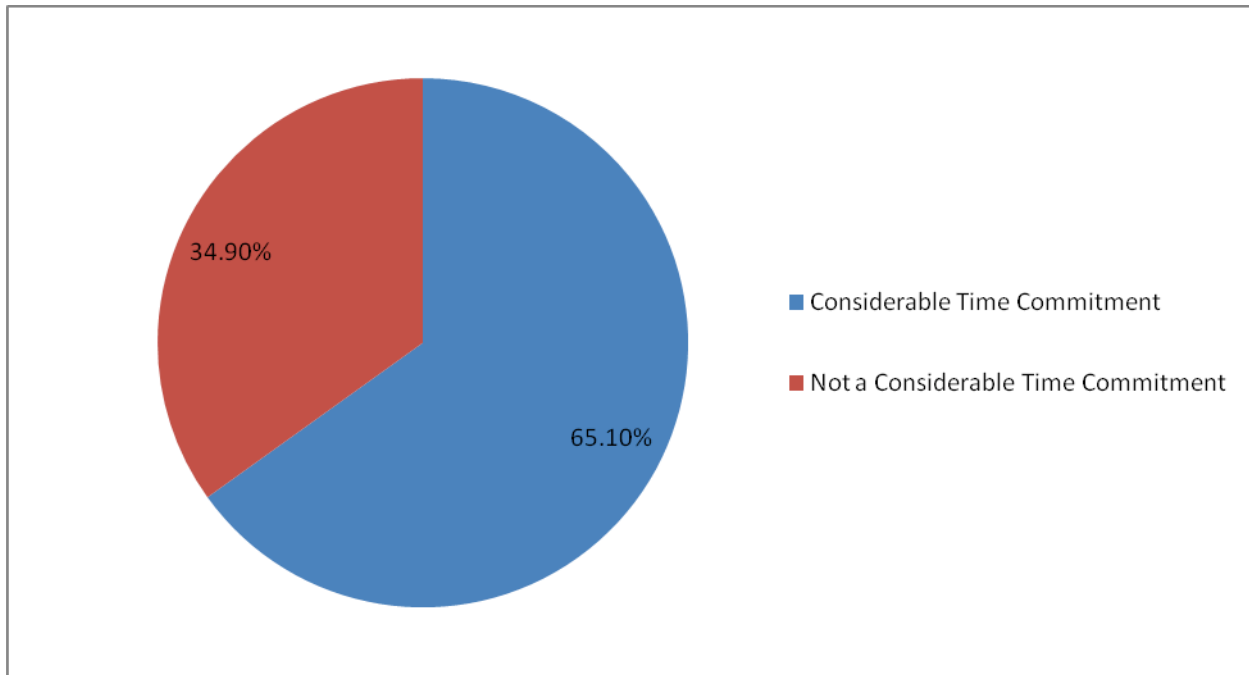
The hallmarks of the marital relationship clearly define being a presidential spouse. Layered on top of that are the expectations created by the presidential spouse in defining who s/he wants to be in this role. Presidential spouses are most influenced by their president and their own personal experiences in determining what their role is. While many presidential spouses commented that the predecessor had an influence on them, the presidential spouses denoted the influence as low.

### **Service to the Institution**

Nearly every presidential spouse defines his/her role based on providing some service to, or in support of, the institution. This work not only aids their president, but also is important to the life of the institution, whether through certain personal projects or in support of the overall marketing and development duties that advance the institution. These endeavors can be significant ways in which spouses can influence the life, character, and success of the institution.

The next set of questions focus on the amount of time committed to being a presidential spouse. I asked survey respondents if they believed that planning and attending events on behalf of the institution requires a considerable time commitment from the presidential spouse. While one respondent did not answer this question, the rest of the respondents indicated the following

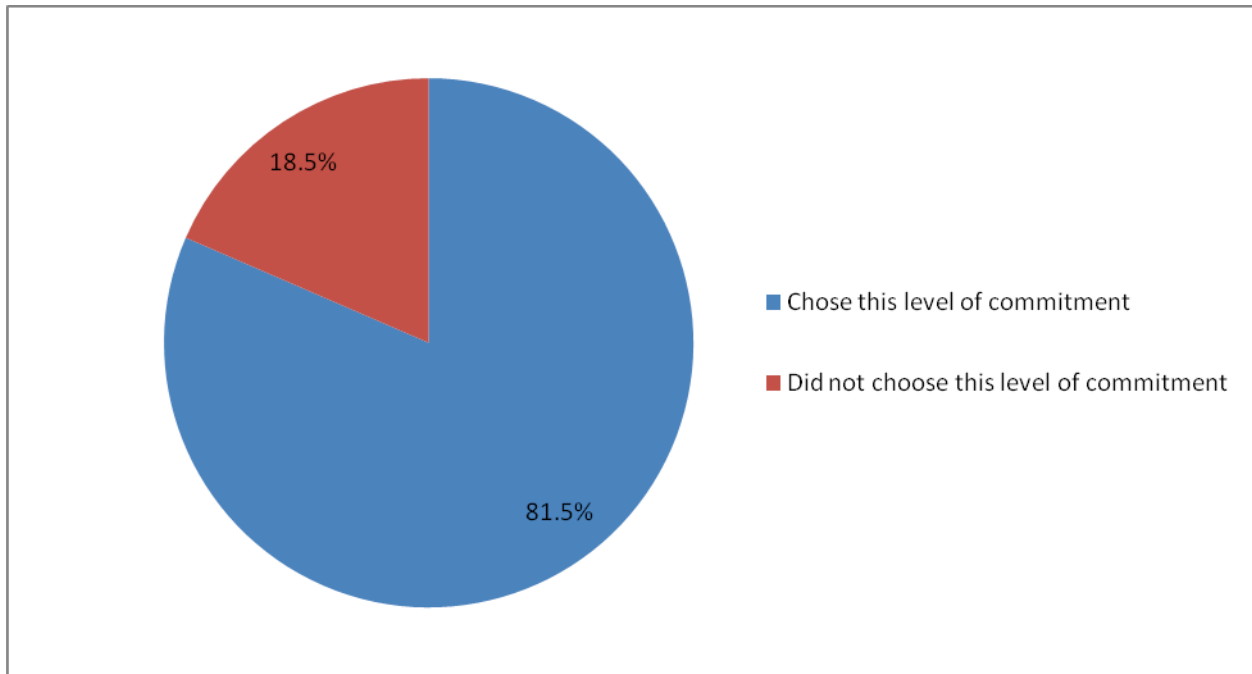
(see Fig. 15): 84 spouses (65.1%) agreed that involvement does require a considerable time commitment, while 45 spouses (34.9%) did not feel like it was a considerable time commitment.



**Figure 15: Presidential Spouse Responsibilities Time Commitment**

It is interesting to note that more than three-quarters of the respondents (99 spouses) indicated previously in the survey that they spend less than 20 hours per week on planning, hosting, or attending events. As was noted, there are often other responsibilities for presidential spouses besides these three, but nearly two-thirds of the respondents feel that their time commitment is significant. This could be because this is a volunteer (unpaid) position. We will return to this issue later.

When asked about this level of commitment, 106 spouses (81.5%) said they chose this level of commitment, while 24 spouses (18.5%) said they did not (see Fig. 16).



**Figure 16: Presidential Spouse - Volunteer or Volunteered?**

I asked the presidential spouses to identify how they would choose to apportion their time if they were free to do so. They had eight factors (including “other”) from which to choose.<sup>8</sup> The order of importance in freely apportioning time was as follows for the 130 respondents: family with a weighted answer of 6.98; service to higher education (serving your president’s institution) with a weighted answer of 5.92; friends (and interests) with a weighted answer of 5.17; a salaried job (other than as a presidential spouse) with a weighted answer of 4.72; other volunteer commitments with a weighted answer of 4.57; travel with a weighted answer of 4.00; recreation with a weighted answer of 3.77. The category for “other” was weighted at 2.32. However, due to the design of the survey, respondents could not indicate what they defined “other” to mean. Based on the level of weight the answer received, it is reasonable to determine that other was not as important as the answer choices on the survey list. Three spouses (2.3%) marked “other” as their top choice; 2 spouses (1.5%) marked it as their fourth option; 1 spouse

<sup>8</sup> I weighted these factors based on the number of responses per answer. Eight is the highest importance and 1 being the lowest importance.

(.8%) marked it as his/her sixth choice; 6 spouses (4.6%) marked it as their seventh choice; and 16 spouses (12.3%) marked it as their eighth choice.

For the interviewed spouses, they talked about the presumptions that come with being a presidential spouse. One of these presumptions is the idea that they have the ear of the president. People try to use the presidential spouse either to get information about a president's thoughts or to get information to the president, via the presidential spouse. Spouse 4 addressed this most directly. He talks about how he has learned to have a case of the "terminal stupids," which is never admitting to really knowing what is going on. "Because at a place like the small community where we live, the college can often be the largest employer. Everything from hiring a new football coach, to what happens with a new building on campus, is community news." People will try to pry you for information. However, it is easier for many spouses not to acknowledge what they know. For example, "There are times when one of her officers will bring up something – we'll be at a basketball game or the intermission of a play or an event and they'll say, 'Hey, what do you think about changing the way we do our identity thing.' And I'll go, 'I don't know. She hasn't told me anything about it. All I know is you guys are doing some study of your identity thing.'" This artful dodge is a helpful technique for presidential spouses who wish to play down their influence on the president and/or the college.

If the presidential spouse has *terminal stupids*, or otherwise does not let on that they have a quiet role in the college, then some people wonder what a presidential spouse is doing all day. For some presidential spouses, this could be a lot of pressure. For Spouse 5, it was a reasonable question. "So people naturally came to me and said, 'What do you do?' I never felt as if they had an idea about what I ought to be doing, but it was just up to me to be whoever and whatever I wanted to be. But the questions were always: 'What do you do with your time? What do you

do with your time?’ I was being given a salary so they have a right to know what I do with my time. After our fourth year of the presidency, I asked my husband if he would mind if I put an addendum to his report. I have been doing an annual report about ten years now. And I just talk about the hosting in our home, the things that I attended – I just flip back through the calendar and tally them all up. The trustees were so very, very pleased with what was happening.” This type of chronicling of the work of a presidential spouse is necessary for a board of trustees in understanding the importance of the work of a presidential spouse and its connection to promoting the cause of the institution.

While there are often many expectations placed on the presidential spouses, nearly two-thirds of presidential spouses believe the commitment is considerable. However, four-fifths of the presidential spouses say they selected their level of involvement. While spouses may tell others they have the *terminal stupids*, they privately in this study are admitting to their role as the kitchen cabinet – the sounding board for the president and influencer on the institution.

### **Paid Occupational Activities**

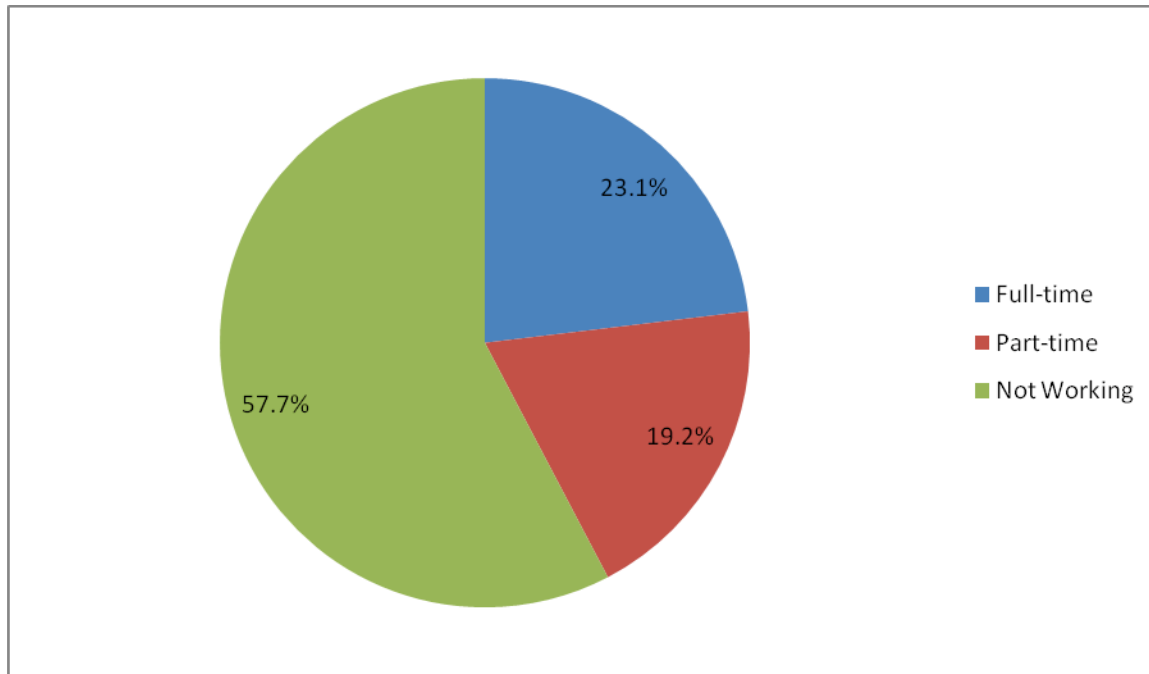
Relocations, the demands of the presidency, and family needs may curtail or diminish one’s career. For many spouses, however not all, the presidency means that the spouse’s career often becomes a dream deferred.

In the previous survey question about time allocation, paid work outside of the role of presidential spouse ranked among the top four items that a spouse would choose given the freedom to do so. In fact, 57 spouses (43.8%) marked it as one of their top four choices. It is important to note that work was listed by the remaining 73 spouses (56.2%) in their bottom four



in importance or not selected at all. Therefore, let us now turn to look at those who are working and the effect of the presidential spouse role on working.

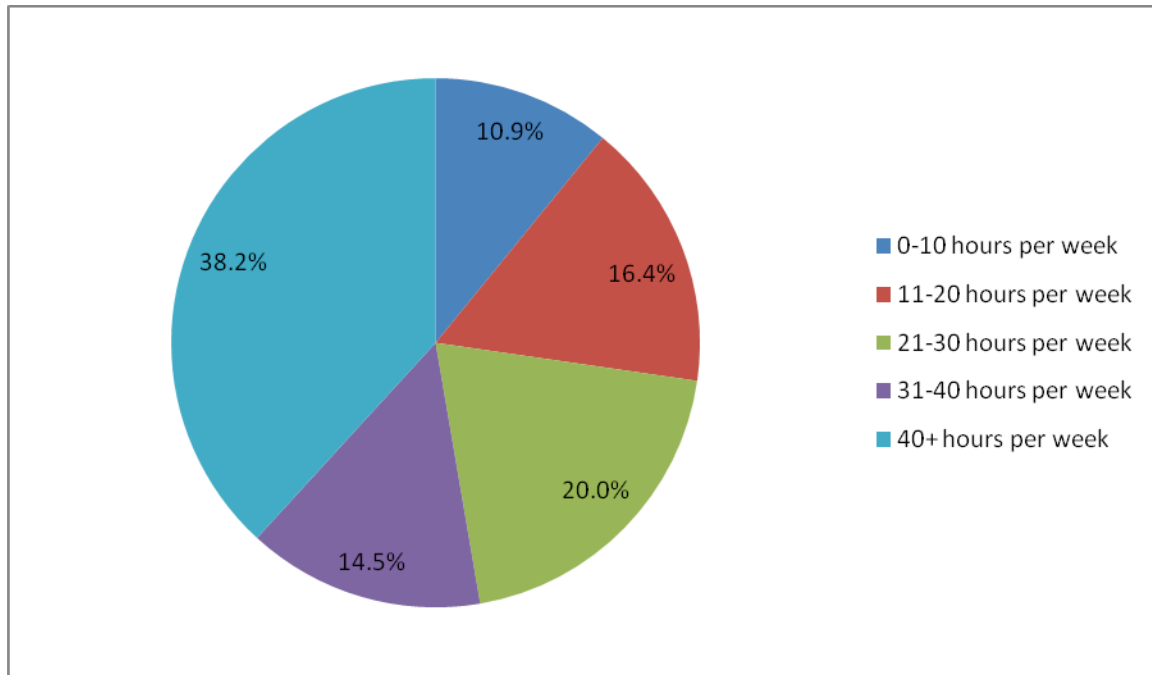
I asked the respondents whether they worked (see Fig. 17): 30 spouses (23.1%) are working full-time; 25 spouses (19.2%) are working part-time; and 75 spouses (57.7%) are not working outside of their role as a presidential spouse.



**Figure 16: Non-Presidential Spouse Work Commitments**

Of those working in a paid position outside of the presidential spouse role, I asked the spouses to indicate how many hours per week they work in this paid role. With the exception of one person, the answers logically match the answers to the previous question. While 30 spouses indicated working full-time, only 29 people indicated they work 31 or more hours per week. The remaining working spouses (26 people) indicated they work 30 or less hours per week. The hours worked breaks down as follows (see Fig. 18): 6 spouses (10.9%) work 0-10 hours per week; 9 spouses (16.4%) work 11-20 hours per week; 11 spouses (20.4%) work 21-30 hours per

week; 8 spouses (14.5%) work 31-40 hours per week; and 21 spouses (38.2%) work 40 or more hours per week.



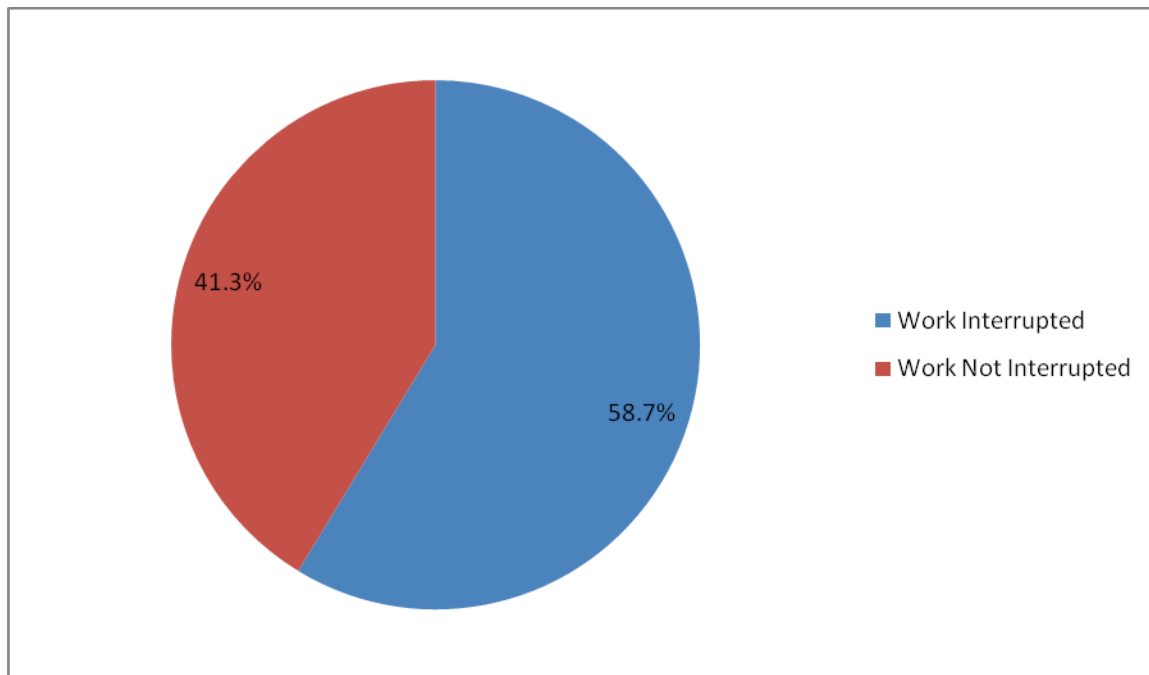
**Figure 17: Non-Presidential Spouse Hours Worked Per Week**

The spouses were then asked whether they began working since becoming a presidential spouse. The results are interesting: 22 spouses (35.5%) indicated they began work since becoming a presidential spouse, while 40 spouses (64.5%) indicated they were already working prior to becoming a presidential spouse. This is interesting because 62 spouses responded to this answer while only 55 spouses indicated above that they were currently working. This leads one to believe that 5 of the spouses (3.8%) may have begun a paid job after becoming a presidential spouse and then decided not to continue the job. (Of course, there could have also been confusion in the question that led some of these five to respond to the question.) With spouses serving for different lengths of time as a presidential spouse and possibly at more than one institution, it is hard to determine the reason why these spouses may have begun work and then had to discontinue it. The survey did not allow a way to capture this information.

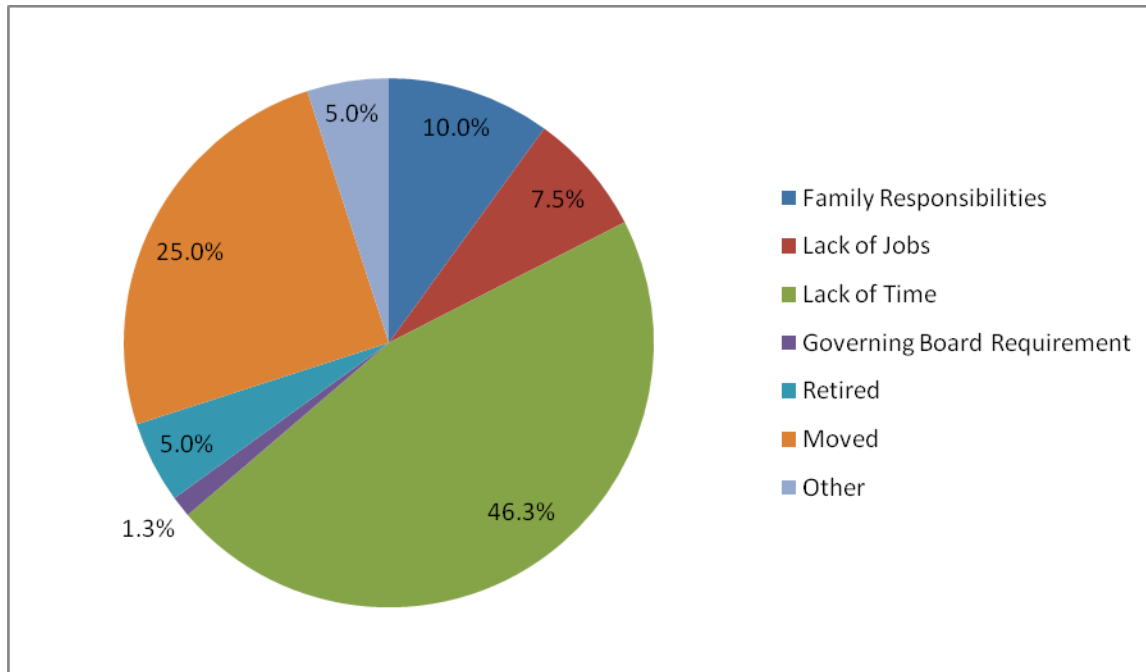
Of those who have a paid position outside of the presidential spouse role, the spouses were asked what their goal was in obtaining the paid position. The responses were pooled around two answers: 37 spouses (69.8%) indicated they obtained the position in order to maintain their professional status, while 7 spouses (13.2%) indicated it was to earn money. The remaining 9 spouses (17.0%) indicated “other” as their reason. The answers given for “other” included: “to maintain my sanity, my own bank account and to do what I’m really good at;” “Associate Professor in the college;” “previous commitment;” “to enhance the community in which we live;” “to have a place where I could be myself – a place where I did not have to be ‘on;” “I have a career;” “personal satisfaction;” “to work with students in a setting that has nothing to do with being a Presidential spouse;” and “continued my business of 30 years.”

In regards to work outside of the presidential spouse’s role, the spouses were asked two final questions. For those spouses who were working prior to becoming a presidential spouse (see Fig. 19), 71 spouses (58.7%) indicated that their work was interrupted by becoming a presidential spouse, while 50 spouses (41.3%) indicated that their work was not interrupted by becoming a presidential spouse (9 spouses did not respond to the question, which seems to indicate that they were not working prior becoming a presidential spouse). The spouses were then asked for the reason the work was interrupted (see Fig. 20): 8 spouses (10.1%) indicated family responsibilities; 6 spouses (7.6%) indicated lack of jobs in the community in which they were moving to be a presidential spouse; 13 spouses (46.8%) indicated lack of time to work because of presidential responsibilities; 1 spouse (1.3%) indicated a requirement by the governing board; 4 spouses (5.0%) indicated they retired; 20 spouses (25.3%) indicated the move interrupted the work; and 4 spouses (3.8%) indicated “other” reasons. Of the four who indicated other, they listed the following explanations: “the birth of twins;” “I work full time as the senior

development officer where my husband is President. For the first five years of his Presidency I volunteered at least 40 hours a week at the University. I was hired because I was very successful at fund raising for the school as a volunteer and had several very good job offers from other non-profits in development;” “all of the above;” “our move necessitated that I leave my previous position and was out-of-cycle for hiring in my field (education). I began working again within 6 months.”



**Figure 18: The Effect of the Presidential Spouse Role on Work**



**Figure 20: Reason for Work Interruption**

The interviewed spouses talked about how the presidency affected their individual careers. Spouse 1 was the most expressive about her career and the fact that the presidency had not been a hindrance. She says, “I am lucky, in the fact that, with my employer it has been looking at me, my education, my capabilities, my credentials – as opposed to my husband’s. So they’re really not looking at that relationship in hiring and retaining me. So for me, that’s a positive in keeping my roles somewhat separate. When my husband took the presidency we left a large metropolitan area. Because of that, I am not sure I would be at the same level in an organization as I am now. Two factors: I have completed my masters since we have been here and the size of some of the organizations in that geographic market. Part of the package when they hired me, was knowledge about my role as a spouse of a University president. He started in July, and I took this role in September.” Through conversations with her new employer, they arranged ways for her to work even when she travels as a presidential spouse. “So I am always connected through Blackberry, cell phones, etc. – the age of technology. There are parts of my

job I still do when I am gone. I think because of that, because when I walked in the door saying these are my other responsibilities – this is what you’re getting – I didn’t have some of the other barriers that others might have if they are already in their job and then, their husband takes on the role of president. For me, for both of us (the employer), it was new. So far we haven’t had any issues.” For Spouse 3 he has also found positive results: “It has clearly been positively affected, because it has opened some doors. It has added some credibility. It also is a hindrance, because I don’t do a lot of work with institutions of higher education and I could – I clearly understand all of the issues.” But he clarifies that he remains successful in his work, “Have I had to give up some business commitments? No.” For Spouse 2, the effect on her career was less affected by the presidency but by her husband’s prior work in the business sector. She has, however, recently cut her work hours, but more because of her decisions to be more active in campus and community involvements, than because of an imposition from the expectations of the presidential spouse role. Spouse 2 elaborated, “I would say first of all it was negatively impacted by being married to my husband and moving around. Working in his previous industry negatively impacted it. Every two years you move to a new city. You can’t get a career going. But, in some ways I’ve done things I would not have done. So when I start feeling sorry for myself and saying, ‘Oh, I couldn’t do this.’ Well, I probably would not be doing some things now if I hadn’t had to make changes and choices. So I think it’s kind of a wash in terms of career advancement. I think that it depends on the career you have. Because my career is very flexible and I’ve been able to do everything I’ve wanted to do in my career. One of the reasons I really like my work, in addition to the fact that I like it, I schedule my own appointments. I worked full-time until about two years ago, when I decided I wanted to do some other things. So I’ve been all along, very involved in the community – on a lot of boards – practically every

board that you can be on. And I've been president of the boards. And I thought, 'I want to get into some hobbies and I want to have more free time. So, where can I cut? Well, I can cut my work.' So I went back to kind of like half-time." For others spouses, the work life changed, because they chose to be involved in the work of their spouses. For Spouse 6, this meant an early retirement. "Let's just say I don't think I would be retired now had I not moved. So, my personal finances changed dramatically in a negative direction." Other spouses discussed how the presidency further had a negative effect on their careers. For Spouse 5, there was a loss of career but a gain in other ways. "Well, it has been a positive effect, but not in my professional life, it's almost like this is another chapter and you have to give up this to have the joy of that." Spouse 4 also notes that his career has been negatively affected, but it was a conscious choice because there were a number of factors changing in the family life as his wife took the presidency. Spouse 4 says of the presidential role's effect on his career, "Well, negatively, very definitely in terms of income, because I made a conscious decision to cut back my work hours. Our children were graduating from college, so we didn't need the income in the same way. I don't know how families do it that have young children in presidencies – it boggles the mind. So, in our case, there was a negative impact economically – both on my income and, quite frankly, my wife's income. She makes less now as a president than she would be making if she had stayed at her previous position at her previous institution – it's based on the size of the institution. I had no desire to be part of negotiation for any benefits for me. I find now that there are some spouses who do have benefits. Many of those come on a second contract or later in a presidency, based upon kind of a mutual agreement based on how people are received by the board of trustees, alums, and all of those other constituencies. So, it negatively affected our income, but the plus side has been so much more for me. I really enjoy doing it." Spouse 1 also

discusses how she treats the presidential spouse role in a job-like manner. She goes so far as to schedule meetings with her husband about college matters that affect them both. “His assistant at the time was flabbergasted when I told her I wanted to schedule an appointment with him for about an hour. She said, ‘You don’t have to do that.’ And I said, “Oh, yeah I do, because I need to respect his time.’ And I never call his office. If he’s [in a] meeting, his secretary would say, ‘Well, I’ll interrupt him.’ ‘No you won’t. I’ll leave a message.’ You know, unless it’s an emergency or something. And he’s like that with me. And we’ve always been that way. So, you know, for certain major things, I just schedule a meeting with him and it works, you know, because then we keep the business of the university on business time, as opposed to having that flow into our family life and family time.”

Spouse 3 discusses that presidents and spouses must have these discussions about work and career effects well before there is a job offer. “When you get to the final three – to the on-site interview, it’s not a situation of the candidate saying no. The candidate coming to that level interview is a yes. And if the spouse isn’t with it, you’ve got a problem that has to work out. And I had signed on to the idea of a presidency and I agreed to figure out how to make it work.” However, some presidents and spouses do not talk about the effect of the presidency on the career of the spouse. Spouse 6 shares her experience, “We did not discuss it. I think, early in our marriage, my husband felt fearful, in a roundabout way, of my career being derailed when we got married and I moved to his community. I had to take a title demotion. I think my husband has always felt somewhat guilty about his own personal ambitions prior to my retirement, because he knew that they would conflict with my own career.” Spouse 6 continues to talk about how a CIC President Vocation workshop had a positive effect. “We were in the first group and all the couples in the group felt the same way. It was our first time sitting with



our peers and talking about how this partnership works and how it is okay to admit that what was initially one person's ambition became the couple's goal. There were problems that we inherited at the school – financial problems that forced us to be closer and we didn't have time to get into any whining about 'woe is me, I don't have my friends here' and that kind of stuff. So I didn't really know what to expect, but it was no different from not knowing what to expect as the wife of an Ivy League professor. I got more hives walking into Ivey League receptions and dinners than I'd gotten all the years prior and since.” Spouse 6 goes on to share how the vocation workshop was eye opening for her president. “Since the Vocation Seminar, my husband said, ‘You know, we presidents really don't realize what we are committing our spouses to. These were our ambitions. They carry a lot of weight and it's a lot to ask.’ And he has even said how much he appreciates all I do for him.”

Accepting the presidency often means that the spouse will have changes in his/her ability to continue to work in their prior field. These changes may require the presidential spouse to look for other ways to fulfill ambitions, goals, and personal expectations. Of the spouses who are working, more than two-thirds do so to maintain their professional status. Of all presidential spouses who were working at the time of beginning the presidency, nearly 60% had their work interrupted by the demands of the position.

## **Housing Status**

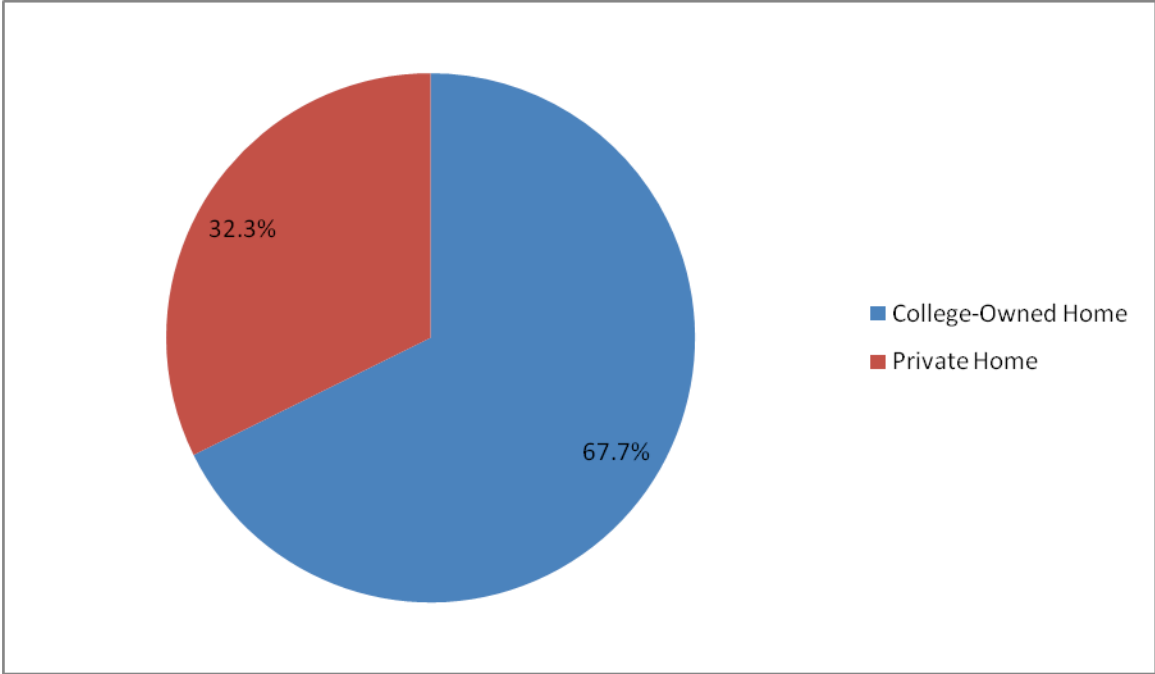
The presidential home is an important place to many institutions – for the presidential couple it is not only a home, but also a place to entertain; for the campus and community it can be a point of pride and an honor to receive an invitation for a meal or social occasion there. The presidential home is not only the center of life and activity for the presidential family, but it often

also becomes a hub of activity for the campus and community. This dual purpose of a presidential home puts strains on the inhabitants – whether the institution or the presidential couple owns the house. According to earlier research, many of the demands of home management and family oversight fall to the presidential spouse, which affects career, personal time, and oversight of entertaining.

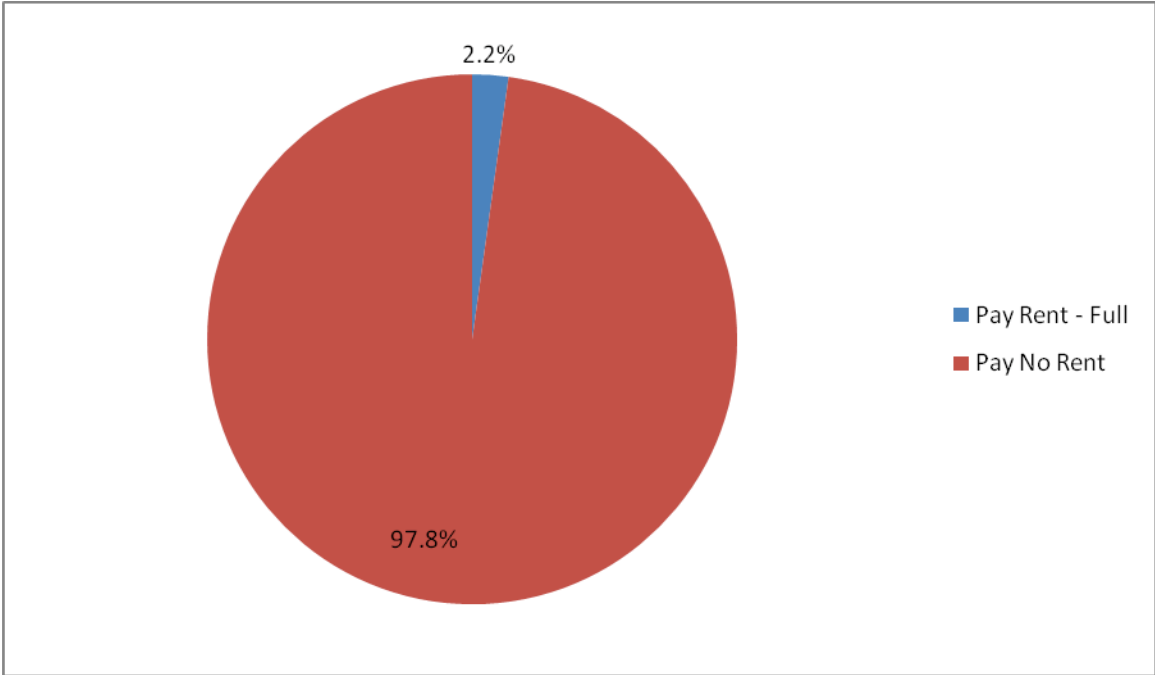
While not all presidents live in a college-owned home, they predominantly do (see Fig. 21): 88 presidential spouses (67.7%) stated that they live in a college home, while 42 presidential spouses (32.3%) do not. Of those living in a college-owned home, only 2 presidential spouses (2.2%) pay a full rent for the use of the house, no one pays a partial rent, and 88 presidential spouses (97.8%) pay no rent (see Fig. 22)<sup>9</sup>. For those living in a privately-owned home, there is a mixed bag as to whether or not they receive any housing allowance or stipend to pay for their off-campus house (see Fig. 23): 7 presidential spouses (15.6%) report receiving a housing allowance that fully pays for their home; 18 presidential spouse (40.0%) report receiving a housing allowance that partially pays the mortgage or rent for their home; and 20 presidential spouses (44.4%) report receiving no housing allowance. (The observant reader will realize that while 42 people reported not living on campus, 45 people responded to the question about off campus housing allowance. It is assumed that the three extra people were marking “no” for whether or not they received a housing allowance.)

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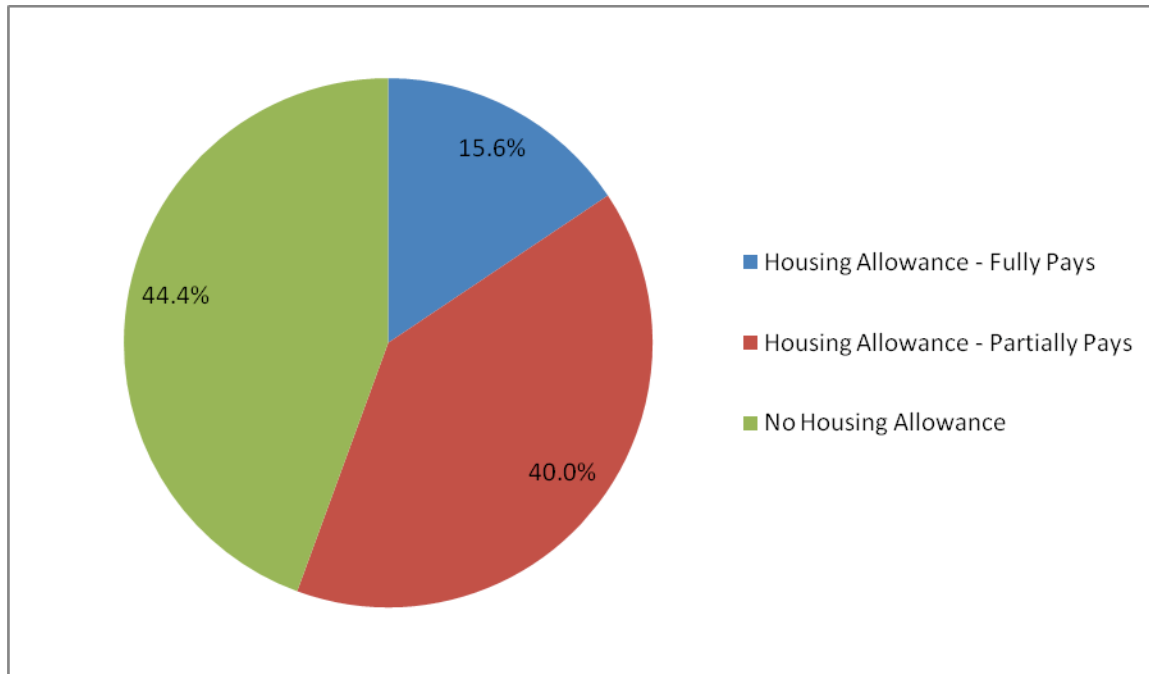
<sup>9</sup> There is a discrepancy between these two questions. While 88 people responded to living in a college-owned house, 90 people responded to the question related to not paying any rent for living in a college-owned home. It is assumed two extra people marked no payment to indicate that since they did not live in a college-owned home they also did not pay rent for it.



**Figure 21: Residency of the Presidential Couple**



**Figure 22: Pay Rent for Living in College-Owned Home**



**Figure 23: Does College Provide a Housing Allowance for Private Home that Covers the Cost of the Home?**

Of the presidential spouses interviewed, four lived in college-owned homes (Spouses 2, 3, 5 and 6) and two lived in private homes (Spouses 1 and 4). Because the presidential couple may entertain quite often (as discussed further in a latter section of this analysis) at the presidential home, the college may assume upkeep expenses for the presidential home, whether college-owned or privately owned. There are struggles that come from either having a presidential home or living in your own home. Spouse 6 comments on growing into a larger presidential home, “We live in a presidential house. The only reimbursement I get is for spending on the house. And I try to keep that to a minimum. In the first few months there were several little purchases made. For example, we didn’t have enough bathroom rugs to go around the house we now live in. We lived in a much smaller dwelling. Now I only have to worry about replacements and dry cleaning.” This is an area where a lesson learned early on can be helpful. As the literature suggests, the presidential home often becomes an area of contention for

campus and community opinions about the presidential couple. Spouse 2 talks about how she tries to share this with her fellow presidential spouses. “And when I have an opportunity to say things I’ve learned to my colleagues, I say, ‘Don’t try to do it all at once. Do little bits, and then nobody will notice. But if you come in and want to do everything and spend \$100,000, they’re going to gripe.’”

Spouse 4 talks about how his wife is compensated for their private home, which is used for some college entertaining, “What the board did for us was especially done because of Sarbanes-Oxley and all the changes for non-profits. They give my wife a stipend that is a part of the total benefits package that we spend for our home. For instance, we re-did our floors before she took office. We have all hardwood floors and we had them sanded and sealed. We paid for that. We kept the receipt. We have a house file, when we buy flowers for our garden I put it in the house file, because we just have to show that we have been spending a certain amount every year on the house for upkeep and maintenance, which quite frankly isn’t hard. Our house was built in 1929. There’s always upkeep and maintenance.” Spouse 4 goes on to explain that he is the custodian and groundskeeper for their private home that is used for college purposes. “I cut the grass. I snow blow the sidewalks. Now if I buy a new snow blower, a new lawn mower, I put that in the house file, because I figure, ‘Okay, even though I’m going to be using it, it’s something the college would have to pay for whether a landscape service or maintenance did it,’ and we’ve not had any issues with that. It’s just another thing where you learn to keep your records and it’s a small enough stipend that you spend more than that – you spend more than that by a long shot.”

The presidential home is important in the life of the institution, especially if owned by the institution and located on the college campus. Approximately two-thirds of the surveyed spouses

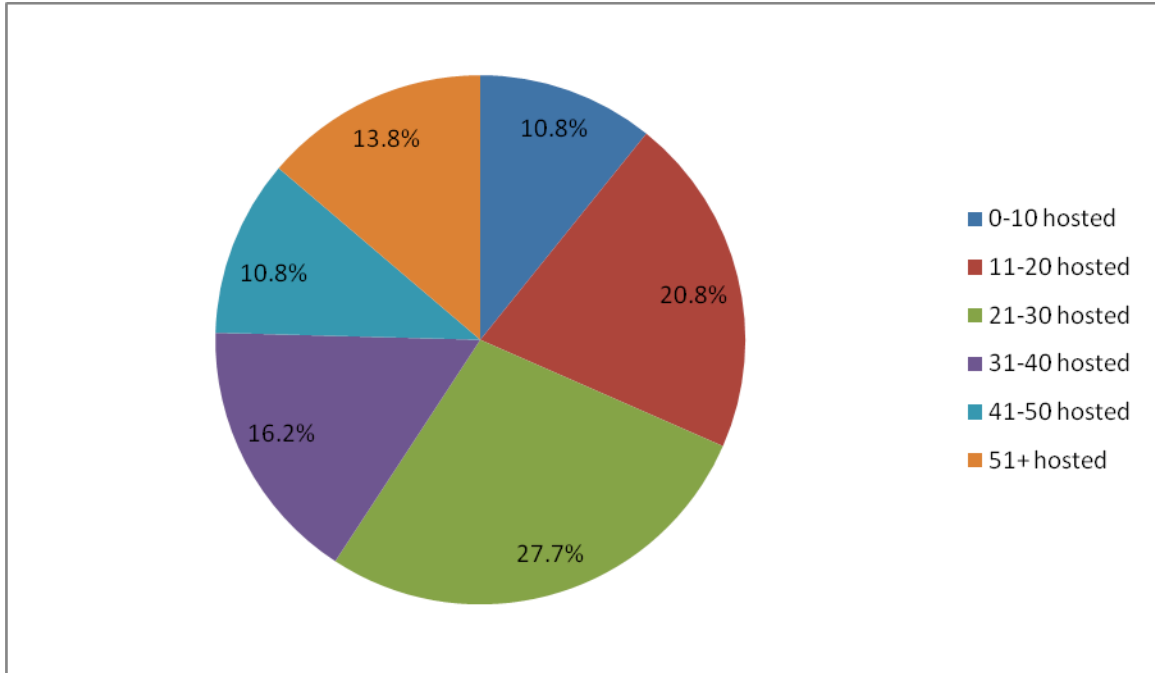
live in a college-owned home. The literature says that the presidential home is, in fact, a source of struggle – for both the presidential couple and the institutional community. For the presidential couple it is a home and a place to entertain, subject to review, scrutiny, and a lack of privacy. For the community it can be a point of pride, but also envy of the people who get to live in the house.

### **Entertainment Activities**

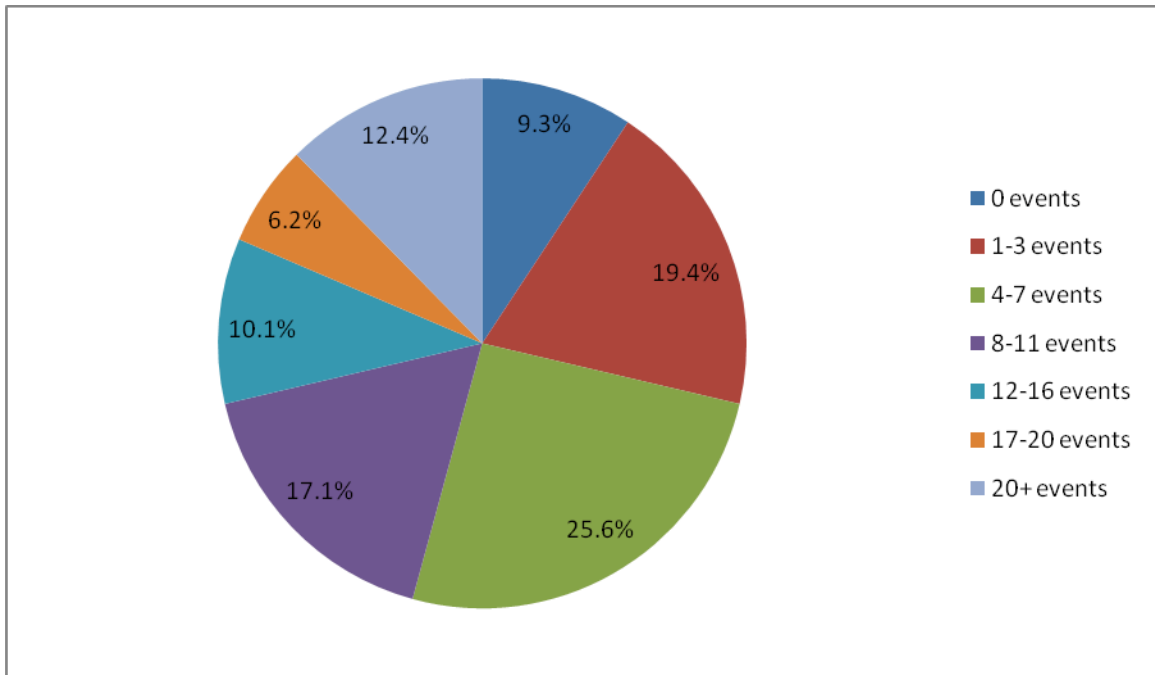
At its most basic level – when done well – entertaining provides opportunities for people to connect with one another and the institution. As the living logo of the institution, the presidential couple exhibits the role and influence of the position through the social aspects of the job. Entertaining students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the institution is one of the most important roles of the presidency. According to the survey and interviewed spouses, most presidential spouses participate in some way. As institutions in today’s market constantly seek to build relationships that lead to funds for the institution, entertaining becomes a primary vehicle. As noted previously, people give to people, not to things. In many situations, the presidential spouse is one of the people to whom donors are giving. Donors are more likely to give when they feel welcomed, cared about, and valued. In many situations, the presidential spouse plays a role in this through entertaining.

Approximately 90% of those surveyed indicated that the president and presidential spouse host 11 or more events each year with nearly 25% of them hosting more than 40 events each year – this is nearly one event per week (when you consider it based on the academic year calendar). Note, these are only the events hosted, not attended, by the presidential couple. The full break down of hosted events follows (see Fig. 24): 14 presidential spouses (10.8%) host 0-10

events per year; 27 presidential spouses (20.8%) host 11-20 events per year; 36 presidential spouses (27.7%) host 21-30 events per year; 21 presidential spouses (16.2%) host 31-40 events per year; 14 presidential spouses (10.8%) host 41-50 events per year; and 18 presidential spouses (13.8%) host more than 50 events per year. Further, presidential spouses are asked to attend institutional events, without the president, on his or her behalf. The fact that more than 90% of respondents attended at least one event without the president indicates that the presidential spouse generally has a role in carrying the message and representing the institution by him or herself (see Fig. 25): 12 spouses (9.3%) attend no events alone; 25 presidential spouses (19.4%) attend 1 to 3 events alone; 33 presidential spouses (25.6%) attend 4 to 7 events alone; 22 presidential spouses (17.1%) attend 8 to 11 events alone; 13 presidential spouses (10.1%) attend 12 to 16 events alone; 8 presidential spouses (6.2%) attend 17 to 20 events alone; and 16 presidential spouses (12.4%) attend more than 20 events alone each year. This means that nearly 30% of the respondents attend roughly one event per month as the primary representative of the institution.



**Figure 19: Number of Events Hosted by the Presidential Couple Each Year**

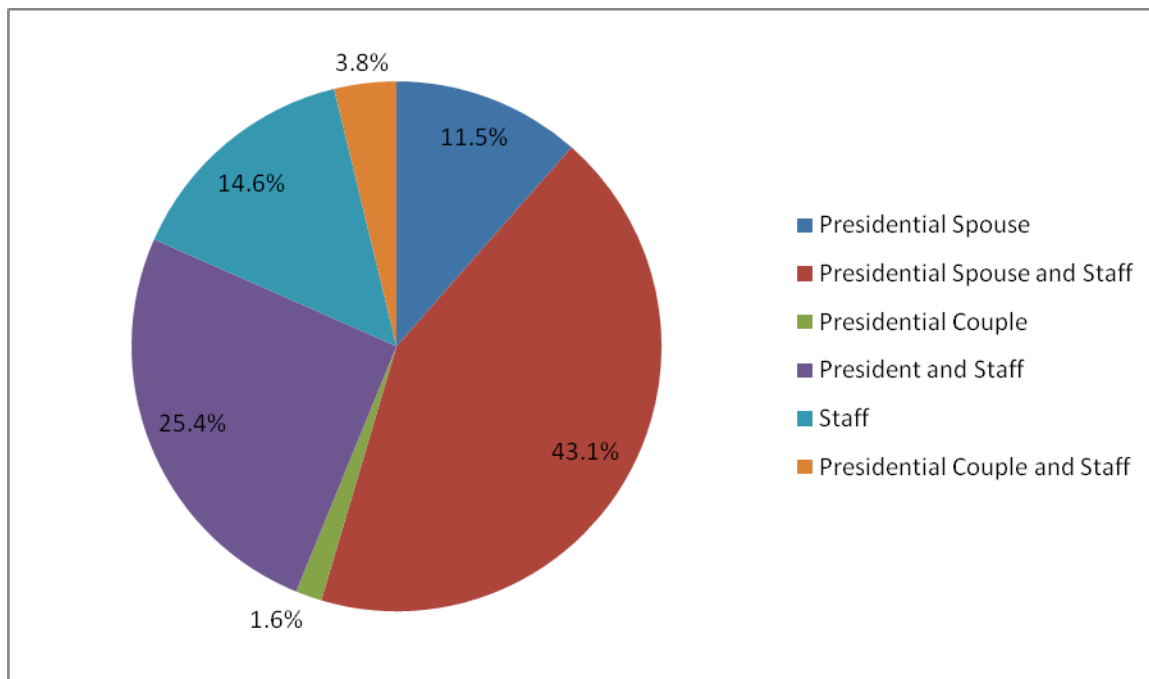


**Figure 20: Number of Institutional Events Attended by Presidential Spouse Alone**

The challenge of hosting so many events each year is not only attending and hosting the event but also the time involved in planning and executing the events. Presidential spouses are involved at some level in planning more than 60% of the events. When asked, who plans the



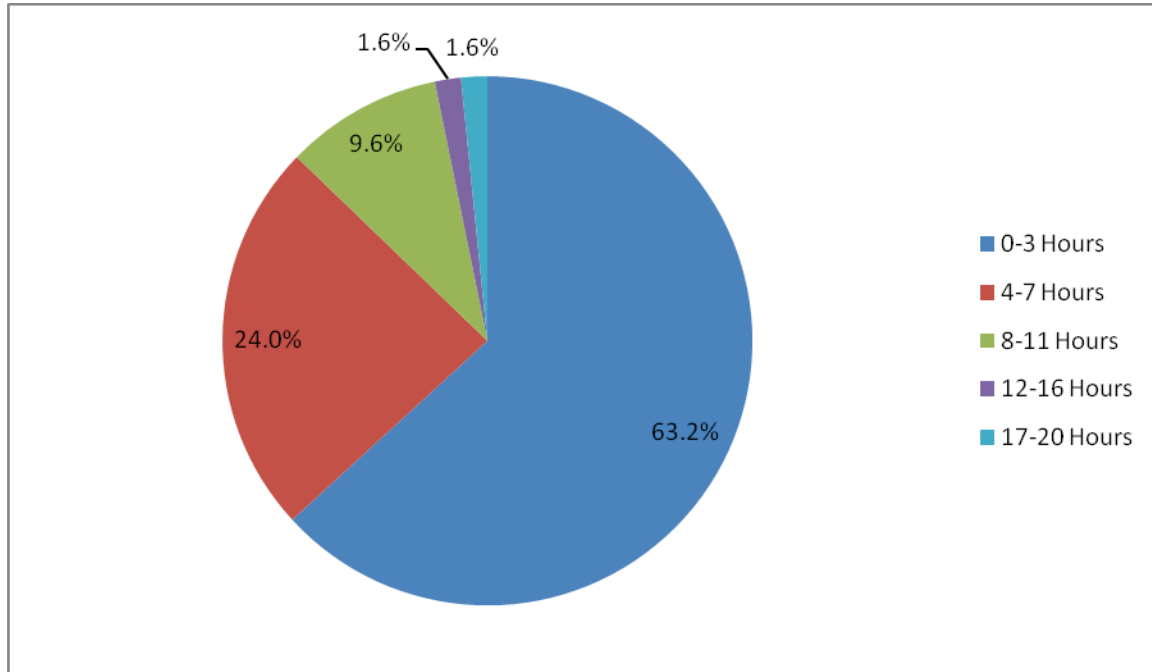
majority of these events, the responses were as follows (see Fig. 26): 15 respondents (11.5%) indicated that the presidential spouse plans a majority of the events; 56 respondents (43.1%) indicated that the presidential spouse and staff plan a majority of the events; 2 respondents (1.6%) indicated that the presidential spouse and staff plan a majority of the events; 33 respondents (25.4%) indicated that the president and presidential spouse plan a majority of the events; 19 respondents (14.6%) indicated that the president and staff plan a majority of the events; 5 respondents (3.8%) indicated that the staff plans a majority of the events; no respondents indicated that the president, presidential spouse, and staff plan a majority of the events; no respondents indicated that the president alone plans a majority of the events.



**Figure 21: Who Plans the Majority of These Functions?**

An interesting paradox to the number of events is that a majority of spouses indicate that they do not spend a lot of time planning these events. For each event, I asked about the average number of hours spent in planning (see Fig. 27): 79 presidential spouses (63.2%) indicated that they spend less than three hours planning each function; 30 presidential spouses (24.0%) indicated that they spend 4-7 hours planning each function; 12 presidential spouses (9.6%)

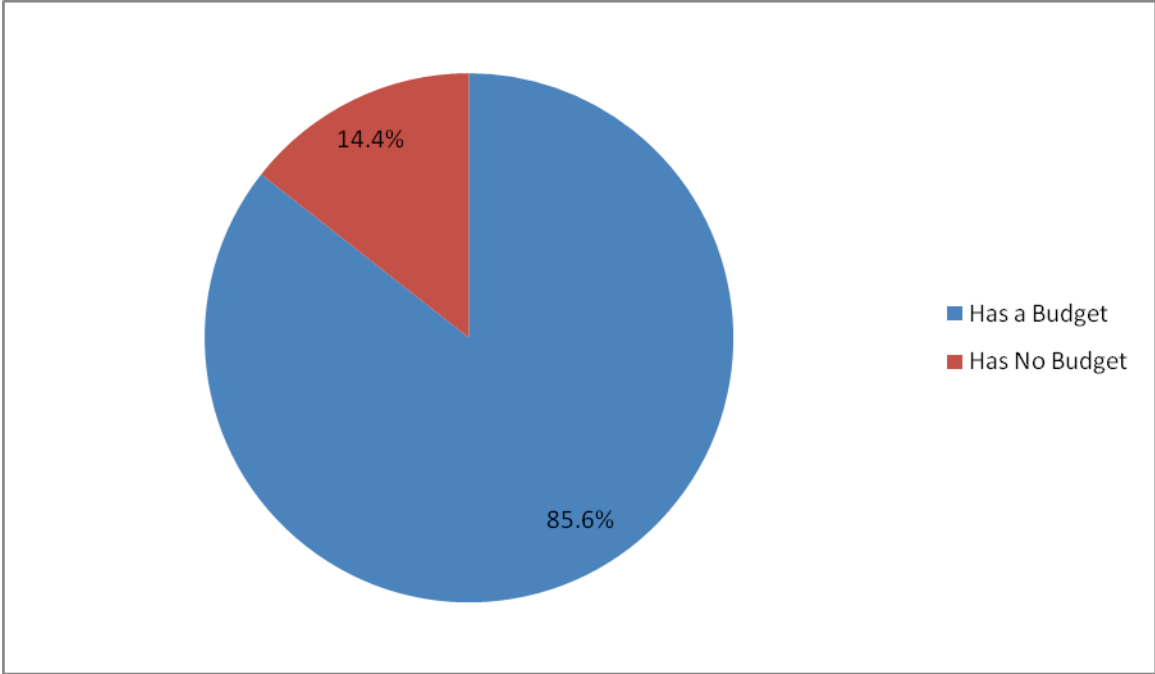
indicated that they spend 8-11 hours planning each function; 2 presidential spouses (1.6%) indicated that they spend 12-16 hours planning each function; 2 presidential spouses (1.6%) indicated that they spend 17-20 hours planning each function; no spouse indicated they spend more than 20 hours planning each function; and 5 presidential spouses did not respond to this question (it is assumed that these spouses do not plan functions).



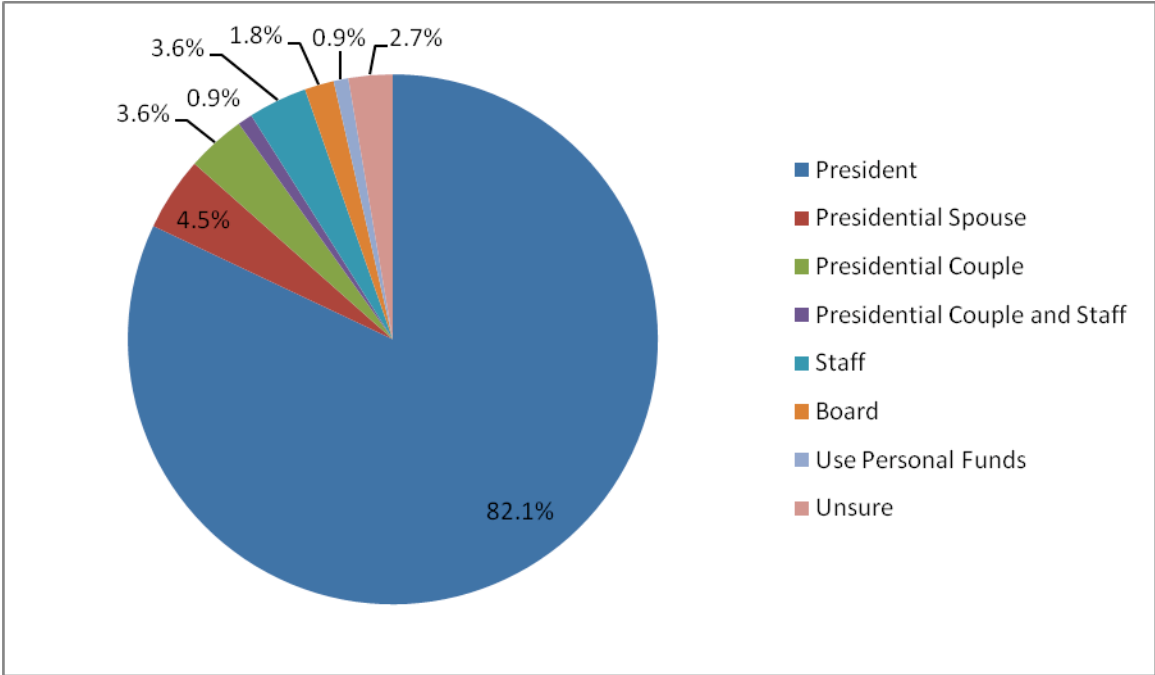
**Figure 22: Average Number of Hours Spent Planning Functions**

These events, whether planned by presidential spouse or others, are not typically without a cost. A clear majority of surveyed presidential spouses have an entertainment budget (see Fig. 28): 107 respondents (85.6%) have an entertainment budget, while 18 respondents (14.4%) do not. (There were 5 respondents who skipped this question.) When asked who controls the entertainment budget, by and large it is the president (see Fig. 29): 92 respondents (82.1%) indicated that the president controls the entertainment budget; 5 respondents (4.5%) indicated that the presidential spouse controls the entertainment budget; 4 respondents (3.6%) indicated that the president and presidential spouse control the entertainment budget; 4 respondents (3.6%)

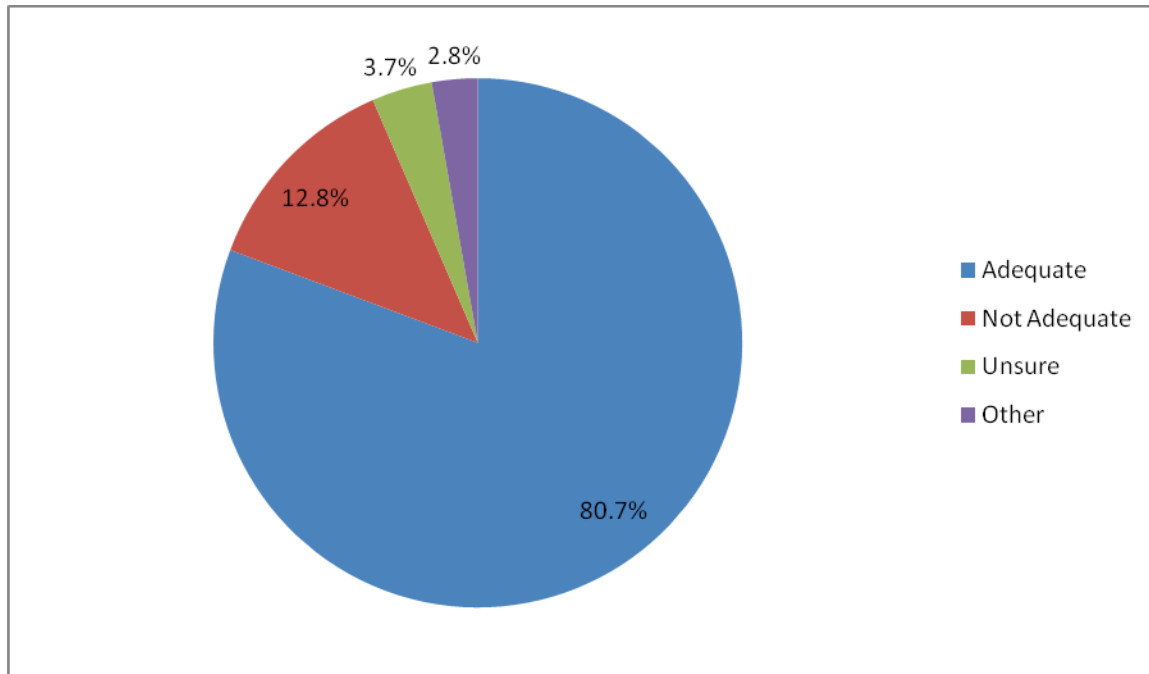
indicated that the staff controls the entertainment budget; 2 respondents (1.8%) indicated that the board controls the entertainment budget; 1 respondent (.9%) indicated that the president, presidential spouse, and the staff control the entertainment budget; 1 respondent (4.5%) indicated that the presidential couple uses their own personal funds to pay for events and gives this as their gift to the college; 3 respondents (2.7%) indicated that they are unsure who controls the budget (18 respondents did not answer this question, which correlates with the number who said they have no entertaining budget). Finally, respondents were asked to indicate if they felt the entertainment budget was adequate (see Fig. 30): 88 presidential spouses (80.7%) think the budget is adequate; 14 presidential spouses (12.8%) do not think the budget is adequate; 4 presidential spouses (3.7%) did not feel able to answer the question because they do not know what the budget is; 1 presidential spouse (.9%) indicates that depending on the financial conditions at the institution, s/he adjusts that budget for entertaining accordingly; 1 presidential spouse (.9%) indicates that s/he is “always trying to save money so does lots of stuff myself . . . this is not always appreciated or a good thing, but I feel guilty spending a lot on caterers”; 1 presidential spouse (.9%) indicates the options for the answer to this question were not valid for the circumstances; and 21 respondents did not comment.



**Figure 23: Does Your Institution Have an Entertainment Budget for these Functions?**



**Figure 24: Who Controls the Entertainment Budget?**



**Figure 30: Is the Entertainment Budget Adequate?**

The entertaining aspect of the role is often how presidential spouses get to know members of the college community. For many institutions, presidential spouse attendance at campus events is either overtly or subtly expected by members of the community. Spouse 5 also discusses how it is important for her and her husband to attend these events. “It means so much to the students when they see that we are there. We go, because we want to go, not because they want us there. But it’s as if the students feel, ‘Oh, you think it’s important what we’re doing.’ And it is very important to us what they are doing.” Spouse 2 discusses that entertaining is work and that point cannot be lost. She discusses trustee weekend events. “We have them again at our house so that’s something where we work, work, work – this is a working weekend. That’s what we tell all the vice presidents and their spouses, ‘Don’t bring your wife if you’re going to stand in a corner and talk to her. Your wife needs to know this is working for you and hopefully for her, too.’ So we just work, work, work the crowd.” Spouse 3 brings to light the time demands of the presidential couple. There is always somewhere to go or an event to attend. For couples

further into the presidency, they begin to find ways to say no more easily. “We have scaled back – in the early years of the presidency for a host of reasons it’s advantageous to put your tux on every night or close to it. I’m on my third tux in twelve years and that’s in part because the girth has changed, but it’s also in part because of the frequency early on. We were out all the time. Most of those were my wife’s events, or community events that we should be at that wouldn’t hurt either of our businesses. We’ve just said, ‘Thank you, no.’ We know the people. They know us. We know what their spiel is. If it’s someone or something that has great interest to us – we’ll do it. Otherwise, no.”

I asked the interviewed spouses to talk about their interactions with member of the faculty and staff, and how they feel these people perceive them. Spouse 6 commented, “I don’t think they really understand how much is involved in either role (president or spouse), to be quite honest. I think they think of these as pretty plush jobs.” Spouse 3 spoke of the need to keep people on campus at a safe distance and to make sure you are not being taken advantage of because of your marital relationship with the president. “Well, early on – in the first year or two – there were three or four faculty people that were, ‘Let’s go play golf,’ and I learned to distance myself from them. I don’t even know who the antagonists are on the different camps of the faculty. I don’t want to know. My wife will occasionally say, ‘You need to stay clear.’ And I do, generally, anyway. The staff I joke with very carefully – tactfully. The secretaries, I am ever grateful to, even thankful to. My wife’s office staff – if I drop a pen they are down there trying to pick it up. I am very sensitive to that.” For this reason, Spouse 3 says, “I have a very cordial relationship with virtually everyone at the institution.” Unfortunately, that is not Spouse 2’s experience. “Well, I would say that the faculty has never been supportive of anything that my husband or I do. They’ve been pretty negative towards him the whole time. It doesn’t bother

him. It bothered me a great deal in the beginning. But now I've said, 'Oh, well.' But the community and the trustees and the staff have been *so* supportive. They are almost gushy in their support and that's fine." Fortunately, there is a balance in perspectives and Spouse 2 does have her campus champions.

While there is variance in staff support for the interviewed spouses, the support appears to break down along gender lines. The two male spouses (Spouse 3 and Spouse 4) do not have any administrative staff support other than what any president has in terms of helping with dinners at the home. Neither of these men oversee the arrangements nor the staff for these events.

The experience of the female presidential spouses is different. Spouse 1 works with a number of on-campus staff people to help maintain the home and executive details for parties at the president's personal home. "Facilities has responsibility for the grounds of the University as well as our home. They schedule. I do meet with them around February or the beginning of March to discuss the grounds and gardens around our home and develop our plan. We're changing gardens right now and trying to make them a little less labor intensive than what they were, but other than that, not really. When sending invitations to events I host, I access my husband's assistant. I have a breakfast for the board spouses while the board meetings are going on and they have decided that they want to read books and do book discussions, so I usually type the letter, e-mail it to his assistant, and she sends them out for me. It's easier for me to think, type and e-mail it, and she gets it on letterhead with my electronic signature." In regards to the entertaining, Spouse 1 had to create relationships and expectations with staff members to be able to effectively and efficiently plan events while still managing a full-time professional position off-campus. She explains the amount of time this consumed early in the presidency. "At the

beginning it was intensive walking everyone through the house letting them know exactly what the expectations were, showing dining services where everything was in the kitchen, and how I would like things set-up, laying out a plan. We have never allowed smoking in our home so how do we make that work for people who smoke? Coat racks when the weather is inclement – I mean, where are we going to put those and how are we going to make it work. Bar tenders that work, since we don't have that as a service on campus. So, all of those connections were established. Now, we're having an event in January. The menus are in my bag here, and the bartenders are all ready to go and it will be set-up and done and that's for 200 people, but it's on campus." Spouse 5 shared that she, too, has access to support staff as needed. "Any time I need secretarial help, I can use my husband's office staff. If I need place cards made for the party, I send them a list and they care of making the place cards." Generally, these connections to staff appear to be easily accessed as needed.

For Spouse 2, who has access to a household staff, the challenge comes in giving up some privacy. "I have a housekeeper who comes once a week. I could have what I want, but it's a tradeoff between: do you want someone in your house all the time? I think I'm at the place if I said I want a live in housekeeper the board would be fine with that. I haven't wanted that but then having the minimum is hard to deal with, too." She is supposed to have secretarial assistance from her husband's office, but that has not been successful. "My husband's secretary is supposed to give me some support and I've had a little trouble with that. Because it's a big job for her working in his office, doing his work and for her – and several, he's gone through several and each one of them I've had a little trouble with. They kindly, sweetly, nicely resist. (She laughs.) So I try to be nice and sweet and get what I can get out of it and do all the rest myself. I do all my own invitations. Do all my own addressing envelopes. I do all that." These two



examples reflect the challenges for a presidential spouse related to managing people who do and do not report to you.

A challenge for the presidential spouse is how to handle some interactions with staff. If there is an issue, who should address it? Should it be the president, as the paid staff member of the college, or the presidential spouse, often a non-paid staff member? Spouse 1 commented on her approach with her husband, “I’m not a shy wallflower – as you have probably noticed – so if something’s not going well there’s a way for you to craft how you put that without stepping on toes or hurting feelings. And if I think something is going to move in that direction, I pull back and talk to my husband. I say, ‘Okay, here’s what I see. How do you want to handle it? Do you want me to address it or do you want to address it?’ Probably 80% of the time he tells me to just deal with it. You figure out pretty quickly that if you’re not communicating, because – as the spouse coming onto campus – your word is just like the president’s. So you really have to make sure that you’re in sync. My husband has always been very considerate. He would not commit my time without talking to me first; I would never do that to him either.”

One spouse spoke about her experience in attending events alone. She would prefer to be just a guest at the party or a member of the audience. However, when she arrives, she is the presidential spouse and is no longer merely attending. Spouse 6 said, “I also don’t enjoy events when I’m there alone and my husband’s not there and they want to know if I have any remarks I’d like to give the audience. I always say something, but I’d love to say, ‘NO!’ I enjoy being involved. I just want to be part of the audience – I don’t want to be representing the college.”

While Spouse 6 does not like to attend college events alone, Spouse 5 discusses how her presence at non-college events is a benefit. “When I attend a Women’s Club in our community it means so much to them that the first lady of the college is attending their event. It elevates who

they are. Any member of that club feels more value, because she's in the same club as a presidential spouse."

This section only validates the literature's discussion of the presidential spouse as a living logo of the institution. The study shows that presidential spouses are intimately involved in much of the social responsibilities of the presidency and college. This expectation and involvement clarifies the important role the spouse plays in the life of the institution. Nine out of ten presidential spouses host eleven or more events per year with nearly a quarter of them hosting more than forty events each year. The amount of time involved in planning events, the number of events hosted, and the role of the presidential spouse as a representative of the institution are important, because as is examined in a subsequent section, more than three-fourths of presidential spouses receive no compensation for their efforts.

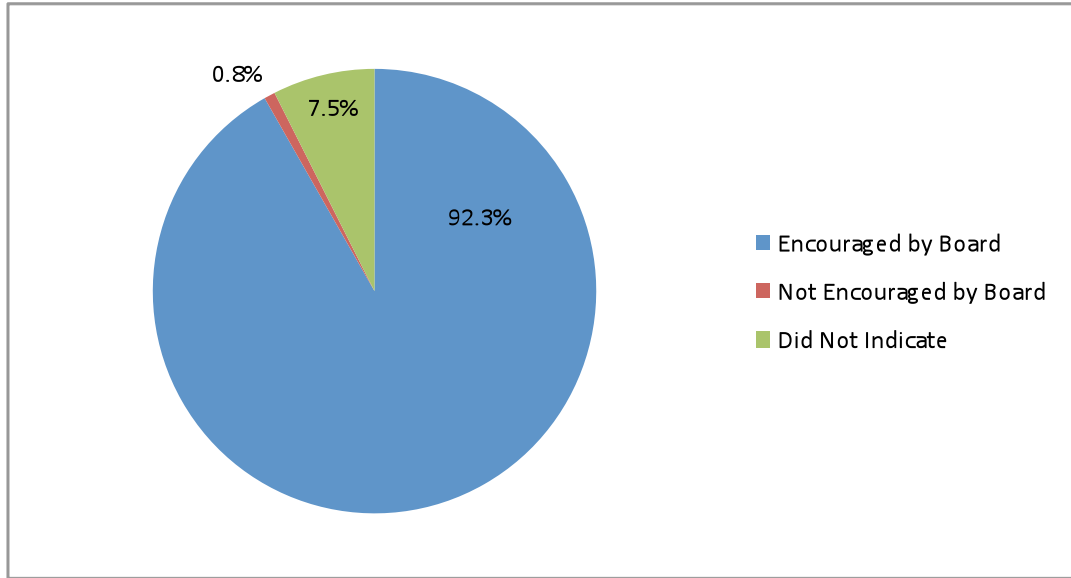
### **College Travel**

As a part of the team carrying the banner of the institution to alumni and donors, many spouses travel with their presidents. In addition, many spouses travel to conferences with their husband and wives. Travel is often both exhausting and time consuming. The mere presence of the spouse on these trips shows his or her influence in the work of the presidency.

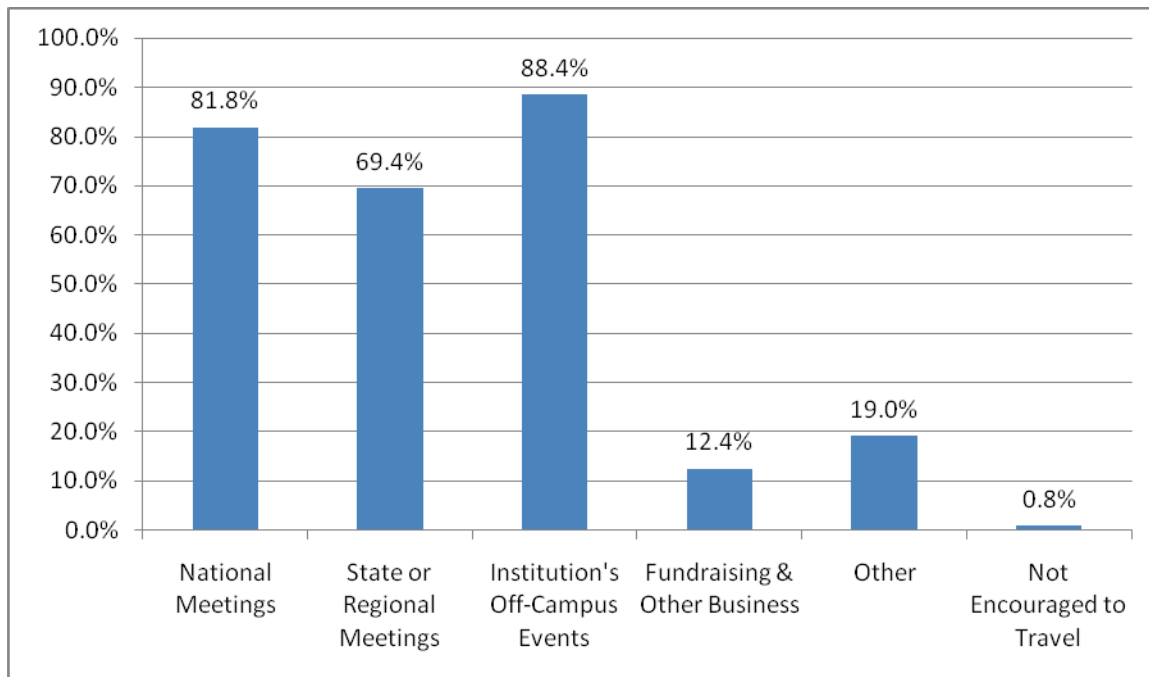
Spouses were asked to indicate if they are encouraged by the board to travel with the president (see Fig. 31), 120 spouses (92.3%) were encouraged to do some travel or the decision was left to the president and spouse to decide, 1 spouse (.8%) indicated that s/he was not encouraged to travel, and 9 spouses (7.5%) did not respond, so it could reasonably be assumed that they are not encouraged to travel. Spouses were encouraged to travel in the following ways (see Fig. 32): 99 spouses (81.8%) were encouraged to travel to national meetings; 84 spouses

(69.4%) were encouraged to attend state or regional meetings; 107 spouses (88.4%) were encouraged to attend the institution's off-campus functions (such as alumni functions); and 15 spouses (12.4%) indicated that they were encouraged to attend trips for fundraising and other college business trips. A group of 23 spouses (19.0%) chose the response "other." Here are their comments on travel: "Board is not involved in these decisions. Mainly the president's decision;" "Yes, when I can but I have a teenage daughter and my priority is staying home with her . . . and that comes first with me and is rather non-negotiable;" "Socially I am expected to be with the President at as many functions as possible but the Board has never expressed their desire for me to attend any meetings. It is usually the decision of the President & me;" "I am not encouraged to travel by the board. The President does this. So we do all of the above;" "Actually I am not encouraged by the board in any of these, but at the request of the President;" "Yes, but my role as any employee it is too difficult to give up that kind of time since as a development office[r] I am extremely busy;" "I am free to do as much as I want and whatever fits into my schedule (my work involves regular travel);" "[encouraged to travel and attend these functions] as a representative of college when husband cannot attend functions;" "My husband usually decides when I will travel with him – I have never been under the impression that the board is involved in these decisions;" "They have neither encouraged nor discouraged me;" "It's left completely up to the president and me;" "They have never suggested that I do anything other than what I am doing;" "Religious meeting of our denomination that our institution is related to. These items are identified in my position description;" "Does not apply as my responsibilities for our 4 children and my part time employment preclude travel;" "Neither encouraged nor discouraged; they've come to trust our judgment;" "I have never perceived any board direction regarding my travel with the president;" "President's request;" "no input that I know of;" "We were hired as a team

with the stipulation that I would travel with the President wherever he went;” “The board has not expressed a preference. Maybe because I have always traveled with my husband during his 21 years as Provost;” and “Board does not have a role in this decision.”

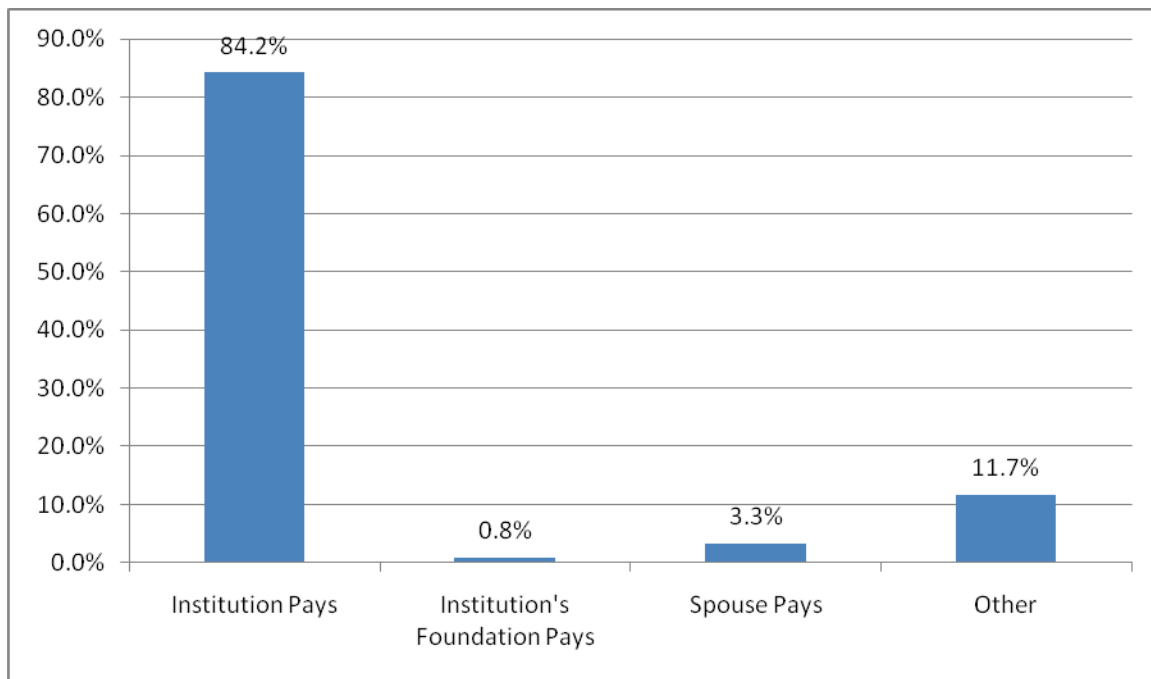


**Figure 31: Is travel of the Presidential Spouse Encouraged**



**Figure 32: Types of Presidential Spouse Travel Encouraged**

Of those who indicated they were encouraged to attend, it was asked who paid for the expenses related to the travel (see Fig. 33): 101 spouses (84.2%) indicated that the institution assumes the expense; 1 spouse (.8%) indicated that the institution’s foundation assumes the expense; 4 spouses (3.3%) indicated that the presidential spouse assumes the expense; and 14 spouses (11.7%) chose “other.” A number of people indicating “other,” had a variation of “shared,” “it’s case by case,” “president’s budget,” “shared, but our portion counts as a gift to the college.” One spouses commented, “President’s contract provides for expenses for spouse for one domestic and one international trip per year.”



**Figure 33: Who Covers the Cost of Presidential Spouse Travel**

Spouse 5 notes that the importance of her travel is important both to her husband and the work of the college. “We realized that we just really wanted to be together. And he saw the value in development, of having two people in talking with an older woman, and with some men – it becomes more social – and you can build the friendship in a social way.” The value of a

presidential spouse on a development call is important for making the right connection and may lead the donor to giving, because s/he feels as if s/he has made a deeper connection with the institution through spending time with the presidential couple.

It is important to remember that the literature notes the payment of a presidential spouse's travel expenses is neither a benefit nor a perquisite. It is the payment for services used by one-half of the institution's presidential couple and living logo. Travel to see donors and to attend conferences is an important part of the work of the presidential team. It is recognized by the fact that more than ninety percent of presidential spouses are encouraged by their board of trustees to do some travel, with more than eighty percent of those costs being borne by the institution.

### **Presidential Spouse Remuneration and Perquisites**

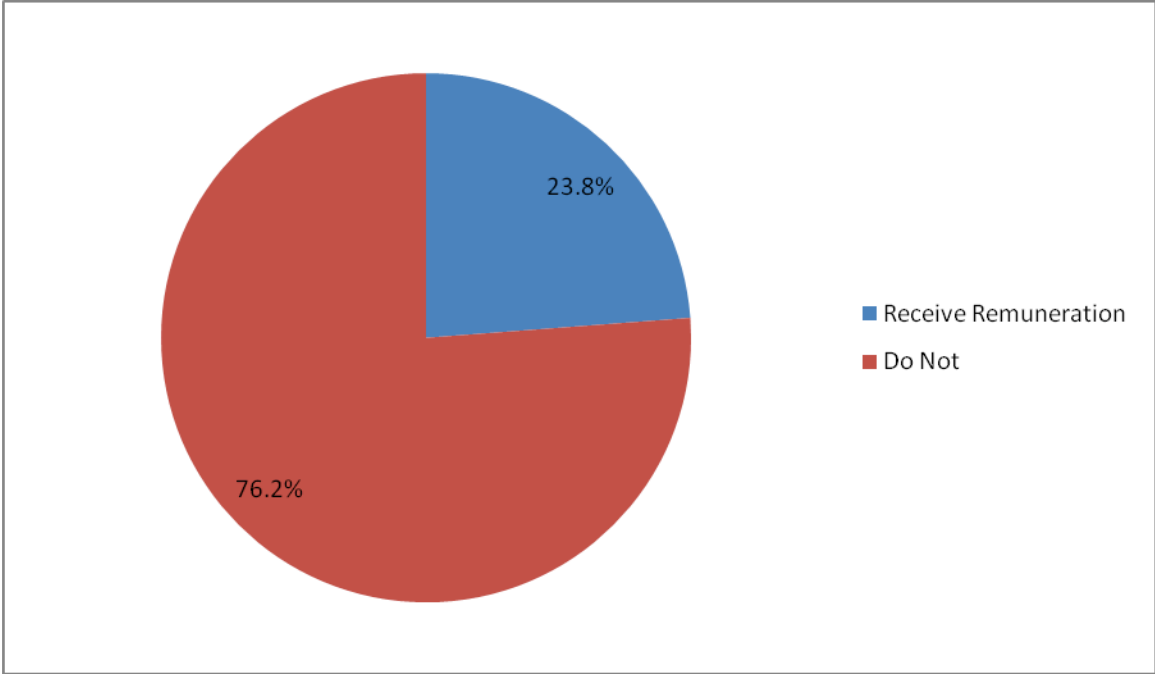
With the amount of time dedicated to entertaining by the presidential spouse, being the kitchen cabinet, and being part of the living logo of the institution, it is natural for the conversation of compensation for presidential spouses to follow. However, one of the more contentious issues in the literature and in the on-going dialog of presidential spouses and non-spouses is the idea of compensating a presidential spouse for the work. Regardless of one's opinion on this topic, it is important to have an understanding of how CIC institutions across the country are commonly addressing the issue.

Most presidential spouses do not receive remuneration. Of the 130 respondents (see Fig. 34), 31 spouses (23.8%) said they did receive remuneration and 99 spouses (76.2%) said they do not receive remuneration. I followed up this question by asking whether the spouse feels s/he should receive compensation for managing the presidential family's formal activities on behalf of the institution. There was representation from more people who would like to receive

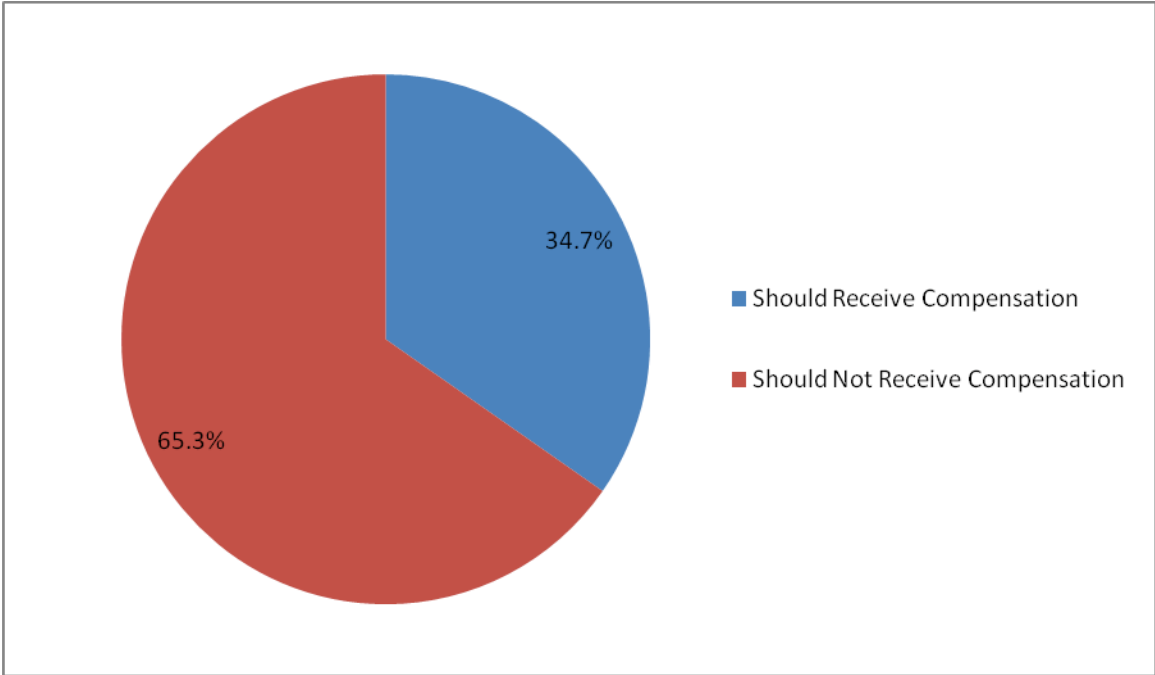
compensation than are currently receiving remuneration (see Fig. 35), 43 spouses (34.7%) indicated s/he should receive compensation for the work and 81 spouses (65.3%) indicated s/he should not receive compensation for the work. Even more people would like to receive non-compensatory remuneration (see Fig. 36), 55 spouses (46.6%) would prefer that their institution provide them with some type of retirement program (such as a 403(B)) in lieu of compensation and 63 spouses (53.4%) did not want this type of remuneration. Finally, spouses were asked what type of formalized support would they prefer instead of personal remuneration (see Fig. 37): 12 spouses (19.7% ) would like a housing allowance (this only applies to those living in a private home); 22 spouses (36.1 %) would like an entertainment allowance; 23 spouses (37.7%) would like secretarial staff; 2 spouses (3.3%) would like to be recognized by the college for the work they do; 3 spouses (4.9%) would like an event planner to help with organizing events; 2 spouses (3.3%) would like travel funds to assist with attending events with their president; 1 spouse (1.6%) would like medical coverage; 1 spouse (1.6%) would like a clothing stipend; 5 spouses (8.2%) would like a housekeeper; and 13 spouses (21.3%) said they would like none of these things.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> These percentages add up to more than 100%, because some people indicated their interest in more than one item. Only 61 spouses answered this question.

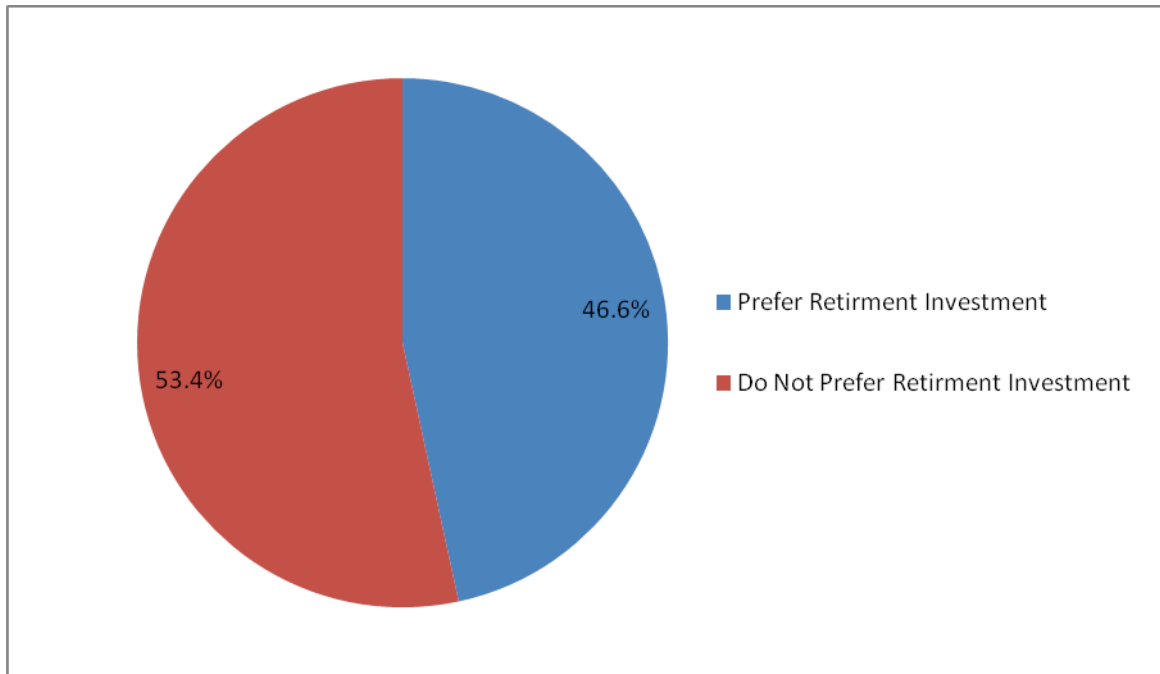


**Figure 34: Does the Presidential Spouse Receive Remuneration**

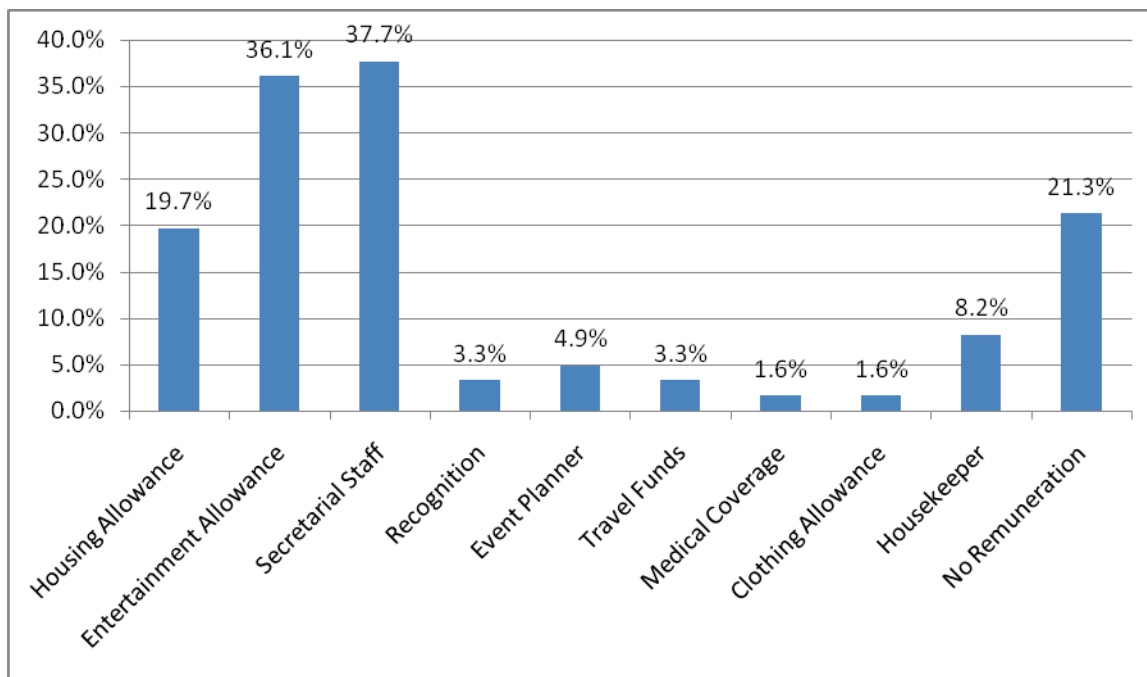


**Figure 35: Do You Believe the Presidential Spouse Should Receive Remuneration**





**Figure 36: Would You Prefer a Retirement Investment**



**Figure 37: Types of Formalized Support of Interest to Presidential Spouses**

I asked the surveyed spouses to indicate perquisites they have, would like to have, or are not important. These perquisites are broken down as follows (see Fig. 38). In regards to a title,

such as “Associate,” “Social Manager,” “Special Assistant to the President,” etc.: 16 spouses (12.9%) have a title, 4 spouses (3.2%) would like to have it, and 104 spouses (83.9%) think a title is not important. In regards to college ID and privileges, such as library card, gym access, and a parking sticker: 114 spouses (89.8%) have at least some of these privileges, 5 spouses (3.9%) would like to have these privileges, and 8 spouses (6.3%) feel that these privileges are unimportant. In regards to tuition remission for the spouse: 90 spouses (72.0%) have tuition remission for themselves, 3 spouses (2.4%) would like to have it, and 32 spouses (25.6%) do not find it important. In regards to tuition remission for the children of the presidential couple: 88 spouses (72.1%) indicate they have this, 1 spouse (.8%) would like to have this, and 33 spouses (27.0%) believe it is unimportant. In regards to reimbursement for mileage when traveling to college functions in their private car: 52 spouses (41.6%) have this, 21 spouses (16.8%) would like to have it, and 52 spouses (41.6%) indicate that it is unimportant. In regards to having insurance coverage while acting as the College Representative (host or guest): 56 spouses (45.9%) have this insurance coverage, 25 spouses (20.5%) would like to have it, and 41 spouses (33.6%) do not think it is important.

	Have Now	Would Like	Not Important	Response Count
Title	12.9% (16)	3.2% (4)	83.9% (104)	124
College ID and Privileges	89.8% (114)	3.9% (5)	6.3% (8)	127
Tuition Remission for Spouse	72.0% (90)	2.4% (3)	25.6% (32)	125
Tuition Remission for Children	72.1% (88)	0.8% (1)	27.0% (33)	122
Mileage Allowance When Using Private Car	41.6% (52)	16.8% (21)	41.6% (52)	125
Insurance While Acting as the College Representative	45.9% (56)	20.5% (25)	33.6% (41)	122

**Figure 38: Perquisites of Interest to Presidential Spouses**

As discussed, the public role of the presidential spouse raises the issue of whether or not they should have specific guidelines and a contract related to meeting these expectations. As noted, only Spouse 5 has a contract. She and her presidential husband approached the position as a couple. Spouse 5 shared, “Moving to the presidency, my husband had said, ‘This is a decision we will make together. We got married because we enjoy being together. In the presidential role, I am going to have to travel a great deal and I want to be with you. I don’t want you to be home doing your job and I’m off doing mine. We are going to make this decision together and if you’re not willing or you want your own career then I don’t have to do this. I’m happy where I am.’ But we met the students and saw what the opportunities that were going to be available to us. But my husband was in an awkward position. He said to the search committee, ‘It is important to me that my wife has compensation. She has her own retirement from teaching, and that needs to continue growing, so whatever the lump sum is that you are going to give to me I will transfer part of that to be her salary. As a college employee, she can travel with me without reporting it as a fringe benefit for the IRS. As a college employee, her retirement can continue to grow.’” This decision was not only an economic and tax benefit, but it was recognition by the president that his spouse was going to play an important role in the presidency and must, appropriately, be compensated. As time progressed, this financial relationship changed. Spouse 5 continued, “We happened to have a chair that was female, and she had been a lawyer. She’s the one who said, ‘We value what [Spouse 5] is doing, and we know that part of her husband’s salary is going to her. But we as a board ought to be giving her recompense, because of the value.’ They were always very verbal in appreciation, so I knew they valued me. However, they wanted to make a contract. Well, I had a contract before my husband ever did. He never had a

contract until just this past year. They gave me an annuity towards my retirement as an interim step along the way as the contract was being developed. Now, I am a line item in the budget. His salary was given totally back to him. I am paid less than what I used to be paid, but it will/can grow and it is all in writing. If my successor doesn't care to sign that contract, the college knows that they will be hiring someone to fulfill that contract. They realized that a person would have to be hired for doing the work that I do, so why not have the contract in place for me? And I think it is important to realize how it happened. The college insisted on this contract. The college is again on the forefront of what is happening and should be happening. It just kind of grew as it should have grown." This level of recognition by the board is appropriate. It acknowledges the work that the presidential spouse does and that if she was not doing it, the college would have to pay someone else to do it. While Spouse 2 does not have a contract, she does receive recognition and a token compensation. "Several times in the 20 years the board has talked about me at board meetings and said how much they appreciate what I do. But in terms of paying me a salary . . . well, I take that back maybe 15 years ago in compliance with the IRS regulations I get \$1 a year but I haven't gotten that dollar yet – I've been looking for 77 cents. But they, the lawyers, say that I need that to travel to CIC meetings without having to pay taxes – that I'm a representative of the college and the college recognizes that by paying me a salary of a dollar a year." While not a lot, Spouse 2 appears to appreciate the recognition.

Spouse 2 begins the conversation on spousal contracts. "I'm of the camp – the women spouses talked about this a lot at our meetings in years past – I'm of the camp: better not write it down, because you have to do it. If you say you're doing "X" then you have to. Now I'm very involved and I do many, many more things than ever would have been written down. From my point of view, and I'm pretty confident in my point of view, I just pick what I want to do and I do

it. You know, I want them to know what I do. I don't try to hide my light under a bushel, because I feel like the trustees should know I am very involved in the community and that I do a whole lot of things that I think are good for the college and are not on the college, but I do a lot of things on the college too, so they can't complain about that. I figure, therefore, when there is something that I don't want to do I can, completely without guilt, or if anyone criticized, I'd thumb a nose at them and say, 'I don't want to do that' and then I'm okay with that." Two other spouses weighed in on contracts for themselves. Part of the absence of contracts appears to be related to employment of the presidential spouse. Spouse 6 says, "I do not have a contract and we didn't think of this initially because I was still employed. I think it was one of those situations where my husband was so focused on his job that we did not think in terms of contract negotiations (i.e., what I was going to do after my last year of work ended), particularly since I knew that my job was created to tide me over until retirement eligibility." Spouse 1 said, "You know, we haven't even broached the area of spousal contracting. I think, because I have always worked since we started this venture. It hasn't been an issue. What has helped is, the increase in care of the home; those kind of things which relieves my time."

Several of the interviewed spouses talked about support coming in non-monetary ways. Spouse 4 said, "They really don't have any expectations for me beyond what I am doing on an informal basis. I received very good feedback from the chair of the board of trustees and other board members and the vice president for development." For Spouse 1, it is the small recognitions she appreciates. "They have also shown their appreciation in other ways. I've received flowers or small gifts, etc. They have told me that they appreciate the fact that I make time to come to events and activities. I think the most moving for both of us was when my

husband's dad died at the end of October and a lot of board members and all of his direct reports came from the town to the funeral several hours away.”

Spouse 4 discusses how he would be interested in compensation as his wife approaches her next contract negotiation. His interest is less about money, but an insurance plan if something should happen to his wife. “I’m still not sure what I want to do from my side of the equation as we get closer to the next contract negotiation. Because the thing that I have heard much about from other spouses is about bridge annuity arrangements that people have if something happens to their spouse, who is president. Because there are folks who have given up a lot economically, and if my wife were to be incapacitated or die I would have insurance that comes from our private fund and whatever the college provides, but I would have to then bridge a period of time when I would have to recreate my own economic life. I’ve created a life with my wife, as a presidential spouse, which is typical of all of us, I think.”

Only one presidential spouses has a designated title. Spouse 5 said, “I have a contract and my title was the hardest part of the contract. I was given the title Special Assistant to the President.” Spouse 5 recognizes the challenge that comes from having a contract or the sense of how a contract could feel limiting to a presidential spouse. “But I didn’t want someone telling me I wasn’t spending enough hours doing this area. I know that’s the reason a lot of spouses who don’t want to be compensated is because they don’t want to be told you must do this or you must do that.”

The spouses without a title respond to their thoughts on the informal title, “presidential spouse.” Spouse 2 is not quite sure what to do with the term. “I think spouse is a weird word. But when I think of the other possibilities and I’ve thought a lot about it – I think first lady is corny, I don’t like that – sometimes I’m called that. I mean, I don’t bristle at it, but surely there’s

a better word and a lot of the wives have titles like presidential assistant or board chair assistant or some other title like that. And I've toyed with those different titles and none of them sound very good either. I think one of the things that needs to be done in the next generation of college spouses is to find another word for the role that we do, that is a professional sounding word, but defines it. I don't know what it is, though." For Spouse 6, presidential spouse is better than some other alternatives. She said, "Well, I like that better than first lady. But if I introduce myself, I generally say, 'I'm a presidential spouse.' Well, I take that back. When I introduce myself outside of the institution's community, I say, 'presidential spouse.' In town I say, 'First Lady,' because it is used so often here. So I stick with that. I like the term presidential spouse better than first lady. I think the term first lady carries a tremendous burden with it of social graces and things of that nature. I'm not sure I think I would ever feel comfortable with that term." Spouse 1 said, "The term is not relevant. I don't really care what they call me. Around town, formally people call me the First Lady of the institution. I've kind of gotten used to it but the whole title reference thing was a transition thing for me. This is the first presidency for us so the whole thing of people calling me Mrs. [Spouse 1], instead of calling me by my first name and, some of it, in the beginning was kind of uncomfortable. I am not a pretentious person. I think for those people trying, that bristle at the first lady terminology; they are maybe moving out of the traditional role of tea and crumpets. I think the role is what you make it rather than the title."

Both of the male spouses seemed not to care too much about the title. When asked about how he liked the term "presidential spouse," Spouse 3 asked rhetorically, "Compared to what? What do you put on a business card? First off, I don't have a business card. I have my own business cards, if somebody wants that – and I have done that on a number of occasions, if we need to get an e-mail address in somebody's hand – I just put mine out there. It doesn't bother

me. It doesn't *affect* or *effect* me. What else are you going to call me? Locally, I'm the first man." And finally, Spouse 4 said, "I'm very comfortable with it. People are always asking me as a male spouse, 'What should I be called? What's my title?' I always just say just call me by my first name or Mr. [Spouse 4], if you want to be formal. Or, if I'm in a joking mood, I'll say, 'Call me Adam, the first man.' But really it's so typical of where we are in gender-based society, trying to balance titles and trying to create things. I am just very happy to be [Spouse 4]."

As a follow-up to this question, the spouses were asked, if they define themselves as a "presidential spouse" or as "Sally/John, who happens to be married to a college president"? The answer did not break along gender lines as may have been expected. Instead, spouses responded in various ways, based on where they saw themselves. Spouse 5 notes that she and her husband have always approached the work as a team. This is a common trait amongst many spouses who look at the presidency as a dual career. "I am definitely a part of the presidential team. From the very beginning we have been a presidential team. I wasn't going to be going to the office every day. Yet, from the very beginning my husband would say publicly how much he appreciated what I had done for the college. So early on taking that role as presidential spouse was very natural. I am a nurturer anyway. I fall right into the role of nurturing the community. I like to cook; I don't like to clean, but the college provided a housekeeper. It was an easy move for me to make. Some people called me first lady, and other people said, 'We only have one first lady and that's the wife of the president of the United States.'" Spouse 6 said, "I probably define myself as the wife of the president of our college. I'm always putting him first, and then I'm his wife." Spouse 1 had a different take, "I think of myself as [Spouse 1], who happens to be married to the president of a university. I think I'm strong enough with my own self-esteem. I



have my own identity, so it doesn't reflect on who I am as a person." Spouse 4 realized that it was a part of a new mantle that had been placed on him. "That's an interesting question. In terms of amount of time, I probably spend about 1/3 of my public time between my private work, my community activities and college activities – so maybe 15-20 hours per week – but – how do I feel? I identify as the president's spouse, because even away from the college that has become a new identifier in the community for me." For Spouse 3, the role is a part of him because of his length of time in the community. "After a decade in the community, everybody knows, and it's hard to say where the first identity is – whether they see me as the business man, the Rotarian, the skier, or the spouse. It's hard to say." For Spouse 2, her presidential spouse role only tends to define her within the context of the campus community. Even then, she gets more credit for her professional status, not her marital status. "Well, I don't define myself as a presidential spouse, but it depends on the situation. If we go to an alumni meeting: I am the presidential spouse, I'm not [Spouse 2]. They're very kind and wonderful. Our college was formerly an all-women's college. And they are proud of women having accomplishments on their own and they like it. I think I'm a role model for the students too, even though we're co-ed. We've been coed for a generation. The fact that I have a career and that I define myself in other ways has been an asset – in an odd way. It's been an asset to my husband as president. He has an active professional wife, since he's at a formerly women's college, so that's worked out. I wouldn't say that it's a title that defines me, but it is a title that I use when I'm in the college setting."

As discussed in the literature, the reason spouse recognition is an issue is because the spouse serves, along with the president, as a "living logo" of the institution. The interviewed spouses spoke about the challenges of this burden and living in the fish bowl of public life. Spouse 3 explains that one can hardly be prepared for being thrust into the public eye. "I don't

think anything can really adequately prepare. It is such a significant change. The social/economic impact of, not your life, but those you interact with. You move from middle income, middle America to the upper 1 percent, the ultra wealthy – and it's pretty nice to be on a 150 foot yacht for cocktails. For a boy from a small town, that's happened. How do you prepare for that?" For some spouses, the shift to the spotlight becomes a conscious part of how they live the role, even for male spouses. Spouse 4 said, "You just don't know how political and visible you are to people who you don't even realize are alums or are married to alums or have a spouse that works on campus in maintenance. So, for a while, I really was very conscience to be, 'Okay, I've got to be careful about who I am in public.' I'm beginning to be more comfortable with that again as I realize what's more important and what isn't." Spouse 1 shares her experience of her every move feeling like it was being tracked. "I'll give you two examples of living in the fishbowl. When I first took the job that I currently have (which began after my husband accepted the presidency in this new community), I was visiting one of the business sites that I oversee which is at the local hospital. My car was parked in the parking lot for quite a few hours and my husband got a couple of phone calls asking if I was okay." She laughingly, continued, "Even though, I still had license plates for our old state on the car. And the second example, we were at an event and there were two women that were arguing about what I had worn to the previous event. And you know, recently someone asked what color dress I wore to such and such – and I said, 'It was teal color. Why?' The lady turned to her friend and said, 'See. I told you; I told you.' And I'm thinking, 'Oh, my God.'" Spouse 1 began laughing again, almost as if to say, *It is hard to imagine that the dress I wear to an event is of that much interest to other people.* But Spouse 1 did share that she realized that there were some parts of her life that were not worth keeping confidential, such as her home telephone number. "When we

moved into our small town, people said, ‘Why didn’t you get an unlisted phone number?’ I said, ‘When we moved here we had two teenagers. Why bother? You know it’s going to be all over town in about 15 minutes anyway.’ So we don’t have an unlisted phone number, but people have definitely respected that.”

Because the life of a presidential couple is so public, it means that you have to be conscious of with whom you associate and careful that people do not try to create friendships for political or personal gain. This can be a difficult change for a couple who has been successful in networking and creating relationships. Spouse 4 explains, “The presidency is a position that doesn’t allow for a lot of personal interactions, even with your vice presidents and their staffs, kind of beyond the formal Christmas parties and college events and things like that.” For many spouses, they seek out friendships with family and people they knew before the presidency. Spouse 6 shared, “I turn to my friends and my sister. My sister knows all my fears. My girlfriends know some, but there are very few secrets between my sister and me. They are my support network and they are wonderful at keeping me in line.” Spouse 6 went on to talk about how her husband was concerned about her friendships and his reaction to her reaching out to people in their new community. “When we got to town, my husband realized he had someone who was very honest and that didn’t work well in this new environment. And so he was concerned about people who wanted to befriend me and people I wanted to befriend. He was concerned about the friendships I would develop, but it was never done in a ‘let’s talk about this way.’” Spouse 3 tells of how the closest relationship he has is with an off-campus business associate. However, it is important to note that the language he uses indicates that these are friendships, but ones that stop well in advance of the type of relationship where one would share a lot of deep personal information. These friendships have intentional limits, more so than the

average person has with their close friends. “Probably among our closest friends in the community, one is purely a business relationship that I started when we got here. We became very good friends with him and his wife. She and I served on a board together. He and I served on two boards together. He is somewhat of a confidant, not on great detail of the institution, but he and I have talked about community board stuff where we have common interests. There are a couple of other CEOs in other fields that we know that we are comfortable with. So there are opportunities and we have a second home that is not on campus, so we have our other place.” For Spouse 5, she has found friendships in other college presidential spouses, but “my best friend is my husband and my confidant in that way. There are just a lot of things we don’t talk to other people about.”

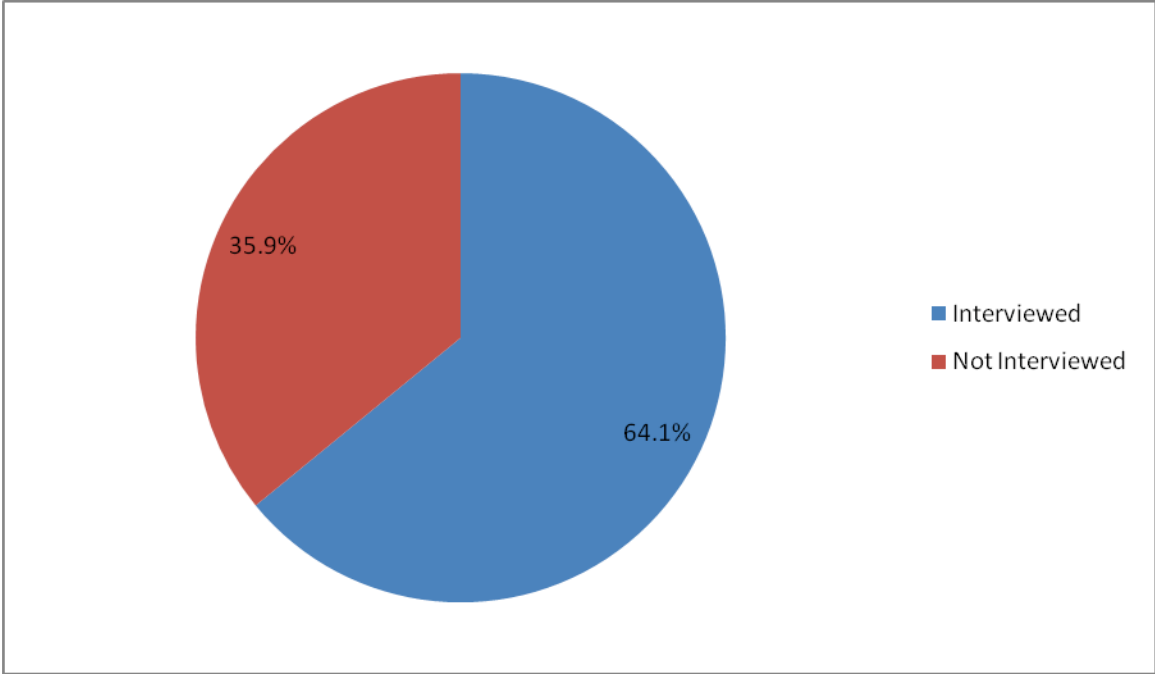
After years of writings reflected in the extant literature, there is no consensus about the topic of presidential spouse’s remuneration. Despite the discussion of the amount of work spouses do on behalf of these institutions, less than a quarter of presidential spouses are compensated. For many, however, remuneration may be less important than other perquisites that aid in the duties of the presidential spouse role. As Spouse 5 notes, if a presidential spouse does not want to sign a contract, then the institution knows it will have to hire someone to do that work. Moreover, if someone is going to be hired to do the work, then why would the institution then resist paying the presidential spouse for doing the same work?

### **Spouse Interview During Selection of the President**

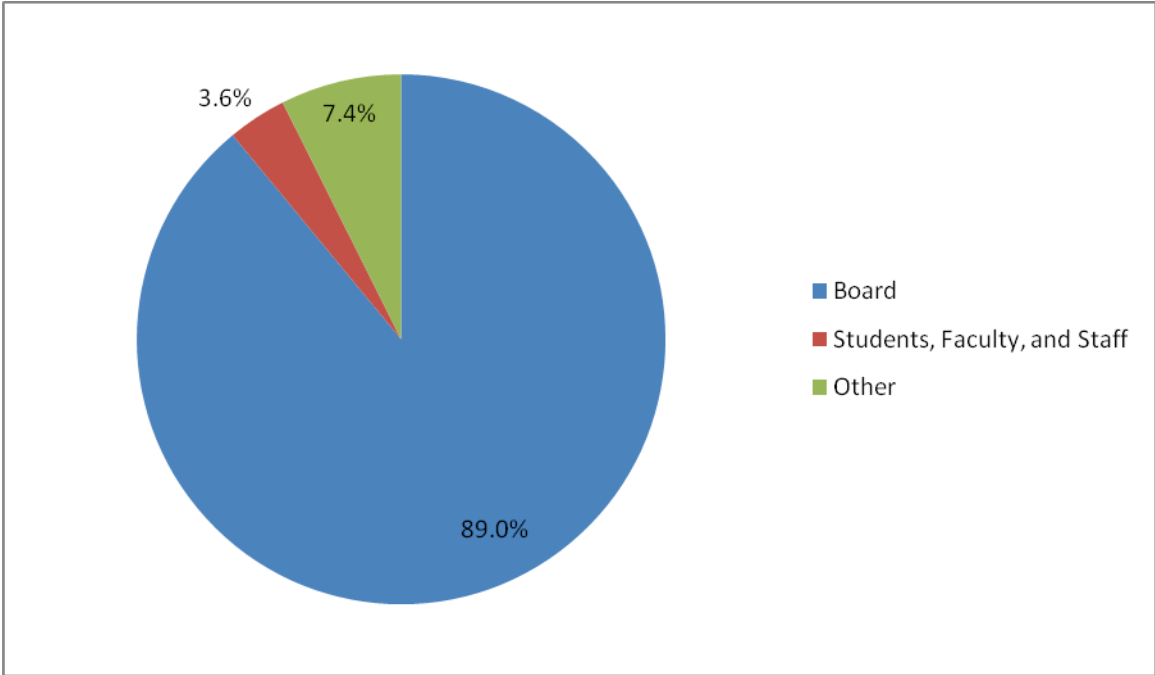
On many campuses, presidential spouses play an important role in the life of the institution. However, not all institutions interview the presidential spouses as a part of the presidential selection process. Those spouses who interviewed participated in both formal and

informal interview processes. In many instances, the campus visit by the potential presidential couple is a time for the campus community to determine if this couple will be the right fit to lead the institution in the coming years. It is also the time the couple will finalize their opinion on whether they can make this community their home for the foreseeable future.

Many institutions employ both formal and informal means of interviewing the presidential spouse. Search committee members may ask spouses direct questions during a designated time or the trustees may simply ask a spouse to attend campus events during the interview process, during which people ask the spouse “cocktail chatter” types of questions. Other spouses are not invited to the campus nor any other part of the interview process. The survey asked spouses to identify if the institution’s selection committee interviewed them in any way during the presidential selection process. Of the responses (see Fig. 39), 82 spouses (64.1%) indicated they were interviewed in some manner and 46 spouses (35.9%) indicated they were not interviewed at all. When asked who interviewed them (see Fig. 40), 75 spouses (89%) indicated it was the board, 3 spouses (3.6%) indicated they were interviewed by students, faculty, and staff members representing a larger constituency, the remaining spouses indicated attending an “open session with members of the campus community and larger community;” “unofficially by a staff member by them giving me a tour of the community and asking questions informally;” and “a few people asked me casually my perception of the ‘role’ during my husband’s interview; I was present in group interviews with college people, not the board.”



**Figure 39: Were You Interviewed**



**Figure 40: By Whom Were You Interviewed**

I asked the interviewed presidential spouses if the institution’s selection committee interviewed them as a part of their president’s selection and hiring process. Spouse 3 indicates

how there is both a visible and invisible part to a spouse being interviewed. “My wife was in the final three in three searches. I did go with her on the final in all three cases. Was I on the platform and being observed? Absolutely. Was there a formal interview in each of these situations? There was not a sit down like this interview. But while my wife was with somebody, I was being shown the campus or community. There was not a sit down across the table that I can recall at this point – but it has been twelve years now.” On the other hand, Spouse 2 recalls being interviewed in an informal way by other spouses of campus community members. “I interviewed. My husband had several stages of interviews, during maybe the second or third one, the wife – there were several women I went to lunch with – and then the wife of one of the senior professors took me around all day. And, I think, in retrospect she was kind of interviewing me, because later what she has told me is she went back to the committee and said you’ve got to hire her. In a way it probably would not have mattered, unless I did something really egregious, they probably would not have counted it positively or negatively toward hiring him, but I guess it was a sizing up.” Spouse 1 was also interviewed. She believes it was a helpful part in clarifying her role and her own plans. “Well, during the interview process, because I was still working and gave up that job for the move, they asked me if I planned on working. And I very honestly said, ‘Yes, I did.’ And that was the end of it.”

The other spouses were not involved in an interview process. Spouse 4 said, “I was surprised when I first came to CIC and people were talking about how they, as a presidential spouse, had been interviewed. I never was a part of any formal interview process. Now, the fact was that we were – we had lived in the community for 25-plus years and had been a part of the faith community on campus – so, we were a known commodity and I’m sure there were some

conversations – phone conversations and things like that back and forth from campus to campus – but, I was not interviewed formally or informally.”

While not all selection committees handle interviews in a formal matter, more than two-thirds of all institutions interview the presidential spouse during the process of hiring a president. Sometimes boards simply try to size-up the spouse to make sure s/he is suitable.

### **Board Perception and Understanding of the Role of the Presidential Spouse**

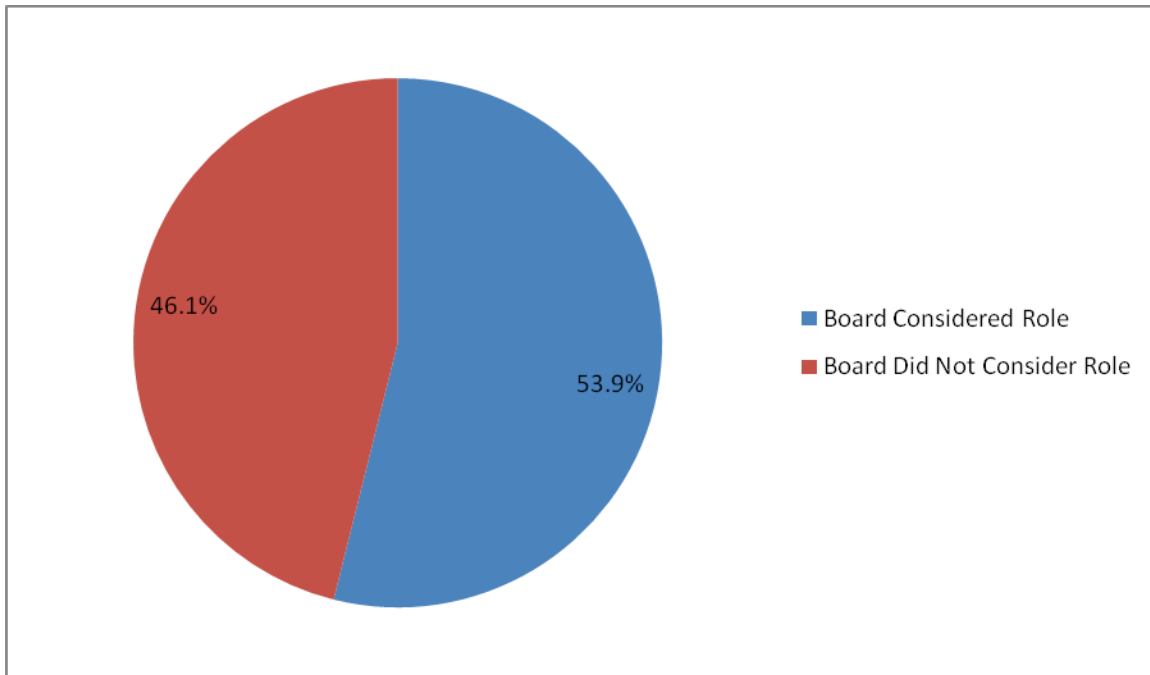
The congruence or divergence in the board’s and spouse’s understanding of the role of the presidential spouse can be critical. Congruence can lead to less stress and a better sense of success. Division in the understanding can lead to frustration and exhaustion. No clear guidance can be worse, because it means the spouse is left floating and hoping s/he is doing the role correctly. However, for some spouses the board’s expectations are inconsequential to what or how they do the role – because either they do little or they are not in need of board validation.

Boards of Trustees may not express expectations because they truly do not have any expectations; choose not to have any because having some expectations listed might necessitate a job description and compensation; or they believe they are being politically correct by not listing any expectations, even though they really have them. Regardless, many spouses would like some frank conversation with the trustees to confirm what the expectations are. As noted below, many spouses do not receive this opportunity.

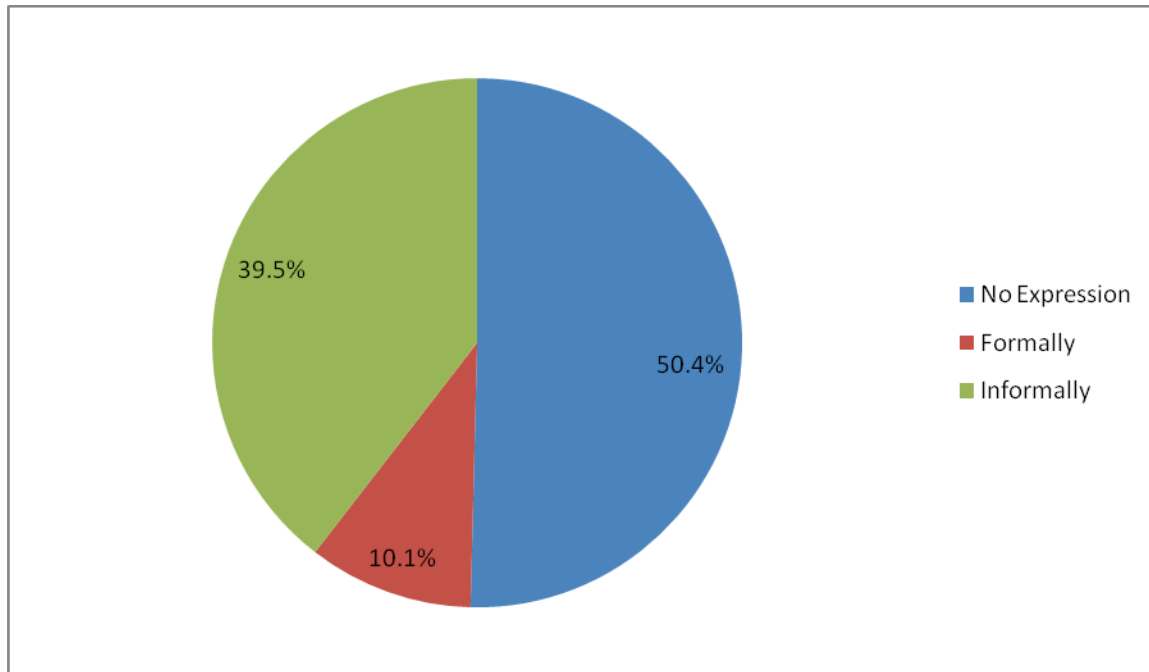
The penultimate section of the survey looked at the alignment between the Board’s understanding and expectations and that of the presidential spouse. A simple majority (69 responses or 53.9%) of the Boards of those surveyed have not considered the role of the institution’s presidential spouse (see Fig. 41). I then asked the spouses how the board has



expressed their expectations. (It is necessary to note that there is a slight, unexpected variation between the previous question and the response. One can assume this is based on a respondent's interpretation of the two questions.) The responses are as follows (see Fig. 42): 65 spouses (50.4%) indicated the board has expressed no expectations; 13 spouses (10.1%) indicated the board has formally expressed expectations through a written document; and 51 spouses (39.5%) indicated the board has informally expressed expectation through verbal communication.



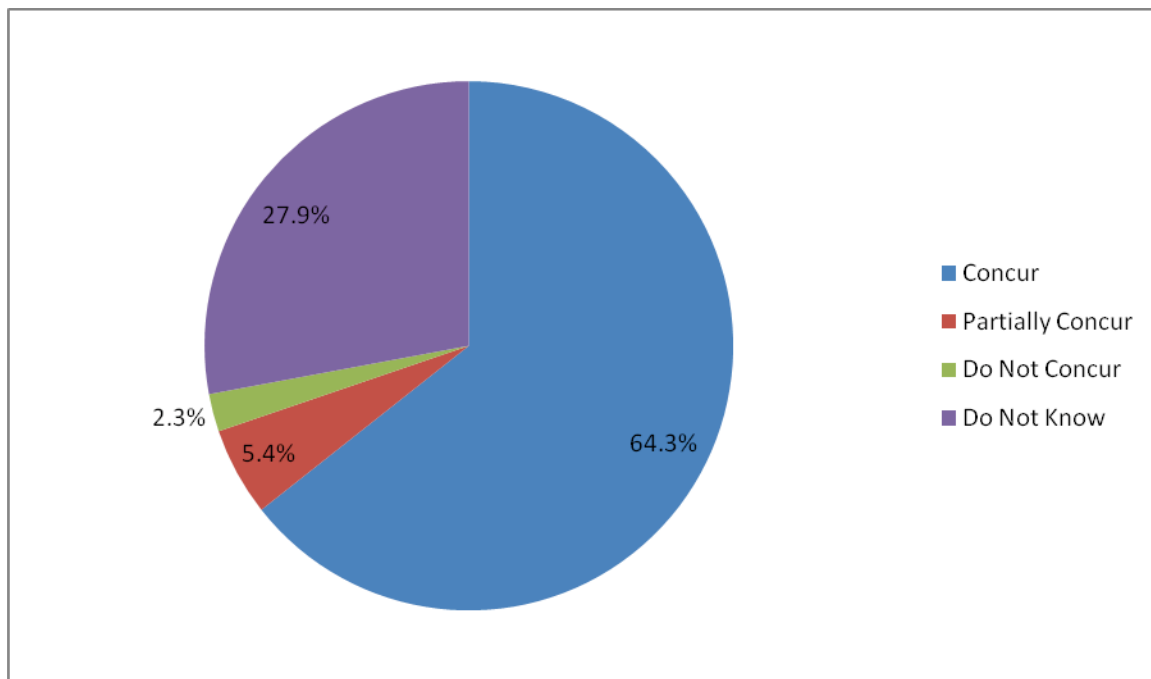
**Figure 41: Has Board Considered the Presidential Spouse Role**



**Figure 42: How Have Expectations Been Expressed**

Next, the survey asked the presidential spouses if their perceptions of the role of the president’s spouse concur with the board’s expectations. Fortunately, for those living in this role everyday, nearly two-thirds of the respondents said that there was congruence. However, just under one-third indicated either “no” or “they do not know.” This can be a difficult position to be in if you do not know the expectations of you. The responses to the congruence questions were as follows (see Fig. 43): 83 spouses (64.1%) said that the perceptions do concur; 7 spouses (5.4%) said that they do partially concur; 3 spouses (2.3%) said that the perceptions do not concur; and 36 spouses (27.9%) said they do not know. I then asked spouses to describe the differences that exist between the spouse perception and the Board’s. Here is a sampling of those responses: “I feel I have offered hospitality to students, faculty, and friends that has surpassed any board expectations;” “As a male, they do not know how to fit me in. They do provide travel expenses when accompanying my wife;” “There are several items: paying a spouse for duties is very new for the board and pay is minimal; time actually spent doing the ‘job’ is significantly greater than

board realized; although I report to the board chair, I don't have a budget and rely on president's budget for job-related expenses;" "Who would know? They have never stated their expectations explicitly, and I have had to assess their response based on trial and error. Some things I did were ok; others were not;" "I am more independent than expected, but the board seems to have adjusted to that and seems happy with the role I have defined;" "The board has become more informed about my activities since I began to submit a yearly report to the board chair. They never asked for the report I started doing it really for me;" "Denial on their part that the role is any different from a corporate CEO's wife;" and "Unspoken expectations are hard to meet and the role is changing and needs to change. The president is hired, not the spouse."



**Figure 43: Are Board and Presidential Spouse Expectations Congruent**

Spouse 6 commented, "I think it would have been nice if there had been some guidelines of what they were expecting. You never know if you're doing enough, or from their perspective, not enough. So that would have been helpful. It also would have been helpful if, given how

much I have to work, there were some contribution to an IRA. Because I am continuing to work, I'm just not getting paid for it.”

Due to the challenge of living the life and expectations of the presidential spouse role, it is encouraging to see that nearly two-thirds of presidential spouses say that there is congruence between their expectations of themselves in the role and the expectations placed on them by the board of trustees.

### **Thoughts from Surveyed Spouses**

The final question on the survey allowed the presidential spouses to share their comments about anything, but particularly any topic they felt the survey had not adequately covered. This section will look at the words the surveyed spouses wanted to voice.<sup>11</sup>

The comments ranged from issues of understanding the role to demands placed on the spouse. One spouse said it simply: “The presidential spouse is underestimated and misunderstood.” In many ways, this statement sums up how many spouses feel. People believe they understand what it is like to be a presidential spouse and the expectations on the spouse, but the presidential spouses say otherwise, partly because every institution, every community, and every spouse is different, this causes every presidential spouse’s role to be different. As one presidential spouse said, “I believe that the role of the presidential spouse is unique to the institution and the particular individual filling the role, and needs to be negotiated as such.” Another spouse elaborated on this idea:

I truly believe that the presidential spouse role can never be ‘one size fits all.’ What type of role one chooses may make another in the same

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<sup>11</sup> All of the quotes are anonymous and unattributed. I have used gender-neutral terminology unless the quote indicates a gender.

position absolutely miserable. Finding what makes for a fulfilling marital and working relationship for the presidential couple will also greatly benefit the college or university. Both partners need to feel happy and satisfied that their roles in their own jobs serve them personally and to the benefit of the institution. Anything less will not make for a productive presidential couple in this very important and highly visible role in the educational and community setting.

The challenge appears to be that many spouses do not feel free to be so self-directed.

Presidential spouses talked about what it was like to step into the role. This next spouse, hits on so many different topics that challenge spouses: not having any sense of what the job will be like, having received no expectations from the institution, the pitfalls of learning an institution and not stepping on someone's toes, and a hidden acknowledgement that the president did not seem to give her clear direction. (This can be understandable. A president is also spending a lot of time in a new position understanding his or her role, working to please a new board of trustees, setting a vision and direction for the institution, and gaining the necessary trust and buy-in from campus leaders. However, it leaves many spouses struggling to understand what to do without a strong and appropriate support mechanism for him or her.) "I attended a CCCU (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities) retreat for new presidents and decided that I would be committed to this new position whatever it would turn out to be. Since there were really no guidelines except for what the staff told me the last president's wife did, I spent my time getting to know the way the place worked and found places that I could serve. I learned to be careful not to assume a job someone else 'owned' and looked for the things that others didn't want to do or didn't have time to do. After four years I have discovered some unique ways to

establish myself as a part of the university.” It seems as if this spouse endured a number of years until s/he found a place and role that fit. This can be a challenging way for someone to live.

There are historical legacies for spouses. One famously quoted by Julius Caesar: “Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion.” One presidential spouse said as much. “It is important that the spouse lives a life above reproach. The president’s and the college’s reputation is on the line.” Now that is some pressure for one to take on.

Other legacies of the role involve more historical expectations of a spouse. Several spouses shared what they do or what they believe the role of the presidential spouse is. These comments enlighten and impart an understanding of how these spouses have shaped their role and value to the community. The comments also tend to reflect a very traditional presidential experience of the presidential spouse as host. One spouse said, “It is very important for the presidential spouse to have excellent relations with the whole community from the Board to the other Administrators, Faculty, Staff – (especially to the men who work in the Physical Plant – who help with yard work, set-ups, etc.). It is important to greet all – including the students with a smile & a very positive attitude. The Students & Coaches love it when we attend the athletic events or other things planned on campus. . . Secret is to be involved & stay busy while enjoying the people & THANK everyone for their involvement!” Another spouse talked about the role this way: “My main role is ‘friendship’ with donors, community people, faculty/staff, students and general supporters of the institution.” Many spouses would agree that friendship with these constituencies is important. However, this description says nothing of who this person is, what drives *him/her*, and what *s/he* finds fulfilling. Although, this next spouse does say that this type of work is rewarding. “I have found the greatest pleasure in devoting myself wholeheartedly to the service of the institution, to the support of the president’s mission, and to identifying needs of

the institution which I am able to meet as a volunteer. I believe I would not feel the same freedom if I were remunerated for my role.” We will return later to more comments about the idea of remuneration, however, it is clear that many spouses are finding a tremendous source of pride and joy in the work that they do. As this next spouse shares, s/he is also being affirmed for the work. “We have been blessed by a wonderful and very supportive board who has allowed me to define my own role on campus. They affirm me frequently about the way I have done things for the last 13 years. I have been most comfortable in a supportive role for the president and have enjoyed attending the campus events as well as the ones off campus.” This spouse appears to have the best of both worlds, a chance to define oneself on campus and to be thanked and valued for what s/he contributes.

Other spouses talk about how the establishment of the role and that remuneration was part of the role development. The first spouse explains the role in a very short, business-like fashion. It is unclear if this reflects her relationship with the role as just a “job to be accomplished.” S/he said, “We formalized the role in 2000. Title: External Relations Coordinator. I have kept diligent records throughout my 15 year tenure on activities as a presidential spouse.” The next spouse discusses receiving a salary and her enactment of traditional presidential spouse duties: “I have only been receiving a salary for the past three years. This came about through my husband’s request to the board who were very willing. I have always assumed a more traditional role as a presidential spouse. I host on campus and at home, but do not seek to be overly involved in campus decision making, management, or extra volunteer duties. I try to get to know students and do several activities with them. My greatest role is to support, listen and encourage my president.”

Another spouse was less coy in his/her description of role and influence. His/her directness displays mere honesty about the way that many spouses must work in order to influence the campus in meaningful and important ways. This spouse writes,

I have exerted a great deal of influence on what has occurred at the school over the years since I have a Ph.D. and a strong academic background myself. I have been able to carve out my own role and have initiated and carried out a number of projects that are recognized in the community as my unique contributions to the school. I probably have had much more influence than most spouses as a result. . . . My imprint on the appearance of the school is everywhere, and so far there is no resentment of this influence. I walked softly in the beginning and worked to overcome any criticism in constructive ways – and it’s difficult to be too critical of obvious success! . . . I would venture to say that the #1 ability that a presidential spouse must possess is the ability to manipulate other people and get your ideas accepted as their ideas. Without this ability, you get nowhere since the spouse does not have the force of definite, salaried authoritative role. With this ability, however, it’s amazing how much can be accomplished. In other words, the presidential spouse always must play a “psychological game.” Some play it much better than others! Satisfaction in the role comes from how well you play the game.

The reader is left realizing that for many of these spouses, there is a way to stake out a place, a role, and sense of purpose, even within the confines of a traditional, patriarchal climate. As this spouse indicates, it is about learning the rules, using them to your advantage, and then playing



the game well. This spouse seems to argue: if you cannot change the system, use it to your advantage, avoid the system using you.

Other spouses indicated that they have pushed the envelope in their or the campus's understanding of what a spouse might do by taking on other involvements. One spouse says, "In addition to traditional roles within (the) campus community, I spend much of my time on 'community relations' at (the) local and state level. (I) have started several non profit orgs, serve on state, corporate and nonprofit boards, and helped lead strategic planning efforts for the State (in which we live) and the local community. My husband jokes that I am better known in the state than he is!" This woman did not have the limits of prior actions or expectations.

Another spouse explains how s/he too is changing the role, receiving support from the board, but meeting reluctance for compensation for this new level of work. "I was encouraged to be more active/involved with the college partly because my predecessor was not. Board has been very supportive, generous in their recognition and very affirmative. It did take several years for me to convince the board that I should receive a salary – it was very helpful to have support of other presidential spouses." A challenge that many spouses face is that when expectations are increased and verbalized by board members, they do not always put funds in to support the increased involvement. It is as if the board has decided to be progressive in openly setting expectations and encouraging a higher level of involvement, but still operating on a more traditional pastoral model where the spouse does the work for free.

Some spouses receive clear expectations that express minimal involvement is appropriate and recognize that the spouse may not be in a phase of life that allows for a high-level of involvement. One spouse writes, "While my husband's college does not pressure me to become more involved in college activities, they are most welcoming when I do participate. The

Chairman of the Board of Trustees was very clear during my husband's interview that there were not expectations upon me – especially in light of the fact that we have so many children still at home. I would travel more with my husband if not for the kids at home. I do not prefer to travel, but enjoy seeing firsthand what my husband does.”

Another spouse knew how important it is to set the expectations that she would not fulfill in a traditional role. “I can only say that I went to my first CIC (Council of Independent College's) conference last year. I was thoroughly disappointed in the program. I would have preferred to have been in the sessions with my husband, as I see the value in knowing what he does and with what he deals, as opposed to the content of the spouses' presentations. . . . Perhaps I am a different animal, but the how to of hosting events, etc. is just not that difficult.” This spouse wants to play an active role with her husband in the oversight of the institution. Many spouses do, either because of a desire to work on behalf of the same cause, or because both members of the couple are higher education professionals. As one spouse commented, “Having worked previously as a university senior administrator and corporate executive has helped a lot. Settings (sic) expectations early on with the board and across the institution is extremely important to not getting tied to past customs and ideas. We are volunteers. We chose this role with our spouse. We should be treated as important volunteers and not as paid employees. We should do what we can best do as volunteers and mix our role with that of staff functions.” This spouse knew going in what the expectations were likely to be. Many spouses do not. As noted earlier by another presidential spouse, they wandered into the role and tried to determine what to do and how to do it – without any guidance. A second presidential spouse talked about her struggles in coming to the role with previous higher education administration experience – a trend that may become more common in the future.

I had a very difficult time when my husband first assumed the presidency being employed in the College's Advancement Office. We came from state institutions where we were both VP's. The Board SAID they wanted me to work in Advancement, yet (unspoken) . . . it became clear that they didn't want me to become "too powerful," make too many changes (which were direly needed) or controversial decisions, or fire anyone! After 18 months, I gave up trying to walk this tightrope and decided to pursue "my own gig." I would certainly think twice about assuming an administrative role in a college where my spouse was President. Although as Presidential spouses we discuss this regularly, I wish someone would systematically explore the difficulties of the dual-career presidency including Board/community expectations of the spouse, working either inside or outside the institution. I have found it difficult to actually "pull it off" and please all the parties without feeling that I'm either forfeiting/compromising my own career track or feeling guilty about it because it comes at the expense of my involvement with the College. My annoyance of this "pastors'" of the non-compensated spouse (who may well have had to give up a highly-compensated professional life of her/his own) has grown more intense the longer I've held the role.

This presidential spouse speaks for so many spouses who have had to defer dreams and ambitions when the marital partner becomes a college president. Regardless of whether or not the roles and expectations of the presidential spouses are outlined, many presidential spouses find the demands on the presidential couple become limiting on the spouse pursuing all of his or

her dreams or career ambitions. The presidential spouse may find great joy and fulfillment in the role as presidential spouse, but it is often at the price of his or her own dreams. How many children wish to grow up to be a presidential spouse? Without this as a personal goal, how are one's own goals not put aside by the demands and expectations of being half of a presidential team? This does not mean that many spouses do not continue with their careers or personal interests, but many spouses must make space for the presidency and its accompanying demands. One spouse noted that s/he was going to do her part for her successor: "My spouse is retiring and I plan to talk to the chair of the search committee in order for this committee to be clear about their expectations for the spouse and also aware of needs and questions a spouse might address in the interview stage."

Two spouses noted that the board valued the higher education background they brought to the campus. The first starts with a criticism of the survey construction and then moves into an explanation of her experience:

I think your survey looks at the presidential spouse in a very traditional way. I certainly do my shard of traditional spouse obligations but my largest contribution to my husband's institution is based on my academic expertise. For instance several of his programs have used me as consultant to design their outcome assessment plans for accreditation. I sit on several task forces and sometimes teach for him in a pinch in the summer when I don't have a contract with my other institution. My husband does not arrange these activities; other persons in the university contact me. I have a very good relationship with the board of trustees as well as with the faculty.

This spouse makes a point to explain that her husband has not forced her services on the campus, but allowed the request for her skills to happen organically. For those working against the traditional role, they know that they cannot come on too strong for fear of resistance. As another spouse explains, it is about creating “legitimacy” in what you can contribute in the academic and administrative areas, which are not assumed, regardless of one’s own credentials. It is as if the act of marriage means only one person can be successful, talented, and capable, and the other person is merely along for the ride. This spouse writes, “My own professional work in higher ed and, especially, my presentations at conferences and on college campuses, has indirectly brought good PR to our college, as has my board work in the community. My writing and publication has also given me a lot of legitimacy with our faculty and staff.”

Other spouses are not trying to create a role on campus. They are continuing with their own professional pursuits. As this spouse comments, “Due to my full-time employment and our family home away from the college, my involvement in the life of the college is very limited. This arrangement was discussed with the board chair and vice chair when my husband was recruited for the position and it was agreed that I would not play the role of a ‘traditional’ presidential spouse. I am only occasionally on campus. The staff plans the events; my husband lets me know when I should show up.” In light of so many other comments, it is necessary to note that this spouse was proactive in defining expectations and found a board accepting of this decision. What is unclear is if there had been other candidates out there with a spouse willing to “play the role of a ‘traditional’ spouse” if this would have jeopardized the husband’s chances at the presidency. It is hard to gauge the true effect of a frank, upfront, defining-of-the-role conversation, by a spouse, may have on the president’s ability to be hired. This is a fact that

many spouses recognize. They, therefore, quietly agree to go along so as not to interfere in the gaining of a presidency for the husband or wife.

It appears that role-playing occurs more often for wives of presidents than husbands of presidents. This could be that there are less clearly defined expectations on a president's husband, than on a president's wife. Society expects a man to have a career and a life of his own. As this spouse notes: "My wife's career and mine certainly intersect, but we maintain some separation. I did not choose to work within about eight miles of the college to keep some distance. Since I am a public figure and make regular statements in public and in print. I feel it is only fair to my wife to keep this separation and not make her responsible for my statements and opinions." This quote underlines the fact that a spouse who has a public role outside of the institution must be conscious that his words do not appear to be taken as the words of the institution when he is not speaking in that capacity. It is unclear from the statement as to whether this male spouse feels he has an extra burden of caution that a female presidential would not bear. A second male spouse discusses how he, too, has been intentional in defining his campus role.

The board placed no expectations on me whatsoever regarding spousal role. I have maintained my own professional career, but as one who always counted my wife's work as one of my avocations, I naturally have enjoyed being on the scene. My wife and I eat in the campus dining hall 2-3 nights a week and get to know students that way (those meals are covered in president's contract) and I am a big sports fan of our teams and one of 3 "webcasters" the past 3 seasons for our home basketball games. Most weekends for the past nine years, I'll spend one morning walking the

campus picking-up litter and seeing who I see and often connect with the security guards, housekeepers, and buildings and grounds staff. I see myself as a “goodwill ambassador” both internally and externally – and have a great interest in Development, Alum Affairs and Admissions – and have sometimes been involved in planning and brainstorming with that staff.

This male spouse, while quiet involved in the campus, makes it clear through his statements and actions that he puts himself in a role that supports the president and the campus community.

Two spouses mentioned that life circumstances, in particular illness, affect the role they play on campus. The first states simply, “Due to a health problem, my participation in college activities is less than it was.” The second spouse elaborates on her situation and its affect.

I was very involved in our early days – attending about 4 evening functions a week. We had a regular sitter paid for by the University. Then I had a series of health issues including breast cancer, so basically dropped out of the social events and stopped entertaining here at home (previously about once a month, donors or student government, groups of faculty etc.). I’d (*sic*) loved being involved as hostess, and found the university events stimulating and engaging. My dad is a Lutheran pastor so I had my parents who worked together as a team as models. Since my health issues, and the kids’ teen years (no sitters, but not a good idea to leave them alone for days) the University also grew tremendously. So paid staff handles the big functions, and I attend events as I am able. The

Board has been very supportive, happy to see me when I'm present, not pressuring when I'm not.

The stages of health and life of each presidential spouse affect the work that s/he accomplishes. Each person and institution must address these differently.

Several of the spouses spoke of the challenges and demands that come from the work and role. "It is a demanding but rewarding role. For me it is important to take on volunteer roles outside the institution to maintain a separate identity in the community." A sense of identity is an often-mentioned issue for presidential spouses. Not only does the presidential spouse often become synonymous with the institution and the president, the work can overtake one's life, if one is not careful. As this spouse comments, "This particular position allows me to have a life full of activities. The most difficult part of being a presidential spouse is calendar keeping and calendar meetings. This includes the time necessary to see our families and the time to make sure everyone in the president's office, the institutional advancement office and the staff at the president's home is always informed." This spouse appears to miss time with family. However, s/he has found other aspects of the life rewarding. Moreover, it must be challenging to be responsible to so many constituents in these three different offices. It is apparent that communication consumes a lot of this spouse's life. This next spouse explains how the demands and expectations of the role, a role that possibly has been defined by these *others*, augments the life of the presidential couple. "I find it extremely difficult to balance our life at the college with that of a family. This job has really turned our world upside down. Being a college president is not a job, it is a way of life and sometimes I have a hard time dealing with the demands. I feel people do not understand what my life is like and it can be very lonely. I don't mean to complain; there are good things as well. We have met some very nice people along the way." It



is worth noting that this presidential spouse, like many presidential spouses, feels like the presidency is a two-person career. When describing the challenges of being a college presidential spouse, s/he says, “being a college president” instead of “being a college president’s spouse.” S/he has assumed the mantle of responsibility associated with the role alongside his/her president, again, as many spouses do. The other interesting thing of note in this comment is the spouse’s apology for complaining. While s/he acknowledges that there are some significant challenges, s/he feels – it appears – embarrassed that s/he does not love every minute of her/his life as the spouse of a president. There are two possible reasons for this spouse’s feelings. One is the historical context of the pastoral model where there is an expectation that a pastor’s wife will dutifully serve in a supportive role. The second relates to a societal sense that this spouse has somehow won the lifestyle lottery by being a part of the first couple of the campus community, and therefore not entitled to complain because of how many people would readily seem to want to switch places with him/her. Either way, her/his life is affected or the challenges s/he faces are real, genuine, and true to her/him. One should not diminish this fact.

Despite how these spouses feel or internalize the demands and challenges, some are confronted by a sense of calling or higher purpose by serving an institution of learning. In speaking about the demands of the position, one spouse notes, “I think it’s not black and white. A lot of stuff that you resent because it takes so much of your time and you’re in such an ancillary position is stuff that you also know is worthwhile because it’s about the health of the institution and the students who attend it, and that’s almost always worthwhile. So – I feel ambivalent. It’s not my job . . . but it is my responsibility. If you get my drift.”

One reaction to this is an ongoing expectation that the responsibilities continually associated with the presidential spouse should, in fact, be considered a job and thusly

compensated. However, after more than thirty years, there is still no consensus amongst the spouses about their feelings of compensation. One spouse in particular addresses this, “Spousal compensation has been on the back burner for a long time. It can be a very thorny issue, but will, I think, become more important in the future. In many ways it has been easier not to be compensated, though I am not sure that covert expectations are any less. I really think that some kind of retirement plan would be most helpful.” Another has a strong feeling against compensation: “I do not want a salary. I do what I do because I choose to, not because of any official expectations. The same goes for invitations to our home. Guests are invited, not scheduled.” Nevertheless, other spouses are practical in realizing that they may outlive their mate who is the main breadwinner for the family. For this reason, some spouses advocate for compensation in the form of retirement benefits. “I would like retirement benefits but not ‘in lieu’ of compensation. I do not want compensation but I would like retirement benefits.” Another spouse recognizes that in the world of higher education she has done well to receive a title and salary. “I am blessed that by and large, the community and board of trustees fully supports the president’s wife and encourages the use of my gifts within the institution and actually pays a small salary with the title of ‘Presidential Spouse.’ I think in the world of college president’s (sic) at small private institutions, I have a good situation.” However, as this next presidential spouse notes, compensation may come and go based on outside factors. “Our board recently rescinded a generous presidential spouse stipend due to the Sarbanes-Oxley legislation related to executive compensation.” This loss of recognized value and appreciation can be disheartening to a presidential spouse. Such actions, by a board, may be what led this presidential spouse to have a somewhat hardened approach to recognition and compensation: “I believe the spouse as a volunteer should do what she/he feels they need and want to do as a

service to the president and the community. I also feel a spouse should never expect reward or thanks, but when it comes be ‘happy.’ That attitude has helped me stay grounded in the work to be done.”

### **Rewards and Challenges of Being a Presidential Spouse**

The final question I asked of the interviewed presidential spouses was “What is the best and worst part of being a presidential spouse?” Spouse 2 and Spouse 4 share common themes in their answer: the relationships. Both then talk about seeing their spouses be successful and connected. Spouse 2 said, “I find it very rewarding. The interaction with people. I’m a people person and I like being around all these different people. I like going to alumni events. I like all the things we go to. My husband is very popular with the students and I like that, and I like going. I get really involved with the students myself, I like going to things on campus.” Spouse 4 continues on a similar tone, “Most rewarding thing: I think it’s getting to know the students and the college community. This is our third year, so I’m beginning to know more of the students. And because we go to events and things, they begin to feel more comfortable being with you. I really enjoy that, but on a private note, I think it is seeing my wife succeed. And what has happened on campus and the energy she has been able to bring to this. When you get to certain age at a certain time in your academic career, it’s really easy to kind of coast and this has really helped to reinvigorate her and in some ways it has helped to reinvigorate myself – I get to reinvent myself, now that I’m at a different stage, with our family life and work life and all that. So the public side of seeing how the students and the whole community responded, but privately it’s just seeing how it’s been fun for her being involved.” Spouse 6 begins with what appears to be half-joking response and then moves into a more serious answer. She said the best

part is “going on trips like this (laughs). I guess that, and when people come up to my husband and say you have made a real difference at my alma mater and I appreciate it. That makes me feel good, too. I know then that the hard work has not gone without notice, and despite the faculty members that are upset about closing their department or whatever other changes have been made, there are people who understand why you did it and know their alma mater is in a much better position than ever before. From a personal perspective, I guess the trips. I will miss these when we transition out of this job.” For Spouse 6, it appears she has found connections and camaraderie amongst the people she has met through travels to conferences like CIC’s Presidents Institute. Spouse 5 also enjoys the people. “The people that we meet. From graduates who are serving humanity in ways that never appear in the newspaper to Desmond Tutu who came to campus to the foremost authority on Mad Cow disease, the opportunity of meeting people who have, in fact, contributed so much to humanity in the public – both sides (public figures and simple people) are real, real true blessings. And we’ll miss that.”

Spouse 3 does an effective job of transitioning the conversation between the rewards and the challenges of the role of a presidential spouse. He said, “The wildly simplistic answers: the opportunities and the restrictions. We have been – well, I would never have been to China. We went to Shanghai to see the sister institution. The pressures of the institution are no different than really the corporate pressures in the business world in many respects. My wife had a death on campus prior to taking the presidency. As academic vice president she was on duty, because a colleague of hers was out of town. A student – a closet drinker – went out and partied and then in an alcoholic stupor dove down a flight of concrete steps. The phone call came at 12:30 Sunday morning. We instantly were out of bed, headed to the hospital where my wife had to be with the parents who had come in from three hours to the east and they had to pull the plug on

this young girl. That's just devastating. I think probably the death on campus would be the least rewarding – and it's no different in other professions. My daughter is a pastor, she faces this. You might get answers to that question like, 'I've got to smile all the time; I've got to always be on.' Those things don't bother me particularly – when you weigh the opportunities to travel. We're going back to a donor's house here. It's on this mountain somewhere. Then there's being on a donor's 144-foot yacht. You know, those opportunities just don't come up and some of the friendships are great. But, again, they are not unique to higher education. They are unique to the successful business world when you move out of the middle income, middle class, social economic strata. And you have to understand that you're never going to be at that financial level as the people you interact with.”

For Spouse 5, it is the burden of the role. “The frustrations that are on my husband's shoulders are sometimes astronomic. I do not like to see him ‘suffer’ with the major decisions that are on his plate. I feel helpless in his quandary.” For Spouse 6, the worst part is the amount of time one must commit to the presidency. “The worst thing is not being able to just let it go. Not being able to be completely divorced from it. My husband works 24/7. There have been times where I have said at the dinner table, ‘Okay, we're going to have a moratorium on the college. We're not going to say anything about the college for 10-12 hours.’ It doesn't matter how the conversation begins, it ends up being about the college. Having a grown daughter, who lives with her husband in another state, and no grandchildren around means that all we talk about is the college. It just consumes your whole life and no matter where you are and even if you are on vacation that five minute call to the office turns out to be 55 minutes – that's the worst part. And also the concern about coping after this is all over, because I don't think president's realize how transformed they have become in even the little things – for example, the 30 minute limit on

the exercise machines in the health center shouldn't apply to them. I don't think they realize how much they have changed and how much their expectations of others have changed. I worry a lot about how these presidents are going to adjust in their next life. I also worry about how I will adjust." Spouse 4 takes the issue of the all-encompassing nature of the work a step further and comments on how it affects friendships. "The amount of time it takes, it's all encompassing and that's not really new to this position. It was true for my wife in her former position at her previous institution. We really saw it when she took the associate provost job. Up until then, you know, you're working within a college or a lower-level so it's not all consuming in terms of the administrative side. She had to give up teaching when she became an associate provost and what happened then was a real squeeze. You have a public life and you have your family life and you have no time for people that you've known for 20 or 30 years in the community, other than when you meet them on that public level almost. I can't tell you the last time we just picked up the phone and called a friend and said, 'Hey, you want to go to a movie?' We just don't do that. If we do call someone, it's someone from our previous institution. We don't even call somebody at our current college, because there are boundaries there. And you don't want to put people in a position where they ask you awkward questions and you have to say, 'I can't tell you about that.' And they say, 'I'm your friend, I won't tell anybody.' 'Well, I can't tell you.' And so we squeezed out our personal friendships – pretty much. Maybe once a year seeing somebody for pizza or Christmas Eve dinner when we have our families in town, we invite a couple people. It's the only time we see them. We don't see them any other time. That's hard, but you've made new friends in other ways." Spouse 6 circles back to this issue when she talks about the isolation of living in the president's house. "The house is on campus. It's right next door to the stadium. At the same time it has a sense of isolation, because it is a large hill and there is surrounding

acreage, must be – well, I don't know how much – I would say at least 5-6 acres. It is a big plot of land and it's surrounded by a fence and you have to get access by dialing the phone at the gate. So to some degree I don't feel like I'm really on campus, even though technically we are on campus.” Finally, we hear from Spouse 2 who shares an often-commented negative of the role: a lack of privacy. As she discusses, though, if she wanted control of her time and space she could get it back under control. “The biggest negative is the standards: the lack of privacy and having too much to do, but I feel over the years, I feel confident to say no to the things I don't want to do. But the problem is that I want to do too many things. So it's really my own fault. I would probably be this way even in any other job my husband had. I'd probably take on too many projects, so I don't want to say it's the role of the position of the wife of the president that makes me too busy – it's me. And we could get more privacy if we desperately wanted it, but obviously we're not seeking it. So we must not want it as much as we like talking about wanting it. We live on campus. Our house is right next to a dormitory and students come over all the time and sing at our door and bring us things. And we like that. Obviously, if we didn't like that we could move off campus, but I don't want to.”

Despite the challenges, would the interviewed spouses be willing to do it again? Spouse 1 summarized it best when she said, “I certainly would, because despite the many challenges that we had, I know for him and for me our greatest reward is the joy in the eyes of the kids who matriculate; all we have to do when we are feeling low is to get engaged with students and realize how important it is that we do all we can to ensure that they have a quality institution to attend for the four to five years that they are there. The rewards far outweigh the challenges and the disappointments. There certainly have been disappointments, but the personal rewards have made it the best decision we have ever made.”

CHAPTER FIVE  
CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS,  
AND AREAS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

**Conclusion**

As both the literature and this study found, the demands on a presidential team are unrelenting. Presidents and spouses are always “on” as the living logos of their institution. Because of this role, the spouse often assumes as many expectations and duties as does the president. On campus, key constituents expect the presidential spouse to attend concerts, dinners, and commencements, often acting as the host of the event. Off campus, college constituencies expect spouses to be engaged active members of the community. All the while their actions, habits, and attire are monitored and evaluated. Certainly, their actions and words are a reflection on the college.

All presidential spouses provide some level of support to their president. The president of a college is responsible for setting a vision, raising funds, and courting constituents, all the while personifying the institution. Many of the responsibilities of the president’s family fall to the spouse, as do many of the tasks associated with the business of entertaining and social engagements. For many presidential spouses, the president’s role becomes a way of life for the presidential team.

Spouses’ involvements are as varied as our nation’s institutions and the people holding the positions. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the work of the spouse – either male or female – is important and crucial to an institution, even if at times undervalued. The three main



categories of spousal service are: (1) oversight of the presidential house and family obligations; (2) oversight and hosting of campus events; and (3) assistance in college public relations through work in the community, attending events, and cultivating alumni and donor relations (Corbally, 1977). What may appear to some as the fun of throwing parties is a superficial analysis and misses the seriousness and importance of the work. When this work is well done, it has significant implications for both friend-raising and fund-raising.

Boards of trustees must take seriously the selection of the presidential team. Spouses are more than just an added benefit. The board must recognize how often the presidential spouse becomes an embodiment of the institution and is important in the success of the college's development efforts. The interview process should reflect the presidential spouse's role on campus by allowing for a trustee-initiated conversation about the board expectations of the presidential spouse. The outcome of that conversation should be a two-sided dialog that captures the interests of the board while valuing the interests and abilities of the presidential spouse.

## **Recommendations**

This dissertation focuses on the role and influence of the presidential spouse and how best to capitalize on the assets of the position and the person. Through the course of the previous chapters, I laid a foundation to better recognize, value, and appreciate this individual. In this section, I outline steps for different stakeholders within the institution to employ. In order to play to the strengths of the individuals and entities affected, these recommendations provide guides for how to approach the work or how to assist the presidential spouse to be a success.

### *Outgoing Presidential Spouse*

- The outgoing presidential spouse should advocate to the board of trustees on behalf of his/her successor to consider clear expectations for a presidential spouse that are developed in conversation with the newly selected presidential spouse. A starting point for this conversation may begin with the outgoing presidential spouse developing a list of activities, involvements, and initiatives that s/he has undertaken. Such a list will help the board fully understand what the outgoing spouse did and help formulate an understanding of the existing expectations of the presidential spouse. From this list, the board may begin a conversation with the new presidential spouse.

### *Presidential Spouse*

- Presidential spouse candidates should be aware that any campus visit or airport fly-in prior to being hired is an interview – either formal or informal – and the candidate should treat the visit as such. Typically, in these situations, campus constituents are watching and evaluating all comments and actions of the candidates.
- A presidential spouse should spend time thinking about what s/he wants to do in this role. Prior to a board initiated conversation about presidential spouse expectations, the presidential spouse should be well prepared to outline the areas that are of interest and possible for her/him to accomplish and achieve. While the presidential spouse candidate will be sensitive to her/his president's candidacy, the presidential spouse has a right to set realistic limitations on expectations based on personal, professional, and societal influences.
- Upon selection of the presidential team, a presidential spouse should develop the words to tell people about what s/he does on behalf of the institution. Spouses may find that

constituents of the college misunderstand her/his role. The presidential spouse will have the opportunity to answer the question, “What do you do?” As a living logo of the institution, it is necessary for the presidential spouse to have a 15-second elevator speech at the ready. This mini-speech will reflect on not only the spouse, but also on the institution.

- Just as it is recommended that the outgoing presidential spouses create a list of activities, involvements, and initiatives, so too should the current presidential spouse. Creating a tool like Spouse 5’s addendum to the president’s report to the trustees, that outlines the work of the presidential spouse on behalf of the institution, is one possibility.
- The presidential spouse should keep track of event attendance and the role played, especially when expending college funds on the presidential spouse. In order to protect the institution, the trustees, and the presidential team, the presidential spouse should document and regularly report his/her actions and the necessary reimbursements of presidential spouse expenses to the board of trustees. When remuneration is given, the presidential spouse must document it as *related to institutional business* in order to avoid taxation. In order to justify tax-free reimbursements, the presidential spouse must submit to the institution a list of all institution-related expenses incurred by the presidential spouse. These submissions must include detailed descriptions of event, cost, purpose, and the role the presidential spouse played in the event. Simply saying, “to support the institution,” is not sufficient. This careful record keeping will allow the presidential spouse to justify to the auditors and to the IRS that the money expended is not a taxable benefit, if the work occurred in service to the institution. Keep in mind the burden of proof is on the presidential spouse.

### *Presidential Couple*

- The presidential couple pursuing and accepting a presidency should have conscious conversations about what the presidency will mean: what are their expectations of one another; who will manage the home, children, and family issues; are there tasks that can be hired out if the presidential spouse is working outside of the home.
- Prior to accepting a presidency, a presidential team should discuss with the board of trustees the standards and expectations for presidential entertaining, i.e. who will plan the events, how many events per week/year, what is the entertainment budget, who drives the calendar (president and spouse, development and alumni offices, or others?). In addition, there should be clarification of staff needed and available to execute these events and to whom these staff members report.
- The presidential couple should consider the upkeep costs of the home when negotiating the overall benefits package as a part of the presidential contract. Further, it is important to outline expectations for the standards for the upkeep and maintenance of the presidential residence. An outgoing presidential team can be helpful to their successor by raising these issues. The exiting presidential team should advocate to the board of trustees for changes, updates, and needed repairs. If done prior to the arrival of the new presidential team, then the new couple does not have the burden of the often-necessary decision to attend to deferred maintenance issues in the presidential home. For couples living in private homes, they need to consider if the home will be appropriate for entertaining, if they in fact plan to use it for such.

### *Board of Trustees*

- During the candidate selection process, the board should do more than informal interviews to determine if the spouse is “suitable”. Because merely “suitable” is different than appreciating that this spouse is a living logo and important to the success of the college’s efforts. The informal process, in fact, may be indicative of what spouses do in a portion of their role. However, the informal interview should not negate the need for the board to have the conversation about expectations. Because many spouses end up with roles and expectations far greater than gripping and grinning at receptions, the trustees owe it to themselves and the presidential spouse candidate to conduct an interview about her/his capacity to execute the other portions of those duties.
- As noted before, the board of trustees and presidential spouse must talk at the hiring of the presidential team about these expectations. It is the board’s responsibility to initiate this conversation. In addition, the board should have follow-up conversations at some regular interval to track achievement of expectations and confirm they are still acceptable to both the board and the presidential spouse. The board should designate member(s) to be responsible for engaging the presidential spouse in these important conversations.
- If travel is part of the expectations of the presidential spouse, then the institution should pay those expenses. Providing a contract for the presidential spouse allows the presidential spouse to be considered an employee (even if not compensated), and thus covered for reimbursement because the expenses incurred are a function of the position and not a taxable benefit. The trustees should work with the presidential couple to make sure that institutional travel is not a taxable benefit to the presidential spouse.

- If there are expectations of the presidential spouse, then there should be a commitment to pay the presidential spouse for the time, energy, and commitment. If the presidential spouse does not agree to do the work, then the institution will have to pay someone else to do it.
- The following are action steps for a board of trustees in developing a presidential team compensation package, based on the recommendations of key writers in the field of higher education employment contract writing. These recommendations will allow the board and presidential team to feel confident in their level of compensation. If the IRS audits and questions the levels of remuneration, the burden of proof would be on the IRS to prove a case of excessive compensation.
  - Appoint an independent committee of trustees to oversee the presidential compensation. These committee members should be free of encumbrances in relationship with the presidential team (Cotton, 2004).
  - Seek advice of external, knowledgeable experts. These experts should be able to pull data of comparable institution presidential team packages (Cotton, 2004).
  - Develop a contract for the president and spouse (as either two documents, or a single all-encompassing document), which outlines duties, responsibilities, expectations, compensation and benefits packages, and metrics for measuring success (Kelly, 1993).
  - Recommend a presidential team package and contract(s) to the board of trustees for approval. This package would include housing, travel and entertainment reimbursement plan, vehicle program, childcare reimbursement plan, retirement and health insurance programs, and spouse compensation.

- Review the package and contract(s) periodically to confirm that they are appropriate and justifiable (Cotton, 2004).

The above listed recommendations provide a template for conversation and contemplation for encouraging the success of the presidential spouse. These recommendations do not mean to imply that the necessary actions are easy or without controversy. However, they provide a starting point for appropriately recognizing the presidential spouse and valuing his/her contribution to the institution.

### **Implications**

By now, the reader realizes that I believe deeply in the importance of the role and influence of the presidential spouse. The minimization of this person in the campus environment is unproductive to the institution and higher education. While we have more than 350 years of women and men serving in the role, few have come to the forefront for recognition or attention. Their successes often are in quiet moments, shared joys with their president, and occasional public recognition and appreciation. However, I believe that people generally do not accept these roles for personal credit or gain. Instead, they believe in the cause of education, are confident in the abilities of their president, or take on the presidential spouse role as a sideline to their own careers. Regardless of the guise of accepting the role, it is a complex and underappreciated one in the annals of higher education.

Studying the role of the presidential spouse has a more important task than just understanding and recognizing the role and influence of the presidential spouse. As a student of higher education management, there are some important implications to the broader area of management and society.

Let us begin by looking at the implications to college management. There is a recognized decline in candidates expressing interest in the presidential position. In the short term, there is a growing concern that there are not enough qualified and capable people to fill the positions vacated by presidents retiring or stopping-out of the top administrative position. Adept boards realize that the presidency is a difficult and stressful position often requiring the efforts of both husband and wife<sup>12</sup>.

In 2002, the American Association of Community Colleges released a study predicting that in the next six years, approximately 45 percent of community college presidents would be retiring. These projections have proven true, and there have been a significant number of vice presidents retiring. In addition, these trends are proving true at four-year institutions (Cotton, 2004). Cotton notes, “We are already seeing an imbalance between the growing demand for successful presidents with proven track records and the limited supply.” The reality of these predictions is a growing shortage of highly-talented men and women for top higher education posts. For this reason, salaries and compensation must remain competitive for institutions to attract their top candidates.

The challenge is clear. The median tenure of a college president is just five years in public universities and seven years in private higher education (Basinger, 2002a). Simple economic laws declare that without appropriate compensation, the best presidential teams will move to other high-paying careers. As higher education continues to increase in complexity, size, and scope, our colleges and universities are not only responsible for educating our students, but also for researching new science that affects our health and economy, employing large

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<sup>12</sup> This does not mean that a single president cannot be successful. However, when there is a presidential couple, both typically have a role in the successful execution of the position.



numbers of professionals,<sup>13</sup> and managing significant funds<sup>14</sup> (Chronicle, 2005). Without qualified leadership, our institutions will falter. Retention of top administrators is the key to continued success in the world market. This point should not be underestimated. Higher education needs the best and brightest seeking these top positions. Therefore, when the best are married, then securing these couples will only occur when boards of trustees seek and retain presidential teams through appropriate compensation packages. For this reason, in order to successfully find and retain the best candidates, boards of trustees are compelled to offer presidential teams – president and spouse – a competitive compensation package. In addition to salaries, presidential teams can receive a diverse range of benefits. Competitive compensation packages are a necessary action, but one that boards of trustees must administer with care and justify by the level of expectations and demands of the positions.

Another factor affecting the pay of the presidency, compared to that of others in the institution, is that a president has generally less stability than other employees of the institution (Thwing, 1926). Presidential teams may choose to step down because of the pressure of the position on self, health, and family. Alternatively, the trustees may remove the team. For these reasons, candidates accepting the position require a higher salary to allow for the creation of a nest egg for times of possible unemployment.

It is important to also note that the search for, and selection of, a college president is an expensive undertaking. Presidential searches generally last six months to a year and include the expenses of bringing several candidate couples to campus,<sup>15</sup> a considerable encroachment on the time of members of the search committee and members of the college community, and the

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<sup>13</sup> Higher education employs more than two million full-time and one million part-time people.

<sup>14</sup> In 2004, the top 60 best-endowed institutions had combined endowments in excess of \$124 billion.

<sup>15</sup> The expenses related to presidential team recruitment may include travel, lodging, meals for them and all of the people with whom they meet. There are the expenses related to advertising and conducting the meetings of the search committee. In addition, there may be the cost of hiring a search firm to conduct the search.

deceleration of campus energy and momentum during the search and transition periods. Thus, the college trustees make a wise investment to create an attractive compensation package that will entice and retain a presidential team for a longer period.

A final mechanism for presidential team retention is to make sure the presidential spouse is satisfied. Not all spouses require compensation or remuneration. Some simply want or need to be recognized, valued, appreciated, and not marginalized in the life of the institution.

The greatest change over thirty years ago is that many spouses have more choice in the role he or she plays in the life of the institution. However, when a spouse contributes to the institution, that work should not go without appreciation or compensation. The reimbursement of travel, entertaining, and babysitting expenses related to college business are common ways trustees compensate spouses, and thus, presidential teams. Spouses are due their recognition and the appropriate compensation for their contributions to higher education institutions. When boards of trustees realize it is within their power to slow down or stop the churn at the top of the administrative structure by ensuring the spouse is happy in his/her role, then we will begin to see interview protocols that include spouses directly in the conversation, contracts with clear expectations defined, and compensation and reimbursement offered. These steps will allow American higher education to continue to garner and maintain national and international respect.

Let us now look to the larger societal implications of this research. There must be a reason the executive spouse receives very little attention in the literature. Here are five hypotheses: (1) Members of our society are uncomfortable believing that a spouse has influence on his/her executive and the work done in the corporate, Oval, or college president's office. (2) We want to believe that executives achieve success on their own. (3) As a society, we have an aversion to a sense of nepotism that may be at play if we recognize that a spouse influences

his/her executive. (4) We still live in a patriarchal society that has trouble accepting a woman as “pulling strings” or being the “power behind the throne”. However, maybe it is more basic than these four previous hypotheses. Perhaps the gap in interest and research in this area relates to a perception of the topic as trivial. (5) The difficulty in recognizing the contributions of the spouse may lie in society’s dismissal of the functions of the spouse as simply “women’s work” (Ostar, 1991). If it is the fifth hypothesis, then this stereotype has outlived its usefulness.

It is most likely a combination of each of these. However, it does not need to remain so. This research could set the stage for a new conversation – a conversation that values the collective energy and insight of an executive couple. It is acceptable that a couple can be successful because of the strengths embodied, support provided, and talents shared that allow for the s/election of one of them as an executive. There is no shame in admitting and celebrating the talents of two people who have chosen to be a part of a two-person career. This shift brings the role of the spouse into the twenty-first century, allowing the presidential spouse recognition as a part of the executive’s success.

### **Areas for Further Exploration**

I will conclude by reflecting on several factors, which until this point have gone without discussion. These factors relate to the authenticity of the interviews, the limitations of this research, the lack of a theoretical framework, and I close by positing a model of influence on presidential spouses.

A reasonable query of a reader would be to wonder if what I have learned from the in-depth interviews is honest and reflective of the true experience of the presidential spouse, or is it merely the public relations spin that a polished presidential spouse would be likely to give a researcher, interviewer, or person s/he did not know. I do believe that there is significant truth in

the words of these interviewed presidential spouses. Through my research and preparation, I had the chance not only to attend three CIC Presidents Institutes and develop relationships with many presidential spouses beyond the six interviewed, but also to conduct a pilot study interview with a recently retired presidential spouse. While I was not able to use directly any of the information gained from any of these informal interactions, I feel confident that what I learned from many undocumented one-on-one conversations undergirds what I relate in the text of this dissertation. Further, there is much more to the interview transcripts than what I have related. For fear of compromising confidentiality, there are a number of personal stories I did not share. However, the candor of these other stories only affirms the truthfulness of the answers shared. Additionally, several of the interviewed spouses commented that they shared things with me that they have not even shared with close friends. For these reasons, I feel confident that there is great reliability in these interviews.

Time, accessibility, and do-ability bind all research to a designated scope. In this research, I purposely chose to interview presidential spouses at small- to medium-sized private institutions. I was fortunate to find a great ally in the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC). They value and support the presidential couples in the work they do on behalf of their institutions and higher education, more generally. Because of their support, I was able to gain access to these presidential spouses and their contact information. To compile this sort of database on my own would have been too time-intensive. CIC's endorsement allowed me entree into this important base of busy individuals.

Because of the access, I chose to work with sitting presidential spouses. It is reasonable to wonder whether the data collected would be different if I had chosen to interview retired presidential spouses. The selected individuals in a research study affect all qualitative studies.

People who are living an experience will understand and reflect on it differently than those who have distance from said experience. However, based on the unpublished pilot interview conducted with a recently retired presidential spouse, I believe that there is consistency in the information I gathered.

Qualitative research makes the reader responsible for finding generalizations from the learnings. I did not design this research to be predictive. One should not read this text with the attempt to determine that “x” spouse would be successful at “y” institution, based on “a,” “b,” and “c” factors. It would be futile to speculate in such a way. However, I will hypothesize that there is transferability of the learnings to other executive spouses (both within and outside of higher education). Through my many conversations with CIC presidential spouses, I found there to be common factors that affect the lived experiences of presidential spouses. These factors include the demographics of the institution’s host community, size of the institution, the institution’s culture, and size of the college’s endowment. To a lesser than expected level, gender of the spouse is a factor. I believe that these factors will remain of importance regardless of whether or not the institution is public or private. Further, executive spouses will find similar factors affecting their lived experience. For example, the size and wealth of the company, the geographic location of the company, the size of the host community, and the culture of the company. In fact, a number of presidential spouses living in smaller communities commented that they felt the closest connection to the executive spouse of the local factory. They reflected that as the spouses of the two largest employers in the community, they could relate to each other in a way that others in the community could not.

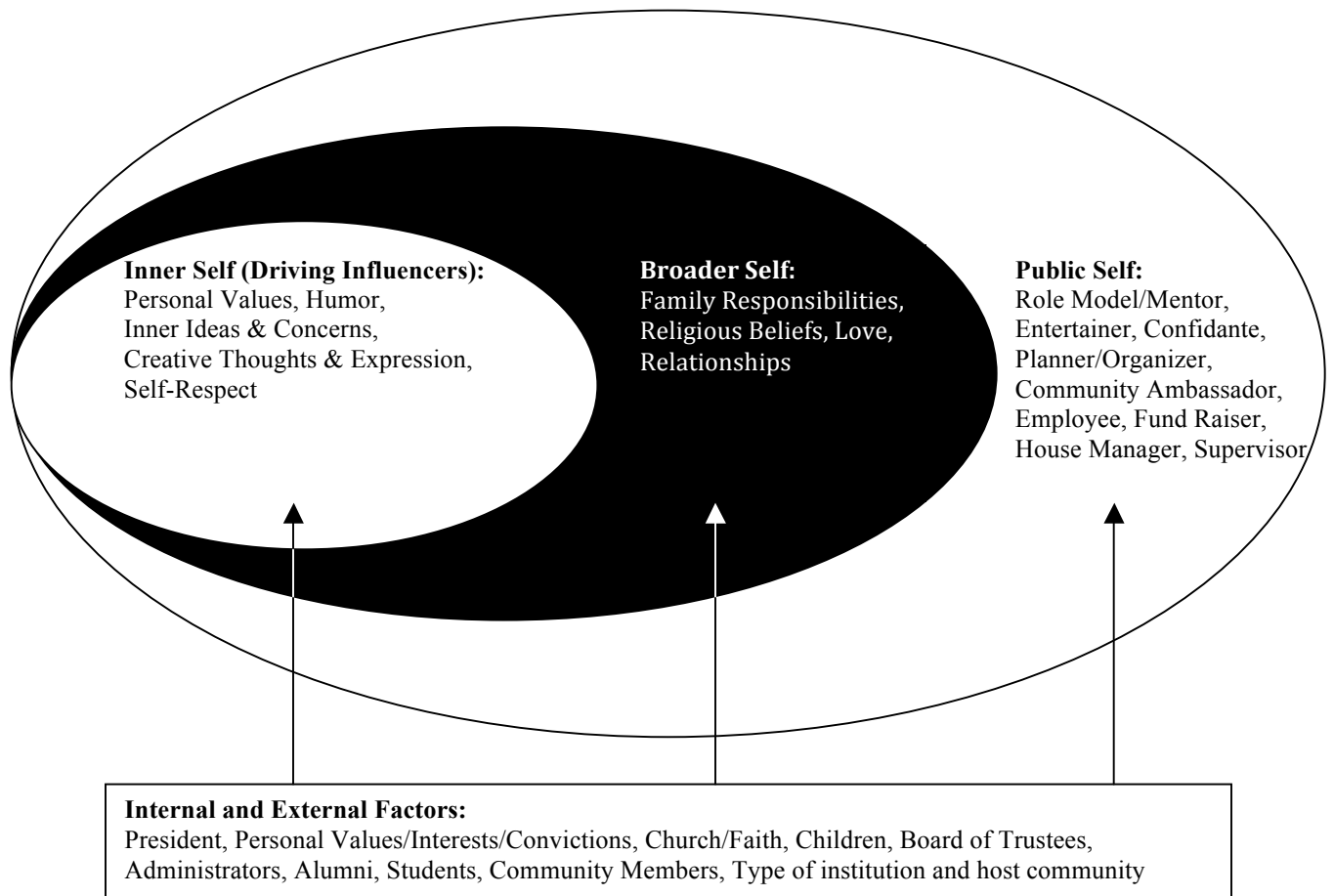
What is predictable based on this research is that an institution should be able to create greater satisfaction for the presidential spouse by initiating important conversations on the front

end of the hiring process and regularly returning to the expectations of the presidential spouse. Further, I believe that other executive spouses would fare well to have the privilege afforded to them by having the same types of conversations with people in parallel roles to those of trustees of the college. We know that the men and women serving as executive spouses have a significant role and influence on their organizations and institutions. Ignoring or downplaying this is to disregard the extant literature and research.

A further limitation of any research is the theoretical framework in which one works. While a researcher designs the framework as a context in which to place his or her work, it also creates artificial walls and boundaries for the research. As I examined different theories, including role theory, dissonance theory, and gender theory, I found them all to be lacking for this research. I am not implying that these theories are not helpful and that they would not aid another researcher in approaching this topic. However, the existing literature on the topic has not chosen a theoretical framework. To do so here, felt contrived and artificial. I do believe that another researcher that brought a feminist perspective to this topic would provide a new and wonderful depth to this field of research. Further, a role theorist would add a level of depth and relevance of this work to a broader conversation. At this time and place, I did not need those frameworks in order to raise this research to the level of discussion and conversation needed to advance higher education. I welcome the researcher who follows me and brings those theories to bear on this important topic.

Finally, I would like to turn to creating a framework or model that I believe addresses the overarching issue of this research, how does the presidential spouse create a personal model for their role and influence on the institution. There are factors that I believe effect how a presidential spouse lives the role and determines how to have influence. There are three selves

of a presidential spouse: (1) the inner one that he or she may only ever see, (2) the broader self readily shown to spouse, children, family and friends, and (3) the public self the spouse creates for others. There exist both internal and external influences that affect the presidential spouse. As the research shows, these include personal beliefs and experiences, the president and other members of the presidential spouse family, the board of trustees and the broader public, and the type of institution and the community in which the institution is. Some spouses are the same on all three levels and may only have modest influence from external factors. Other spouses live as three different people and influenced by the external pressures. The following chart hopes to capture a pictorial representation of these selves and factors<sup>16</sup>:



<sup>16</sup> This model is influenced by (1) conversations with Kathi Tunheim, a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota and president of Tunheim Leadership Group, Inc., and (2) the works of Clodius & Magrath (1984), Corbally (1977), and Ostar (1986 & 1991).

This model posits that a spouse must decide for her or himself who s/he wants to be. By understanding one's self and the internal and external factors, the spouse is better able to manage her/his role and decide how to influence. The spouse must start by looking inward. This inner self is what I describe as the driving influencers. People often hide these influencers from society, but they are at the core of who a person is. These influencers include one's personal values, inner ideas and concerns, creative thoughts and expression, a sense of self-respect, and one's own sense of humor. The next layer out is the broader self. One often shares these influencers and traits with close family and friends. These influencers include one's family responsibilities, religious beliefs, love, and relationships. The final outer level is the public self shared with everyone. This self is made up of roles one takes on, such as role model/mentor, entertainer, confidante, planner/organizer, community ambassador, employee, fund raiser, house manager, and supervisor. One could easily add on many other roles to this list.

Presidential spouses mention a number of factors that affect who they are in these three different layers of self. These factors include both internal and external components, such as their president, personal value/interests/convictions, church/faith, children, and members of the larger community.

Through the course of this final chapter, I have advocated the important role of the board of trustees in initiating conversations about expectations with the presidential spouse. However, these conversations will be less than successful if the presidential spouse does not first spend time reflecting on who s/he is, wants to be, and how s/he will handle the role of the presidential spouse. This research has shown that there are both internal and external expectations associated with being a presidential spouse. To ignore these expectations and their effect on the lived experience prevents the presidential spouse from being successful. When the presidential spouse



is successful, s/he aids the president in being successful in advancing the institution and higher education.

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## APPENDIX A

### PRESIDENTIAL SPOUSE ON-LINE QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Title Page

##### Consent Agreement

##### The Role and Influence of the College Presidential Spouse

##### Doctoral Dissertation Research

Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia

Through participating in this on-line survey, I agree to take part in the dissertation research of Matthew R. Thompson, a doctoral student at the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia.

My participation is strictly voluntary. I understand that I am under no obligation to complete this on-line survey and can withdraw my participation at any time without explanation and without penalty by selecting the "exit survey" link located at the top of each page.

My participation will involve completing this on-line survey which is expected to take about twenty (20) minutes. I agree that my answers will be compiled and used in the aggregate, with no connection to me or my institution of service as a presidential spouse.

I agree that I will not be identified by name, but through reference to being a presidential spouse at a vaguely defined institution. The researcher reserves the right to use this data for purposes other than the development of the dissertation. If he draws from my survey results for other purposes, he will not identify me by name or position in any presentation or publication.

I will not benefit directly from this research, except in that it will inform theory and practice in the management of higher education. The researcher does not anticipate that the research will involve discomforts, stresses, or risks.

If I have any questions about the research at any time, I may contact the researcher, Matthew R. Thompson, Doctoral Student, Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia, at [matthewrthompson@yahoo.com](mailto:matthewrthompson@yahoo.com).

My continuation with this on-line survey indicates that I understand my rights and willingly agree to participate in this research. I recognize that I should print a copy of this screen before proceeding in order to have access to contact information for the researcher and his institution.

Additional questions or problems regarding my rights as a research participant should be addressed to J. Douglas Toma, Ph.D., Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia, Meigs Hall, Athens, Georgia 30602; [jdt@uga.edu](mailto:jdt@uga.edu) or 706-542-4836.

#### Overview and Directions

Directions: Please answer questions in relation to you, unless the question asks for information about the president.

Note: In this survey, several terms are used as representative terms. The term "president" represents the

chief executive of the institution, whether the title is CEO, President, or Chancellor. The term "college" represents the institution, whether your institution is a college, university, or institute. The term "board" represents the governing body of your institution who hired your spouse, whether your institution is governed by a board of trustees or a system-wide board.

### *Institutional Characteristics*

**Indicate the size of your institution by category of enrollment:**

- 1 - 999
- 1,000 - 2,499
- 2,500 - 4,999
- 5,000 - 9,999
- 10,000 - 19,999
- 20,000 or more

**Which region corresponds to where your institution is located:**

**Describe the location of your campus, according to the population of the town:**

- Less than 25,000 people
- 25,000 - 49,999 people
- 50,000 - 99,999 people
- 100,000 - 249,999 people
- 250,000 - 499,999 people
- 500,000 - 999,999 people
- 1,000,000 or more people

**Indicate whether the students at your institution are primarily:**

- Residential
- Commuter

### *Presidential Spouse Experience*

**For how many years have you been a presidential spouse?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1 - 3 Years
- 4 - 7 Years
- 8 - 11 Years
- 12 - 15 Years
- 15+ Years

**In how many different institutions have you served as a presidential spouse? (Please include your present institution in your calculation.)**

- One (1)
- Two (2)
- Three (3)
- Four (4)
- Five (5) or more

**Have all of the institutions in which you have served as a presidential spouse been private?**

- Yes
- No

**What was your spouse's position prior to becoming a president of a college/university?**

- Dean or other administrator at same institution
- Dean or other administrator at another institution
- Faculty
- Other (please specify)

**Of the following, which source helped you most in your identification of the responsibilities of a president's spouse? (Please use the scale of "One" as the most helpful to "Eight" as the least helpful. You may only choose one answer for each rank on the scale.)**

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight
Governing Board								
President (your spouse)								
Your Past Experience								
Documented Traditions								
Your Predecessor								
Publications								
Association Meetings								
Other								

If "Other," please specify.

**Did you meet with your predecessor?**

Yes  No

**If yes, did you discuss his/her experiences as the presidential spouse?**

Yes  No

***Service to the Institution***

**Please estimate the average number of hours you devote per week to the activities required of the president's spouse, including the events you plan, host, and are expected to attend as a guest:**

- 0 - 5 hours per week
- 6 - 10 hours per week
- 11 - 15 hours per week
- 16 - 20 hours per week
- 21 - 25 hours per week
- 26 - 30 hours per week
- 31+ hours per week

**In your opinion, does planning/attending activities on behalf of the institution require a considerable time commitment from you?**

Yes  No

**Did you choose this level of commitment?**

Yes  No

**If you were able to freely choose how to apportion your time, what priority would you give to each of the following? (Assign a "1" for the highest priority and "8" for the lowest. You may only choose one answer for each rank on the scale.)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Service to Higher Education (your spouse's institution)								
Salaried Job (other than as a presidential spouse)								
Friends (interests)								
Travel								
Other Volunteer Commitments								
Family								
Recreation								
Other								

***Paid Occupational Activities***

**Are you now employed in a paid position (other than as a presidential spouse)?**

Yes - Full-time

Yes - Part-time

No (If no, mark this box and then press the "Next" button at the bottom of this page.)

**If yes, how many hours a week do you work?**

0 - 10 hours per week

11 - 20 hours per week

21 - 30 hours per week

31 - 40 hours per week

40+ hours per week

**Did you begin a paid job or occupation since becoming a presidential spouse?**

Yes  No

**What was your goal in obtaining this paid job?**

- To meet the members of the community
- To enhance the image of my home institution
- To maintain my professional status
- To earn money
- To develop new interests

Other (please specify)

***Occupational Activity***

**If you were working before your spouse became president, was the work interrupted when you became a presidential spouse?**

Yes  No

**If your work was interrupted, was it because of one of the following?**

- Family responsibilities
- Lack of jobs in the community
- Lack of time because of presidential responsibilities
- Requirement by the governing board

Other (please specify)

***Housing Status***

**Do you (and your spouse) live in a university-owned house?**

Yes  No

**If yes, do you (and your spouse) pay rent?**

- Yes - Full rent
- Yes - Partial Rent
- No

**If you do not live in a university-owned house, do you (and your spouse) receive a housing allowance?**

- Yes - Fully pays the rent
- Yes - Partially pays the rent
- No

***Entertainment Activities***

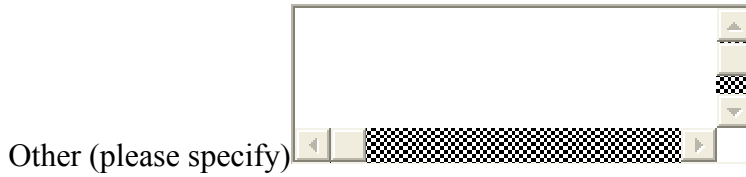
**On average, how many social functions do you and the president host per year?**

- 0 - 10 per year
- 11 - 20 per year
- 21 - 30 per year
- 31 - 40 per year
- 41 - 50 per year
- 51+ per year



**Who plans the majority of these functions?**

- Me
- Me with Staff
- President
- President with Staff
- Staff



**On average, how many hours do you spend planning a function?**

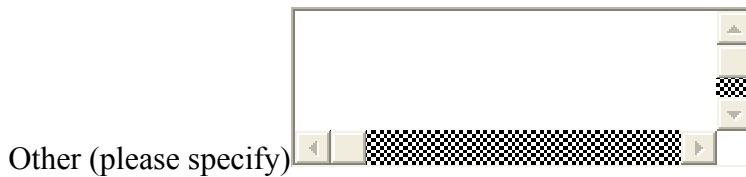
- 0 - 3 hours per function
- 4 - 7 hours per function
- 8 - 11 hours per function
- 12 - 16 hours per function
- 17 - 20 hours per function
- 21+ hours per function

**Does the institution have an entertainment budget?**

- Yes
- No

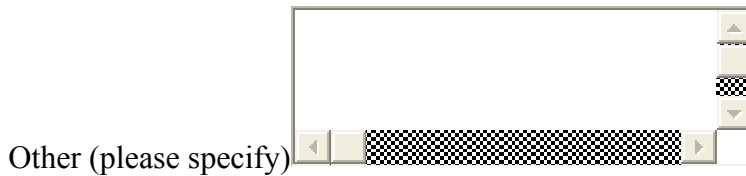
**If yes, is the entertainment budget controlled by:**

- President
- Me



**Do you consider the entertainment budget to be adequate?**

- Yes
- No



**How many institutional functions per year do you attend without the president?**

- 0 events per year attended alone
- 1 - 3 events per year attended alone
- 4 - 7 events per year attended alone
- 8 - 11 events per year attended alone
- 12 - 16 events per year attended alone
- 17 - 20 events per year attended alone
- 20+ events per year attended alone

Other (please specify)

***Presidential Spouse Remuneration***

**Do you receive remuneration for your services as the presidential spouse?**

- Yes
- No

A horizontal bar chart with a checkered pattern, indicating a selection. It includes a legend on the right with a checkered box and a dropdown arrow.

Other (please specify)

**Do you believe you should receive some compensation for managing the presidential family's formal activities on behalf of the institution?**

- Yes
- No

**Would you prefer that the institution provide you with some type of retirement program (such as a 403(B) or TIAA-CREF Special Service Retirement Annuity) in lieu of compensation?**

- Yes
- No

**Instead of personal remuneration, would you welcome formalized support for your efforts as presidential spouse, such as:**

- Housing Allowance (we privately own our home)
- Entertainment Allowance
- Secretarial Staff

A horizontal bar chart with a checkered pattern, indicating a selection. It includes a legend on the right with a checkered box and a dropdown arrow.

Other (please specify)

**Do you now have, or would you like to have, the following perquisites as formalized support for your social management activities as presidential spouse? (Please mark one answer per line.)**

	<b>Have Now</b>	<b>Would Like To Have</b>	<b>Not Important</b>
Title, such as "Associate," "Social Manager," etc.			
University ID and privileges, e.g. library card, gym access, parking sticker			
Tuition Remission for Yourself			
Tuition Remission for Your Children			
Mileage Allowance When Using Private Car for University Activities			
Insurance While Acting as the University Representative (Host or Guest)			



***Stress Associated with Position***

**Please consider the following list of tasks in your life as presidential spouse and rank them in terms of those that take the most time. A “1” indicates the task that takes the most time, and a “5” indicates the task that takes the least amount of time. (You may only choose one answer for each rank on the scale.)**

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Planning and coordinating institutional social events hosted by the president and me						
Attending social functions as the "presidential spouse"						
Speaking in public for the institution						
Listening and advising the president on institutional issues						
Joining the president for travel to international, national, regional, and state meetings						

Now consider the same list of tasks in your life as the presidential spouse and rank them according to the pleasure you find in doing them. A “1” indicates the activity you enjoy the most, and a “5” indicates the activity you enjoy the least. (You may only choose one answer for each rank on the scale.)

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Planning and coordinating institutional social events hosted by the president and me						
Attending social functions as the "presidential spouse"						
Speaking in public for the institution						
Listening and advising the president on institutional issues						
Joining the president for travel to international, national, regional, and state meetings						

***Institutional Board***

**Is your institution governed by:**

Its own board

A system board

**Is your institution affiliated with a religious organization?**

Yes

No

**Has the board considered the role of the institution's presidential spouse?**

Yes

No

**Has the board or its members expressed its expectations of the president's spouse?**

Formally (a written document)

Informally (verbally)

Not at all

**Does your perception of the role of a president's spouse concur with the board's expectations?**

Yes

Partially

No

Don't Know

**If there are differences, please describe:**

***Spouse Interview***

**Were you interviewed in any way while your spouse was being considered for his/her present position?**

Yes

No

**If yes, by whom:**

**If yes to answers above, please describe the type of questions asked of you:**

**Did you have the opportunity to negotiate support services for your role as presidential spouse?**

Yes

No

**If you expressed to the Board a desire to continue or begin paid employment, please indicate the Board's response:**

The Board offered/agreed to assist in locating employment.

The Board responded that it did not want me to seek employment.

The Board responded that it preferred me seek only part-time employment.

Other (please specify)

***Institutional Board***

**Are you encouraged by your board to travel with the president to: (check all that apply)**

National meetings

State or regional meetings

Your own institution's off-campus functions (such as alumni functions)


Other (please specify)

**If you checked any of the above, indicate whether:**

The institution assumes the expense

The institution's foundation assumes the expense

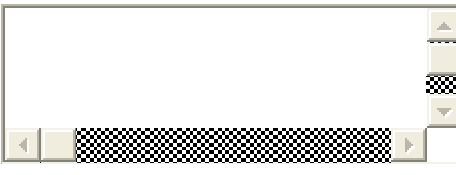
I assume the expense

Other (please specify) 

**What is the procedure for requesting funds for your travel?**

Yearly request

Specific trip request

Other (please specify) 

***Presidential Spouse Background & Occupational Activities***

**Your Gender:**

Female

Male

**If you have children, please indicate their age and gender, placing an asterisk (\*) next to the ones living at home.**



**Do any other members of your extended family live with the presidential family?**

Yes

No

**If yes, please list relationship to family:**



**Are there any other comments or insights you would like to provide to the researcher about your role and influence as the presidential spouse at your institution? (If you are open to the researcher contacting you to follow-up, please include your name, institution, and e-mail address. Or, to maintain the anonymity of your survey response, you may e-mail him at [matthewrthompson@yahoo.com](mailto:matthewrthompson@yahoo.com).)**



*Thank You*

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your time and involvement are greatly appreciated.

Please press the "Done" button to submit your survey.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the researcher at [matthewrthompson@yahoo.com](mailto:matthewrthompson@yahoo.com).

Preliminary results of this research will be shared at the 2008 Council of Independent College's Presidents Institute in Marco Island, Florida. For more information on the Institute, please visit: [http://www.cic.org/conferences\\_events/presidents/2008.asp](http://www.cic.org/conferences_events/presidents/2008.asp).



## APPENDIX B

### IN-PERSON INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How long have you been a “presidential spouse”?
2. What do you think of that title? Do you think of yourself as the spouse of the president or as a person who happens to be married to a college president?
3. How much time do you feel like you spend doing “presidential spouse” duties?
4. What efforts do you take to separate presidential spouse responsibilities from your other responsibilities?
5. What do you find most rewarding about your role as the presidential spouse?
6. What do you find least rewarding about your role as the presidential spouse?
7. Please describe your support network. Is it comprised of local friends, people you knew before your life as a presidential spouse, or family members?
8. Do you think the college faculty and administration are supportive of you and your work on behalf of the institution?
9. How is this shown?
10. Do you feel like your individual career has been positively or negatively affected by your spouse becoming a college president?
11. (If there are children:) Do you feel like your children have been positively or negatively affected by your spouse being the college president? What have you done to “buffer” your child(ren) from the public? What do you think your children have gained from this experience that non-presidential spouse children miss? Do you think they have experienced anything negative that you wish could have been avoided or prevented?
12. Was being a college president always a career aspiration for your spouse? When did you begin to discuss the possibility? How much time did you spend as a couple discussing how this would affect your life together and your other interests?

13. Has life as a presidential spouse been harder or easier than expected? In what ways?
14. How much do you interact with the institution's board of trustees? Do you find them to be supportive of your work/contributions to/for the institution? How so? (Is the recognition formal or informal?)
15. Are you paid or remunerated in any manner for your contributions to the institution?
16. Do you have a written, oral, or unexpressed contract with the board of trustees?
17. Do you think this hinders or assists you in your role as the presidential spouse?
18. If there is any written or oral agreements on your responsibilities to the institution, did they occur at your, your spouse's, or the board's request?
19. If you are not remunerated for your efforts, do you believe you should be? If so, how?
20. (As appropriate:) Why do you think that you are not recognized in a formal way as the presidential spouse? Does this affect your efforts?
21. (For male spouses:) Are you the first male presidential spouse at this institution? What is it like being the male spouse of a college president? Do you think the expectations on you are different than for a female presidential spouse? Do you enjoy participating in college functions? Do you find it easier or more difficult to be a male spouse at this institution?
22. (For female spouses:) Do you find being a female presidential spouse that you are treated differently than a male would be in your same role? Do you enjoy participating in college functions? Do you find it is easier or more difficult to be a female spouse at this institution?
23. Describe your relationship with your presidential spouse? Do you discuss college business, or does work stay at work? Do you set aside "college-free" time to do things together or as a family? Do you set aside time to manage college obligations, i.e. calendars, planning for events, travel?
24. If you could go back in time, would you still support your spouse's decision to become a college president? If yes, would you do anything different, i.e. set-up some different parameters or agreements? If no, why? What could have been handled differently to make the situation better for you and your spouse?

25. Do you think you and your spouse were prepared for the challenges of being a presidential couple? If yes, what did you do to prepare? If no, why not?
26. Besides your spouse, who is the person/people you have met in this role as presidential spouse that has most impressed you, surprised you, disappointed you, and delighted you?
27. How much do you interact with members of the administration? Such as the president's administrative assistants, head fund raiser, other members of the development and alumni offices?
28. Do you have any staff provided to assist you? If so, what type of assistance?
29. Did you role model anyone as you came into this position? Did you establish for yourself a vision of whom you wanted to be, what you wanted to do, and how you wanted to be perceived?
30. Do you get involved in any public advocacy programs, either as a spokesperson or a fundraiser? Do you feel any limitations on doing this based on the role your spouse holds?
31. Would you like to switch places with your spouse – you as president and s/he as presidential spouse? Do you think your lives and relationship would be significantly different?
32. What, if anything, will you do to prepare your successor for his/her role as a presidential spouse at this institution?

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT FORM – SURVEY

***Note: This announcement was placed on the first page of the on-line survey on the Survey Monkey Web page. By participating in the survey, the participant agreed to the terms of the Informed Consent.***

Consent Agreement  
The Role and Influence of the College Presidential Spouse

Doctoral Dissertation Research  
Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia

Through participating in this on-line survey, I agree to take part in the dissertation research of Matthew R. Thompson, a doctoral student at the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia.

My participation is strictly voluntary. I understand that I am under no obligation to complete this on-line survey and can withdraw my participation at any time without explanation and without penalty by selecting the "exit survey" link located at the top of each page.

My participation will involve completing this on-line survey which is expected to take about twenty (20) minutes. I agree that my answers will be compiled and used in the aggregate, with no connection to me or my institution of service as a presidential spouse.

I agree that I will not be identified by name, but through reference to being a presidential spouse at a vaguely defined institution. The researcher reserves the right to use this data for purposes other than the development of the dissertation. If he draws from my survey results for other purposes, he will not identify me by name or position in any presentation or publication.

I will not benefit directly from this research, except in that it will inform theory and practice in the management of higher education. The researcher does not anticipate that the research will involve discomforts, stresses, or risks.

If I have any questions about the research at any time, I may contact the researcher, Matthew R. Thompson, Doctoral Student, Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia, at [matthewrthompson@yahoo.com](mailto:matthewrthompson@yahoo.com).

My continuation with this on-line survey indicates that I understand my rights and willingly agree to participate in this research. I recognize that I should print a copy of this screen before proceeding in order to have access to contact information for the researcher and his institution.

Additional questions or problems regarding my rights as a research participant should be addressed to J. Douglas Toma, Ph.D., Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia, Meigs Hall, Athens, Georgia 30602; [jdt@uga.edu](mailto:jdt@uga.edu) or 706-542-4836.

## APPENDIX D

### CONSENT FORM – IN-PERSON INTERVIEW

#### Informed Consent Form The Role and Influence of the College Presidential Spouse

#### Doctoral Dissertation Research Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia

Through being interviewed, I agree to participate in the dissertation research of Matthew R. Thompson, a doctoral student at the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia. Prior to this interview, I have received a briefing memorandum explaining the questions being explored in this endeavor.

**My participation is strictly voluntary.** I understand that I am under no obligation to be interviewed and can withdraw my participation at any time without explanation and without penalty.

My participation will involve being interviewed for approximately one hour. I agree that the interview will be recorded with the recording later transcribed by the researcher. When the transcript of the interview is available, the researcher will notify me by the electronic mail address below and ask whether I wish to review the transcript to correct or delete any of the comments recorded. I may do so without explanation and without penalty. I will have two weeks from when the transcript is sent to return it, as revised, to the project office. The researcher will change or delete any notes or memoranda associated with any material on the transcript as I indicate.

**I agree that I will not be identified by name, but through reference to being at presidential spouse at vaguely defined institution.** The researcher reserves the right to use this data for purposes other than the development of the dissertation. If he draws from my interview for other purposes, he will not identify me by name or position in any presentation or publication.

I will not benefit directly from this research, except in that it will inform theory and practice in the management of higher education. The researcher does not anticipate that the research will involve discomforts, stresses, or risks.

If I have any questions about the research at any time, I may contact the researcher, Matthew R. Thompson, Doctoral Student, Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia at [matthewrthompson@yahoo.com](mailto:matthewrthompson@yahoo.com).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Interviewee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu) or 706-542-3199.*

**PLEASE COMPLETE AND SIGN TWO COPIES, one for the interviewee and one for the researcher.**