

A stylized sunburst logo consisting of a central white circle with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating outwards in a semi-circle. Two thicker vertical lines extend upwards from the top of the circle, and two thicker horizontal lines extend outwards from the sides of the circle.

# **CEO TENURE AND RETENTION STUDY**

---

***5<sup>th</sup> Update***

January 2007 – December 2010

*CEO Tenure and Retention Study*©  
Community College League of California  
2017 O Street, Sacramento, CA 95811  
(916) 444-8641 / (916) 444-2954 fax  
Website: [www.ccleague.org](http://www.ccleague.org)

Author: Dr. Rita Mize, State Policy & Research Director, The League

© Community College League of California, *Revised 2011*

***For more information on CEO Tenure and Retention or questions regarding this publication please contact the author, Dr. Rita Mize, at [rmize@ccleague.org](mailto:rmize@ccleague.org).***

## Summary

The fifth review of data on the retention and tenure (i.e., length of service) of California Community College district CEOs (which includes chancellors and superintendent/presidents as well as presidents in multi-campus districts) indicates that:

*For chancellors and superintendent/presidents:*

- The tenure length of chancellors and superintendent/presidents (4.7 in 2007, 4.2 in 2008, 4.6 in 2009 and 4.5 in 2010) continues to hover near the lowest tenure-length over the 16 years of this study. (The shortest prior tenure length was 4.4 years in 1995-96 while the highest was 5.5 in 2002.)
- During the first half (2007-08) of the update period, chancellors and superintendent/presidents retired at almost twice the annual average number (15 retirements in two years) as in the prior four years (19 retirements during 2003-06). In 2009-10, retirements were in a more normal range of seven retirements among chancellors and superintendent/presidents.
- The movement of CEOs out of state – which was a concern when this study was first conducted in 1995-96 – has been quite low, with most CEOs leaving the state primarily when they retire and most often to return to their home state or the state where their extended family is based.
- Retirements account for the vast majority of those leaving their positions, with 22 chancellors or superintendent/presidents retiring between 2007 and 2010, while 19 left for other reasons, including 13 who left “under fire” and 6 who took positions in larger California community college districts.
- The percentage of district CEOs who left “under fire” continued at a fast clip, with 32% of those leaving doing so “under fire” during these years – either having had their contracts bought out or leaving as they were having problems within their districts.

*For college-level presidents:*

- The tenure length of service for college presidents in multi-campus districts continued to decline when compared with the 2003-06 period when service length averaged 3.65 years. For 2007-10, the tenure length had dropped to 3.3. The individual tenure lengths are as follows: for 2007, 3.1; for 2008, 3.0; for 2009, 3.6; and for 2010, 3.8.
- During this four-year period, the retirements of presidents in multi-campus districts doubled with 8 retirements in 2007-08 and 10 in 2009-10 as compared to a total of 9 in the four-year period of 2003-06.
- Whereas in past years, college-level presidents were more likely to leave their position for one at a larger college or as a chancellor or superintendent/president, this series of changes in position revealed that while 21 of these presidents left for a higher position, another 18 retired. This percentage of retiring presidents far exceeded the numbers who retired from these positions in the past and is another source of the loss of experienced CEO-leaders, especially for the more complex chancellor and superintendent/president positions.

## Other Issues

Among the other areas of interest during the time of this study have been those of CEOs leaving to take positions out of state (or those out of state not applying for positions in California); as well as questions regarding ethnicity and gender ratios of CEOs.

### Recruitment of Out-of State Candidates

As mentioned above, out-of-state leaders do not seem to be particularly averse to coming to California (or particularly likely to leave due to the difficulty of the positions). Our data indicated that, in the years 2009 and 2010, thirteen CEOs were hired from other states, while 21 were hired from within California.

Both for CEOs who report to a local board of trustees, and for presidents in multi-campus districts, there were more out-of-state hires than in the previous years (nine hired from out-of-state in the four years of 2003-06; ten hired from out-of-state in the two-year period of 2007-08; and thirteen hired from outside of California in 2009-10.)

The most recognizable trend among presidents in multi-campus districts was that in 2007-08, only three left to take a higher position (usually as a superintendent/president or chancellor) while seventeen presidents took a higher position in 2003-06. Thus, we conclude that, in 2007-08, trustees seemed to be very comfortable with hiring from the ranks of those serving in colleges outside California, as well as those currently serving as California community college (non-CEO) administrators, and those who already hold a California CEO position.

While we do not compile data on the education of CEOs or candidates, we posit that the increased hiring of out-of-state candidates may at least partially be due to the lack of community college doctoral programs at any four-year public research university in California. (The last public research university to have such a program was UC Riverside which had offered the Educational Leadership and Policy (ELP) program which granted the Ph.D., MA., and Leadership M.Ed., until last year when they announced that the Graduate School of Education had suspended admissions to this program for Fall 2010 and subsequently cancelled the entire program.)

Some of the need may be taken care of by the California State University which was authorized to offer the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree as a result of SB 724 (Chapter 269, Statutes of 2005), authored by then-Senator Jack Scott. Since fall 2007, seven CSU campuses (Fresno, Fullerton, Long Beach, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego and San Francisco) have offered these programs and another six (Bakersfield, East Bay, Los Angeles, Northridge, Cal Poly Pomona, and Stanislaus) have followed in subsequent years. However, as with all graduate programs, these programs are not likely to be expanded in the near future due to the current budgetary situation in California and the fiscal uncertainty which results for public higher education institutions.

### Ethnicity of CEOs

Since this study was first conducted, California has always employed a greater percentage of women and ethnic minorities in CEO positions than the national average, and this statistic continues for the 2010 calendar year. The combined data for chancellors, superintendent/presidents, and presidents in multi-campus districts are illustrated by the chart below.

**Ethnicity for California CEOs 2010 vs. California 2005 vs. National 2005**

	CA 2010	CA 2005	National 2005 <sup>1</sup>
African-American	14.7%	13.3%	5.9%
Asian American or Pacific Islander	5.9	5.2	1.1
Latino/Latina	18.4	20.0	4.2
Unknown	—	3.8	—
American Indian	—	—	1.9
Caucasian	61	57.7	87.5

## Gender Among California Community College CEOs

Community colleges in California have continued to be led by substantial numbers of female CEOs, although the percentages are not growing as quickly as the pace of increased diversity over the past twenty years. Whereas in 2002, 41.6% of CEOs were female, that percentage had dropped slightly to 40% by 2010 in California but remained significantly above the comparable national figure for female community college presidents of 29%. (“What Women Presidents Want”, Inside Higher Education, March 25, 2011.)

One additional measure of the advance of women in California community colleges is that 16 women were serving as chancellors or superintendent/presidents in December 2010 (and several of these are serving in large, complex districts such as Contra Costa, Foothill-DeAnza, and San Diego Community College Districts) indicating that trustees and local communities in California recognize the inherent equality and capability of these women leaders.

## Conclusions

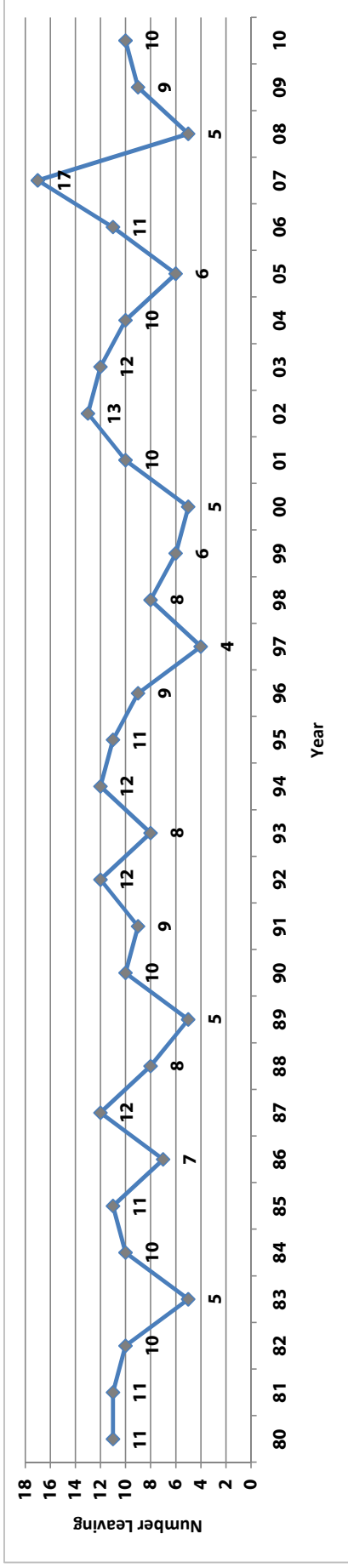
Review of these findings continues to indicate that there are significant challenges ahead for California community colleges:

1. Large numbers of capable, experienced CEOs continue to retire; however, they are not retiring in percentages which are significantly greater than the percentages retiring nationally or in other states. For example, in 2009, a total of 17 (12.3%) CEOs left their positions; in 2010, a total of 24 (17.3%) left their positions. Although the numbers are large, the percentages are more appropriate measures of turnover since California has by far the largest absolute number of community college CEOs – a total of 138 persons who serve in this capacity – as a chancellor, superintendent/president, or president. *(For the first time since this series of studies began, we have calculated the median tenure for both chancellors and superintendents as well as for presidents in multi-college districts. Our findings are that the median for chancellors and superintendent/presidents was two years in 2009 and 2010; while it was three years for those years for presidents in multi-campus districts. In future years, we propose to continue to assess the medians as well as the means and will try to determine if there is comparable national data available.)*
2. California does not have a public research university within its borders providing doctoral degrees in educational leadership; however, thirteen campuses of the California State University have begun Ed.D. programs in recent years. These are likely to be cornerstone programs for the development of strong, effective leadership for community colleges in the coming years.
3. While only one president in a multi-campus district left “under fire” during the four years of this study, the pressures on chancellors and superintendent/presidents continue with six leaving “under fire” in the years 2007 and 2008 and another seven who left “under fire” in 2009 and 2010. And, although calendar year 2011 is not yet complete, three chancellors or superintendent/presidents have already been released from their positions this year.

---

<sup>1</sup>National data reflect the presentation, “Community College Presidents: A Current Profile,” George B. Vaughan and Kent A. Phillippe, 86th Annual AACC Convention, April 23, 2006.

**Table 1**  
 California Community College District CEOs  
 Number Leaving by Year • 1980-2010  
 (excluding interns)

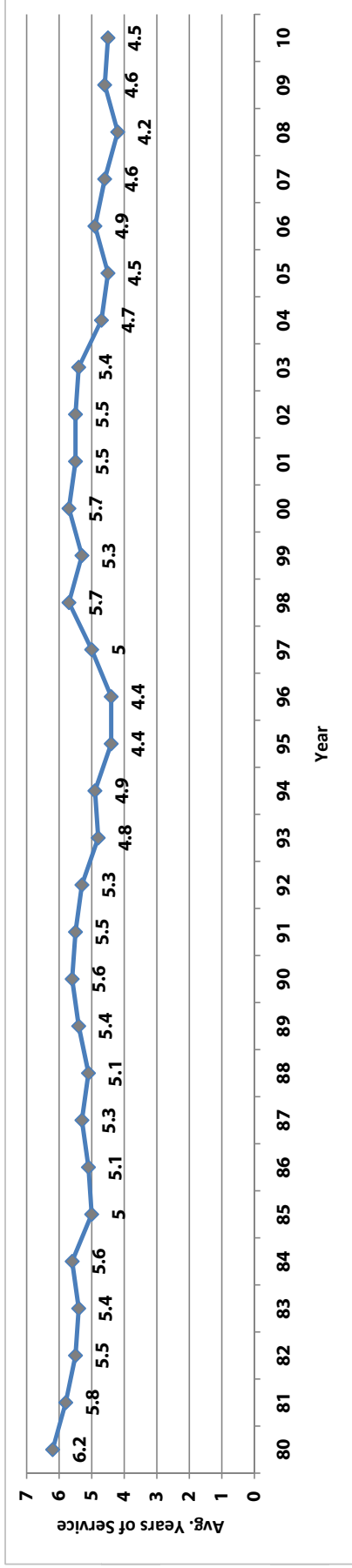


**District CEOs Leaving by Five Year Intervals**

Years	Average	
	Number Leaving	Percent Leaving
1976-1980	8.8	12.4
1981-1985	9.4	13.2
1986-1990	8.4	11.8
1991-1995	10.4	14.6
1996-2000	6.4	9.0
2001-2005	10.2	14.2
2006-2010	10.2	14.2
Average of Five Year Intervals	9.1	12.8

71 California community college districts through 1999  
 (51 CEOs from single college districts and 20 CEOs from multi-college districts)  
 72 California community college districts as of 2000  
 52 CEOs from single college districts and 20 CEOs from multi-college districts)

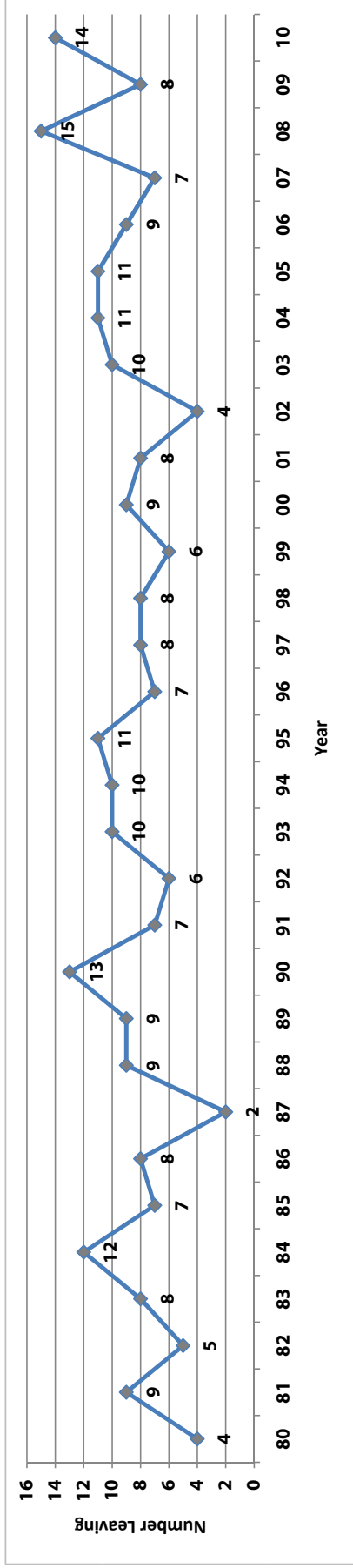
**Table 2**  
 Analysis of California Community College Districts  
 Mean Number of Years of Service • 1980-2010  
 (excluding interns)



Mean Number of Years of Service for District CEOs by Five Year Intervals	
Mean 1976 through 1980	= 6.4
Mean 1981 through 1985	= 5.5
Mean 1986 through 1990	= 5.3
Mean 1991 through 1995	= 5.0
Mean 1996 through 2000	= 5.2
Mean 2001 through 2005	= 5.1
Mean 2006 through 2010	= 4.6
Mean 1980 through 2010	= 5.3

71 California community college districts through 1999  
 (51 CEOs from single college districts and 20 CEOs from multi-college districts)  
 72 California community college districts as of 2000  
 52 CEOs from single college districts and 20 CEOs from multi-college districts)

**Table 3**  
 Analysis of California Community College Presidents in Multi-College Districts  
 Number Leaving by Year • 1980-2010  
 (excluding interns)

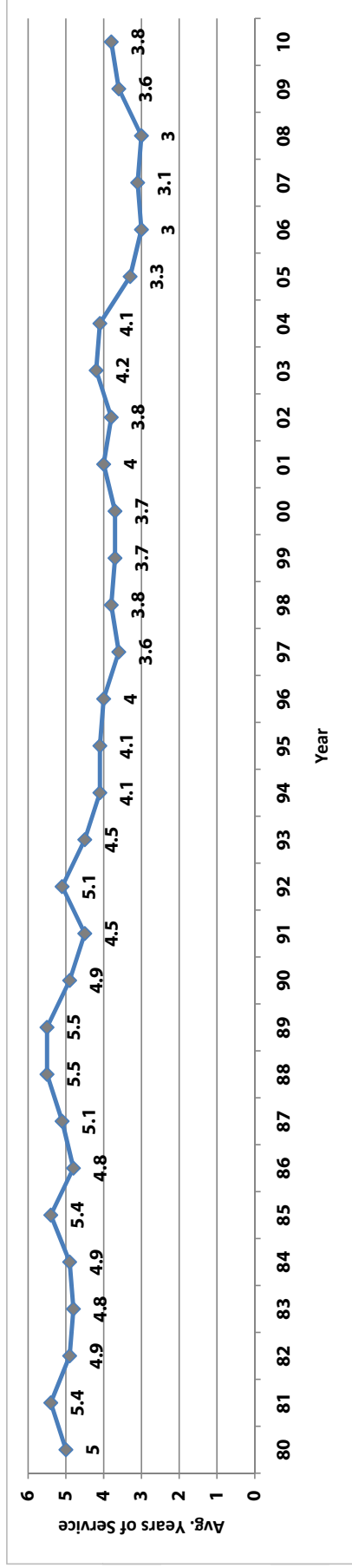


Years	Average	
	Number Leaving	Percent Leaving
1976-1980	7.2	13.3
1981-1985	8.2	15.0
1986-1990	8.2	15.2
1991-1995	8.8	16.3
1996-2000	7.6	13.8
2001-2005	8.8	15.8
2006-2010	10.6	16.1
Average of Five Year Intervals	8.5	15.1

The denominator for determining the percentage leaving differs as colleges have been added (q.v., Los Positas in 1990, Santiago Canyon in 1997, Woodland in 2006, and Moreno Valley and Norco in 2010)



**Table 4**  
 Analysis of California Community College Presidents in Multi-College Districts  
 Mean Number of Years of Service by Five Year Intervals • 1980-2010  
 (excluding interns)



**Mean Number of Years of Service for Presidents in Multi-College Districts by Five Year Intervals**

Mean 1976 through 1980 = 4.4
Mean 1981 through 1985 = 4.7
Mean 1986 through 1990 = 4.9
Mean 1991 through 1995 = 4.7
Mean 1996 through 2000 = 3.8
Mean 2001 through 2005 = 3.9
Mean 2006 through 2010 = 3.3
Mean 1980 through 2010 = 4.0

The denominator for determining the percentage leaving differs as colleges have been added (q.v., Los Positas in 1990, Santiago Canyon in 1997, Woodland in 2006, and Moreno Valley and Norco in 2010)

