

**Title**

THE FIRST 120 DAYS:
What a New College President Must
Do To Succeed

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Author

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The premise of the book is that in the first 120 days, a new college or university president determines whether his or her tenure will be highly successful— or less than flourishing. Those first four months are a harbinger of the president's promise and fate.

The author notes early in the book that he will provide guideposts along the way in the first days that will direct the course of the journey. "My book is nuts and bolts, a working manual." Panas delivers on that promise.

An important section of *The First 120 Days* is the chapter on what the new president must do before actually taking office. There are 18 mandatory activities that must be undertaken shortly after the selection is made. "It's Make Or Break Time," Panas calls that chapter.

To prepare for the book, Jerold Panas interviewed over 50 college presidents. Twenty-two are quoted extensively throughout the book. In addition, he engages his experience with more than 50 additional presidents he has worked with as a consultant to higher education.

The book is directed to new presidents but is equally helpful for those who have been in office for some time. In order to assess the value of *The First 120 Days*, Panas had fifteen seasoned, sitting presidents review the book. Some were in their second and third presidency. They all indicated that the book would be indispensable to new presidents, but would be equally helpful to experienced presidents.

The chapters describe how to deal with the faculty, the relationship with trustees, and evaluating the senior staff. And taking action if necessary. There are chapters on leadership, creative listening, feeling comfortable in the role of a change-agent, and helping others reach their highest aspirations.

One of the chapters deals with what happens when the president fails— and the five reasons this is most likely to happen. There is a section that delivers advice on how to handle the relationship with the president's predecessor. It is called, "Send Him On a Cruise!" There are eight tips to follow.

There are fourteen imperatives to follow in the first week on the job. The most important is to remember: It's all about the students. There are eight principles to make the early days a joyful journey, and five questions that need to be asked before making an important decision.

Eighty-five tenets comprise the last chapter. These are observations and recommendations that will ensure success. It provides a roadmap of what the new president must follow.

On the dedication page, Panas tells the story about the earnest young missionary who talked non-stop to cannibals for three full days. They seemed to listen with great respect. Then they said grace and put him in a big pot with boiling water over his head. They cooked and ate him. Panas says the purpose of this book is to make certain a new president doesn't get into hot water and get cooked.

PRAISE FOR THE FIRST 120 DAYS

APHORISMS AND PEARLS OF WISDOM

Drawn from the experience of veteran presidents and Panas' own extensive work as a counsel and confidant to presidents, this book offers aphorisms, pearls of wisdom, and provident care to those newly appointed to our calling. It will have you chuckling and nodding with "aha's" as well as "oh no's." It's the kind of advice a new president can only receive in a book like this. My only real complaint about the book is that it should be titled, *The First 120 Days and Then Some*, because as a somewhat seasoned president myself, I found it to be full of good reminders and reinforcing sentiments.

- **Todd S. Hutton**, *President*
Utica College

PRACTICAL, WITTY, AND INSIGHTFUL

Jerry Panas has again proven himself a practical, witty, and insightful mentor . . . offering not only a worthwhile primer for new college presidents but also an important contribution to the literature on executive leadership. Reading *The First 120 Days* should be on every new college president's short list.

- **James H. Mullen**, *President*
Allegheny College

COULD'VE SAVED TIME, RESOURCES, AND MUCH NEEDED SLEEP

What took Jerry so long? I could have used this valuable resource thirteen years ago when I first became president. It would have saved time, resources, and much needed sleep! I found the book insightful, on target, and tremendously helpful.

- **David C. Joyce**, *President*
Ripon College

GREAT WIT, SHARPEN, AND THE COURAGE TO SHAKE US

The First 120 Days is the newest of a multitude of contributions by Jerold Panas to the inspirational and educational literature of higher education leadership. He has a great wit, sharp pen, and courage to shake us from our common disappointments and inspire us to goodness and greatness. I only wish the book had been available during my transition to the presidency.

- **Michael E. O'Neal**, *President*
Oklahoma Christian University

A MUST READ

This is a must read for every new president or anyone considering a college presidency. Jerry captures in an easy style the fundamentals for success to overcome the hurdles and barriers one is sure to encounter as a new president.

- **Frederick J. Finks**, *President*
Ashland University

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

This highly readable book gives a window into the good, the bad, and the ugly. Panas offers insights about opportunities and pitfalls of those intense first 120 days . . . packed with good advice for keeping students first, authentic listening, making necessary personnel changes, being visible, relating to trustees— and, most important, having fun.

- **Jo Young Switzer**, *President*
Manchester College

THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

Jerry Panas has made a great contribution to ensuring a successful college presidency . . . practical, readable and right on target. I am in my third presidency, and I wish I had this resource before I started my first presidency. If you are a sitting president, this book will be a great reminder of the keys to success.

- **Jack P. Calareso**, *President*
Anna Maria College

MAXIMS, QUOTES, ANECDOTES, AND HONEST TESTIMONIALS

At last an ideal manual for the new college president. Its chatty style makes it a quick read. Open the book on any page and find salient advice that is the key to success. Panas sprinkles his work with maxims, literary quotes, brief anecdotes, and honest testimonials from experienced presidents about their first 120 days in office.

- **Jacqueline Powers Doud**, *President*
Mount St. Mary's College

GREAT ADVICE

The First 120 Days is a must for new college presidents. It is a quick read, but gives great advice. The book captures the complicated, energy-consuming, and time-intensive job of the presidency.

- **Debra M. Townsley**, *President*
Nichols College

BRAVO!

Jerry has done it again. He has identified the characteristics and behaviours of higher education's most productive and successful presidential leaders. Not only is this a must read book for new presidents, it is exceedingly valuable for those with presidential aspirations and seated presidents in all stages of their leadership journey. Bravo!

- **Douglas D. Mason**, *Partner*
Gonser Gerber Tinker Stuhr, LLP

AN ACUTE INSIGHT

In crisp prose, Panas has written a modern day *Vade Mecum* for the new as well as the experienced college president. He offers wise counsel and crafts memorable phrases with an acute insight into human nature, a rich array of references, and the self-deprecating style of the true sage.

- **Matthew J. Quinn**, *Executive Director*
Jack Kent Cooke Foundation (former President-Carroll College)

VERY READABLE AND SALTED WITH QUOTES

I have read numerous good books prior to taking on the presidency. I wish I had had this one— both for its immediate content, and as a guidepost for further reading. In very readable fashion and salted with quotes from numerous successful presidents, Jerry develops an extensive checklist of the things new presidents need to give attention to.

- **Kenneth A. Smith**, *President*
Geneva College

A ROAD MAP TO SUCCESS

Jerry has written a compelling book for new presidents. In straightforward fashion, he provides a road map to success for those fortunate enough to lead an institution of higher learning. This should be required reading for new presidents.

- **Frederick V. Moore**, *President*
Buena Vista University

IT'S CLASSIC PANAS

It's classic Panas presented in an easy-to-read, witty, and enjoyable fashion. Jerry has identified and illuminated the critical skills and behaviors necessary for success in starting a presidency. It is an engaging "must read" for anyone embarking on the incredible journey called the presidency.

- **Richard H. Dorman**, *President*
Westminster College

LUCID, PRACTICAL, AND WISE

The First 120 Days is lucid, practical, and wise. It is as close as new college presidents will get to an instruction manual. Jerold Panas has probed the experiences of seasoned presidents and offers invaluable advice and lessons learned.

- **Judy Jolley Mohraz**, *Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust,*
President & CEO
(Former President-Goucher College)

INITIATIVES THAT WORKED WELL AND MISTAKES NOT TO MAKE

Jerry's advice to new presidents is sprinkled with pithy quotes and is reinforced by the frank and candid statements of several long-term presidents who acknowledge what initiatives worked well in their early tenures and what mistakes they would not repeat.

- **Antoine M. Garibaldi**, *President*
Gannon University

