

Portraits In Leadership: Six Extraordinary University Presidents - Arthur Padilla

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Leading complex organizations is never easy or simple. In this book, Padilla uses the university as the organizational vehicle through which to examine the phenomenon of leadership and followership in complex entities. The unique characteristics of universities as organizations are discussed and the leadership experiences of six well-known university presidents are analyzed within an original framework of leadership. Just as John Kennedy's Profiles in Courage considered the notion of political courage within the institutional setting of Congress, this book explores leadership within the context of the modern American university. The roles of persuasion and communication are highlighted as the author weaves the principal patterns from each of the six case studies to the situational conditions that faced these extraordinary individuals. Padilla offers valuable suggestions on how to improve selection of leaders and increase organizational effectiveness. The author's plan follows three circles that overlap to form its basic framework: 1. The university as a complex organization; 2. Leadership - its patterns, theories, and commonalities; and 3. Case studies of exemplary leaders, which highlight their early experiences and actions. The overlap of the three circles defines the conclusions and synthesis. Each leader's story covers four areas: Childhood background; formal schooling/education; senior leadership roles and major defining events, successes, and failures; and forecasts for higher education and its leadership. The book includes an assortment of public and private universities, which provides a diversity of leaders who face significant differences in terms of control, financing, and oversight. This diversity allows for more useful comparisons and contrasts. The author explains the enormous role that persuasion (rather than domination or power) plays in successful leadership. It is clear that persuasion is effective in many settings, and not just in the university environment, but it is particularly effective.

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