

ABSTRACT

FOWLER, PAUL R., Ph.D.,

December 2003

Educational Administration

LEADING TECHNOLOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EMPIRICAL
INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER (287
pp.)

Co-Directors of Dissertation:

Steve Michael, Ph.D.

Mark Kretovics, Ph.D.

The central purpose of this study was to investigate the current role of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) in higher education by comparing the perceptions of the CIO, Chief Academic Officer (CAO), and Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Synnott and Gruber's (1981) roles and Pitkin's (1993) research were used as a template. Personal characteristics for a successful CIO and the forces shaping the role of the CIO were also investigated. In all, 185 four year higher education institutions were surveyed using a proportional stratified random sampling technique that was applied to four year doctoral, master's and baccalaureate degree granting institutions using the Carnegie Classification system. Overall, 77 CIOs, 71 CFOs, and 68 CAOs indicated that a CIO existed at their institution; these surveys were used in the analysis. Both inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Major findings indicated that the number of CIOs in higher education continued to increase especially at master's institutions. In addition, CIOs who responded believed that their position was an executive level position; however, the data indicated that a CIO

participated in executive decisions often while only sometimes attending board meetings.

Data suggested that the CFO and CAO response groups believed that a CIO tended to have a limited understanding of the overall higher education environment and that the position was viewed more as a technical one centered on reacting to the needs and initiatives of other administrators. Results also indicated that the increased importance of information technology (IT) to higher education was the greatest influence on the role of the CIO followed by the need for IT security and increased financial restraints.

Better effective overall communication, especially among administrators, was seen as a way of increasing CIO effectiveness; however, elevating the CIO position to a senior level position was seen as being equally important to the CIOs who responded. Implications of the differences in perceptions among the three response groups are also discussed, along with suggestions for further research.