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Kent State University

## **KENT STATE UNIVERSITY**

College of Education, Health, and Human Services

## **DOCTORAL DISSERTATION DEFENSE**

of

Lashonda M. Taylor

For the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Interprofessional Leadership,  
School of Foundations, Leadership, and Administration

**BUILDING THE SENIOR TEAM AFTER A PRESIDENTIAL  
TRANSITION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SENIOR LEADERS  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**March 14, 2023**

**2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

Microsoft Teams: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

## **Lashonda M. Taylor**

Master of Science  
Kent State University, 2018

Bachelor of Arts  
Kent State University, 2013

Lashonda Taylor has served in higher education for nearly 14 years. She joined Kent State University in July 2009 in an administrative support role for the Office of the Provost. She presently serves as associate chief of staff in the Office of the President. In this role, she directs the daily operations of the Office of the President, leading a team of administrative professionals in the planning, execution, and coordination of the President's schedule, university events, presentations, and communications. Lashonda works with the president and chief of staff to support the accomplishment of university-wide leadership initiatives, goals, and objectives.

During her time at Kent State, Lashonda has been active in many university committees. Lashonda is an active volunteer, serving in various roles in the greater Akron region, including the Akron Urban League, the Zeta Theta Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and her church home, New Covenant Sanctuary of Praise. She is a proud alumna of Kent State University, where she earned a Master of Science degree in hospitality and tourism management and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies.

Lashonda lives in Akron, Ohio, with her husband, Sean, a detective for the City of Akron. They have three sons, Pyrce, Preston, and Paxton, affectionately referred to as PLT one, two, and three, and one fur baby, Domino.

## **Abstract**

Within the next few years, there will be an increase in presidential departures in higher education. While the transition of a president can be a monumental and celebrated occasion for a college or university, it is often accompanied by work disruptions, job uncertainty, and turnover of senior administrators. University presidents can face numerous challenges as they try to adapt to a new culture, team, and work processes; at no time during their career are leaders more susceptible to failure than when they are in transition. Therefore, the development of the senior leadership team comes at a time critical for the new president's success.

This narrative study examined how university presidents and senior team members understand their experiences and decision-making processes while building a senior leadership team after the presidential transition. Five university presidents and six senior leadership team members were interviewed for this study. The senior leaders interviewed were vice presidents and individuals who reported directly to the university president.

When making decisions about the makeup of their team, significant influences on the presidents included institutional practices, governing bodies, diversity, equity, and inclusion. In addition, effective communication, collaboration, expertise, and trustworthiness were vital attributes that influenced the new university presidents' decision-making. Findings show how the senior leaders interviewed understood their path to a senior leadership team and experienced the presidential transition. Finally, the findings suggest that senior leadership team members have had an overall positive experience as a senior leadership team members during the presidential transition and that they were able to navigate challenges with the support and resources provided to them by their university presidents.