

Strategies for Easing Faculty-Management at Institutions of Higher Education

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With calls across the discipline of communication to use our research to enhance the lived experience of organizational members and employees of all industries, this essay focuses on the often tense communication between university faculty and university leaders. Using communication and business scholarship as our foundation, we recommend communication strategies that should facilitate better communication between university faculty and management. These strategies will not only help faculty and staff overcome disagreements and avoid uncivil discourse, but the strategies can also be applied to uncivil non-academic workplace environments. The authors will also outline how these incivilities and recommended communication strategies play out in actual cases.

With calls across the discipline of communication to use our research to enhance the lived experience of organizational members and employees of all industries, this paper turns the focus inward to the communication between university faculty and university leaders. We introduce a case study as well as personal experiences of the authors (two faculty members and one retired university administrator) to demonstrate some common conflicts at institutions of higher education that can be solved with better communication practices. Using communication scholarship as our foundation, we recommend communication strategies that should facilitate better communication between university faculty and management (deans, provosts, presidents, chancellors).

Strategic internal communication is critical to the success of any organization. Human resources and public relations should be “strategic partner[s] in leveraging the essential relationships between employees and top management” (Society of Human Resources Management, 2008). Although some universities have assigned a public relations specialist to oversee the task of managing the communication between university executives and faculty, many still rely upon human resource managers to communicate with these parties and be the mouthpiece for high level managers (i.e. the chancellor and vice-chancellor) in times of change and stress. As Freitag and Picherit-Duthler (2004) point out, HR managers may “lack extensive professional communication training,” and, more specifically, may not be able to “craft messages suitable for segmented internal publics” (p. 476).

Since it is not economically feasible for every university to hire a communication specialist for the purposes of managing internal communication, we put forward some communication strategies to guide both communication specialists and HR managers through the difficult task of managing internal communication between university factions that are sometimes at odds. First, we will summarize some literature on successful internal

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communication strategies from public relations and communication scholars. Next, we will describe some of the research that has been done on the communication issues that arise on college and university campuses between faculty and administrators. Finally, we will recommend communication strategies to enhance the relationship between faculty and management.

Employee Relations Strategies

While much research has been done on public relations and external publics, many public relations scholars acknowledge the gap in the PR literature in the area of employee relations (Asif and Sargeant, 2000; Freitag & Picherit-Duthler, 2004; Wright, 1995). Perhaps the lack of research on employee relations in the public relations literature is due to the fact that employee relations research is covered extensively by organizational communication and human resources scholars. Freitag and Picherit-Duthler (2004) found that the communication of employee benefits is still predominantly the responsibility of human resource officers, but “[their] survey data, which stress the recognised importance of benefits to employees, therefore, to organizational prosperity, dictates vastly increased involvement by the public relations department—the communication experts” (p. 481). Clearly, public relations scholars may be able to add to the employee relations body of knowledge that is currently dominated by organizational communication and human resources scholars.

Public Relations scholarship has highlighted ways in which organizations can successfully manage relationships with external publics. Some of the more developed lines of communication research on public relations are based on relationship theory and two-way symmetrical PR (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Ledingham, 2001). According to relationship theory, organizations work to identify their publics and foster positive relationships with those publics through two-way communication. Grunig and Grunig (1992) describe the two-way symmetrical communication model as the “excellent model” for public relations, where the organization and its publics communicate openly and mutually adjust to the needs of the other. The best relationships are fostered between the organization and its publics (internal and external) when the organization both speaks freely and listens carefully, creating a feedback loop with its stakeholders where it takes their opinions into consideration when making decisions. In different situations, different publics will become more important to the success of the organization, and in these difficult and uncertain financial times, effective employee communication is perhaps more important than ever as employees are the public face of the organization and are the front line dealing with consumers and shareholders.

General public relations scholars have put forth some best practices that have been applied successfully to internal public relations situations, but we would like to apply these best practices to institutions of higher education. In McCown’s (2007) study of internal public relations at a university, the practices of environmental scanning, two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig, L.A., Grunig, J.E., and Dozier, 2002), and “mixed motives” public relations practices (Murphy, 1991) all proved to be successful in building stronger employee-organization relationships, increased trust, openness, involvement, and increased satisfaction (p. 65). Environmental scanning refers to the organizational practice of collecting information from your publics in an effort to serve them and communicate with them better. Two-way symmetrical PR, as defined above, refers to the organizational process of communicating with your publics, collecting feedback from your public, and using that feedback to reorient your activities in order to build a stronger relationship with

your publics (Grunig, L.A., Grunig, J.E., & Dozier, 2002). Mixed motives PR practices involve each side of the stakeholder relationship prioritizing their own self-interests but cooperating in a limited fashion to resolve conflicts (Murphy, 1991). This article will expand upon the McCown (2007) study and apply these internal PR best practices to the unique communication context of colleges and universities. Specifically, we will use the previous literature to inform a list of internal public relations and management strategies that either the HR staff or PR staff in charge of employee relations can use to facilitate open and constructive communication between university faculty and management.

Since public relations is a part of an overall approach to the larger umbrella term organizational communication, it is necessary to highlight the organizational communication approach to internal communication strategies between hierarchically differentiated groups. Establishing an open and trusting communication environment between traditionally oppositional groups can be considered a change management process. There has been a substantial amount of research on the strategies that management uses to communicate during times of change and crisis (Cameron & Green, 2012). Clappitt, DeKoch, and Cashman (2000) identified five different strategies that upper management uses to communicate with employees during both unplanned and planned organizational changes. They found that the most effective change management communication strategy was “underscore and explore,” which is when management highlights key topics related to a successful change program and then gives employees the creativity and flexibility to respond to and frame those issues. The authors also found that several communication strategies are ineffective at dealing with change management, including “spray and pray,” where management inundates employees with information and then hopes the employees can properly prioritize it, and “withhold and uphold,” where management keeps as much information as possible from employees and then holds the company line when confronted with gripes or questions. In short, the most successful change management programs emerge when management involves employees in the change process and truly values and explores their ideas (Clappitt, DeKoch, & Cameron & Green, 2012; Cashman, 2000; Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994).

Communication Issues between Management and Faculty in Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study

Collegiality and a sense of community have been found to be two primary sources of satisfaction in academic life (Barnes, Agago, & Coombs, 1998; Manger & Eikeland, 1990; Matier, 1990; Weiler, 1985). When these qualities are absent from the experience of faculty members, many will disengage from their academic departments and sometimes even disengage from the institution as a whole (Huston, Norman, & Ambrase, 2007). In addition to being the basis of job satisfaction, Tierney (2006) argues that collaboration, cooperation, and trust are the keys to the successful governance of a university. However, from the authors’ personal experiences and from studies on the subject (Guckenheimer, Fenstermaker, Mohr, & Castro, 2008; Huston, Norman, & Ambrose, 2007; McCown, 2007), it seems that many faculty and administrators will face difficult communication challenges throughout their careers. While communication problems may exist between faculty and students, senior university administrators and lower level administrators, administrators and staff, or any other combination of a university’s internal publics, we will focus on the communication issues that may persist between faculty and high level university management (deans, provost, chancellor, president).

Tyron (2005), a former faculty member who made the transition to administrator, labeled a traitor by faculty, describes the communication gap between faculty and administrators as “the Divide.” He says, “The Divide is that almost unbridgeable, us-versus-them gulf between [faculty] members and those who would lead them” (para. 6). Guckenheimer et al.’s (2008) study of administrators’ opinions about faculty demonstrated that the divide was painfully obvious in the nine colleges and universities they studied. The administrators studied said faculty were “myopic, and preoccupied with small, local concerns” (p. 9), “have a poor idea about financial realities” (p. 10), and are resistant to change. Overall, the administrators seemed to hold a contradictory view of [faculty]: “[Faculty] don’t understand the workings of the institution (or the essential work of administrators), they care primarily about their own narrow, local concerns, and yet, they are also blissfully aware that they ‘hold the key’ to institutional transformation” (p. 13).

The opinions of those administrators may not be unfounded. Sadly, studies have found that an alarmingly high percentage of junior faculty are unhappy with the level of collegiality at their universities (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005; Bilimoria, Perry, Liang, Stoller, Higgins, & Taylor, 2006) and many senior faculty are so dissatisfied with their workplace experience that they disengage from decision-making processes, avoid workplace social activities, and deliberately withdraw from university relationships and collaboration (Huston et al., 2007). Huston, Norman, and Ambrose (2007) found that faculty express their deep dissatisfaction with the university in four ways: voice, exit, silence/loyalty, or neglect/destruction (p. 512), which is similar to the findings reported in organizational theorist Albert Hirshman’s (1970) seminal work, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*.

The most harmful responses to the management-faculty relationship would be the neglect/destruction response. The neglect response is exhibited by faculty who neglect or avoid responsibilities, and the destruction response “involves actively engaging in counterproductive, damaging behaviors,” such as encouraging junior faculty members to leave or to disengage from the university (Huston et al., 2007, p. 512). The observations of the administrators studied by Guckenheimer et al. (2008) are not surprising, then, since this large proportion of disengaged faculty would obviously become much more focused on their own “local” concerns, would not be motivated to facilitate change in their university, and may even be consciously neglecting their duties or engaging in counterproductive behaviors.

Perkoski and Lutner (2005) write about the need for university administrators to manage employees at a university effectively and then communicate those management practices effectively to the entire university community (p. 9). They argue that in order to avoid conflicts between different employee constituencies and even the escalation of those conflicts to the point where faculty or non-academic staff fight to unionize, the university management needs to “[foster] honest dialogue, open communication, and an environment wherein employees treat one another with respect and dignity”(p. 9). If administrators do this, they could see “increased productivity; enthusiastic, positive, and motivated employees; loyalty; teamwork; regular attendance; the referral of qualified applicants by current employees; and support for new ideas”(p. 9).

June (2012) reported on a conflict between the president and provost and the faculty and students at Saint Louis University, a private Jesuit university. Over the period 2012–13, faculty took a vote of no confidence in the provost for actions they believed demonstrated a failure to consult effectively. One of the examples cited was a major change to tenure that was labelled “draf,” but had an effective date only a few months after dissemination of the policy to faculty. According to a statement by a representative of the AAUP, the move “effectively eviscerates the university’s existing tenure system” (Barker, 2013, para. 2). The

faculty blamed the provost and president for what felt like an attack on their job security, and called for the removal of the provost. When the president of the university refused to remove the provost, the faculty took a vote of no confidence in the provost (50-4) and the president (51-4) (para. 3-4). Students largely took the side of the faculty and also called for the president to step down (Townsend and Barker, 2013, para. 19). This was not the first time the president had been asked to remove the provost. In 2009, the faculty protested after being left out of a decision to begin dismantling the graduate school, another move spearheaded by the provost (Barker, 2013).

The president and the board of trustees pledged to ensure better communication between faculty, administrators and the board, but attempts by the administration to hire a public relations firm, as well as a firm to survey employees, were not positively perceived by faculty (Cambria, 2013). The PR firm advised the board of trustees not to communicate with faculty, students, or the media. At that time, the chairman of the Trustees said the board's goal was to communicate "full and unwavering support" of the president (Barker, 2013). This stance created more tension between university leadership and the faculty. Finally, the provost resigned from his position.

At a celebration of his twenty-fifth year in office, a month after cancelling a scheduled meeting with the faculty senate, the president announced that he would retire after a search for a successor had been completed. However, a few months later, faculty protested that the pay increases recommended by the deans were lowered by the president for those faculty members who were the most vocal opponents of the president. The perception of retaliation created even more contentiousness, and the president either decided or was asked to retire immediately (Townsend & Barker, 2013).

Even faculty who were vocal in their opposition to the president of Saint Louis University during 2012-13 were quoted as recognizing how much he had accomplished during his time in office (Townsend & Barker, 2013). Over those twenty-five years, the president had transformed the campus physically, with nearly one billion dollars in new construction, landscaping and equipment. He added a significant number of endowed chairs and student scholarships. He enhanced salaries and benefits, and grew the endowment almost ten-fold (Townsend & Barker, 2013). How could a president who was so effective by these measures have come to such an unlikely end to his presidency?

Judging from a distance, the answer seems to lie in the key areas of personality style, communication, and distinct conflict styles. Conflict styles are a person's orientation to and engagement of conflict (Folger, Poole, and Stutman, 2013). Blake and Mouton's (1964) influential work on conflict styles has been cited by every major writer on conflict, including family, workplace, and government conflicts (Nicotera & Dorsey, 2006). Their model hinges on two interdependent conflict components, assertiveness and cooperativeness, and these components interact to produce five different styles: accommodating, compromising, competitive, avoiding, and collaborative (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Conflicts often emerge when top management has a different conflict style than the majority of the employees, which might be the case in university settings.

In this case, the president was known to have a competitive conflict style, and the faculty at Saint Louis University were generally more compromising, collaborative, and accommodating. The president was able to accomplish so much, in part due to his competitive style and force of will. Over time, those traits that served a very positive role in the building of so many new initiatives became a weight that created a wedge between the faculty and the president.

It is the opinion of these authors that if there had been truly open communication channels, even the strong personality of the president would not have resulted in such upheaval. During earlier years, administrators, staff and faculty had effective dialogue and most felt that they were making positive progress. Faculty applauded the actions of the president and were proud of the success of the university. However, what was required was a provost and other administrators who could work collaboratively with faculty and staff to communicate and carry out the vision of the president. Without key administrators to communicate and effect change in a manner appropriate to an institution of higher education, where shared governance has symbolic resonance with faculty, the president becomes further distanced from the people and processes of the institution. He becomes isolated as a target, and criticisms that would normally have been filtered through appropriate shared governance channels had no way to surface, other than in public. Public humiliation is never a way to achieve positive outcomes without serious negative consequences.

Turning our focus back to the causes of the animosity between faculty and administration, it seems that collegiality and communication are the heart of a positive university employee experience. Since both faculty and administrators contribute to either a positive or negative university community, we offer communication strategies that relate to both groups. We understand these strategies may be read and used by a human resources director, a public relations specialist in charge of internal communication, department chairs, academic administrators, internal ombudsman, and faculty, alike, so we provide candid tips and use explicit language that hopefully will aid in their practical application.

Recommended Communication Strategies to Enhance Relationships Between Management and Faculty

- I. **ISSUE:** Senior administrators become disconnected from the shared governance process and lose touch with the thoughts and ideas of the faculty.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES: Although unilateral decisions at the highest levels may give the appearance of creating change more rapidly, in higher education it can actually slow down the process, as demonstrated in different ways by the Saint Louis University case.

STRATEGY: In addition to using traditional means of shared governance, we encourage open communication from university leaders, with the president or chancellor, vice-chancellors, and provost taking the lead. McCown (2007) found that the president's (or chancellor or vice-chancellor's) openness had a "trickle down" effect that prompted other university leaders to practice open communication and transparency. One suggestion would be to hold regular open discussion forums featuring university leaders, in which leaders can inform faculty and non-academic staff of important issues and answer any questions they may have. Upper level buy-in to openness is essential.

- II. **ISSUE:** Internal bickering within academic departments may create a toxic environment that can undermine attempts at higher levels for an open and collaborative environment. One of the authors mediated a dispute between two faculty members that initially arose from one borrowing a book from the other. Over time, the two faculty members became so embattled that the entire school was suffering, and one of the faculty (a woman in an underrepresented area of engineering) was considering leaving the institution. All this

conflict ostensibly began over a book worth less than \$150 but really involved underlying issues tied to emotions, reputation, and professional identity. Every difficult conversation is actually three conversations wrapped into one that include what happened, identity and impression management, and feelings (Stone, Patton, & Heen, 1999)

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES: Creating an environment that fosters civility and communication must be a priority at all hierarchical levels within an organization. .

STRATEGY: We encourage faculty members to take responsibility for creating academic departments that foster collegiality, open communication, and mentoring relationships between junior and senior faculty. In the individual academic departments, all the faculty should work together to make sure junior and senior faculty members are satisfied, feel a sense of community and collegiality, and are, therefore, more likely to remain positively engaged at both the departmental and university level. The department chairperson has a key role to play in creating this environment. Unfortunately, the vast majority of chairs either are not aware of this role or have not had professional training to create collaborative environments or engage in conflict management between faculty members. Therefore, we suggest that universities provide department chairs with experiential training in establishing collaborative communication channels, meeting facilitation, and conflict management strategies.

Specifically, trainers could apply the Harvard Negotiation project approach to having productive, albeit difficult, conversations (Stone, Patton, & Heen, 1999). We recommend that provosts and HR organizational development staff partner in developing the chairpersons in this role, and to internally recognize those chairs who do a good job of fostering collegiality and open communication within their departments. Universities could create a list of best practices based on how successful chairs structure the communication in their departments. Most academics can name several occasions when pettiness and bickering over insignificant issues created a toxic environment within the department. The chairperson needs to step up and deal with these issues before they become toxic. The deans, provost and HR offices need to provide tools and assistance to the chairs, as well as rewarding the chairs who are skilled and brave enough to take on this role. For instance, internal ombudsman programs need to be promoted and described to faculty more effectively.

III. **ISSUE:** Due to the nature of their work, faculty tend to remain isolated within their departments or research areas, losing sight of bigger picture issues facing the university. For example, many universities are attempting to remedy declining net tuition revenue by involving faculty in the recruitment of students. At some institutions, faculty resist taking part, saying that the recruitment of students is “not [their] problem.”

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES: Declining net tuition revenue affects everyone at a university. If there are budget deficits, salaries, benefits and staffing levels must be reduced. In addition, studies (e.g. Astone & Nunez-Womack, 1990; Baldrige, Kemerer, & Green, 1982) indicate that speaking with faculty has a strong impact on potential students and their parents.

STRATEGY: We encourage faculty to emerge from their “silos” and cross “the divide” to take initiative in engaging others. Participation in university events is a start, but the

university should incentivize faculty to seek regular and substantive interaction with faculty from other departments, with administrators, and with staff. The ultimate goals are to have faculty members learn about the responsibilities of the administrators, the economic needs of the university, and the ways in which they can, personally and as a group, contribute to positive change at the university. One of the authors was involved in faculty development programs targeted to interdepartmental development and initiatives. These initiatives had positive results not just in developing a broader perspective of the university, but also in the design and implementation of interdepartmental academic programs and courses, which benefited the students and enhanced student recruitment and job placement.

IV. ISSUE: Information that could serve to educate faculty on the ongoing issues of the university does not “trickle down” from senior administrators. In addition, when administrators do communicate with faculty, they often adopt inappropriate communication strategies or channels that lead to information overload and an assumption that faculty can properly prioritize large amounts of information.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES: When administration is seeking faculty support on issues, they learn that faculty do not understand the current financial or organizational challenges and, therefore, are reluctant to collaborate on solutions.

STRATEGY: We encourage the president, chancellor, vice-chancellor, provost, and other university leaders to use electronic tools to communicate with employees and students, but to do so in a strategic manner that prevents information overload and a “spray and pray” mentality (Clampitt, DeKock, & Cashman, 2000). Campus-wide emails on issues of importance (achievements, issues of health and safety, holidays, etc.) could go out to students and employees, and more tailored emails could go out to all employees on topics of special interest to them (the hiring and departure of employees, births and deaths, achievements, benefits, compensation issues, etc.). In addition, we recommend that the chancellor or vice-chancellor personally respond to any emails he or she may receive from concerned employees in a timely fashion, with at least a message stating who will be charged with responding to their issue.

Finally, the university intranet or internal social media could be a place where the dialogue between administrators and faculty is encouraged and enhanced. This approach should not be limited to frequent updating of human resources and management web pages. We believe blogs could be a tool for those university leaders willing to invest time in the activity, allowing comments to be posted by faculty and non-academic staff in response to each blog post. This feedback loop could be a particularly helpful feature of blogs. Robert M. Groves, Provost at Georgetown University, has a blog where his posts discuss his dinner with new faculty, his thoughts on preparing undergraduates for the 21st century, and his end-of-summer preparations for the new school year (blog.provost.georgetown.edu). Certainly this blog makes him appear to be more transparent and open, provides a way for Georgetown faculty and staff to get to know him at a more personal level, and also provides instant feedback opportunities for any readers who wish to comment on a post.

V. ISSUE: A physical distance exists between high level administrators and employees and students. Many faculty and students bemoan the fact they never see the chancellor or president on campus.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES: The president is typically engaged in fund-raising, meeting with legislators, and other essential activities off campus. However, without some kind of contact, faculty and students do not feel a connection with the senior administrator and, in fact, may ridicule the amount of time he/she is off campus.

STRATEGY: We encourage the president or chancellor to engage in frequent face-to-face interaction with employees and students. One study found that designated “open door days,” where all university employees and students were invited to visit the president (i.e., chancellor) in her office, were very successful (McCown, 2007). On the other hand, these face-to-face interactions don’t have to be scheduled. Simply taking the time and effort to stop and talk with a few people (students, non-academic staff, faculty) whenever the president, chancellor or other university leader is walking on campus could go a long way towards improving relationships. This informal, mundane communication builds trust and creates the perception of openness, which is an essential first step that leaders should take to build a collaborative environment (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). With enough interpersonal contact, employees will begin to trust administrators, feel personally appreciated, and may also experience more job satisfaction, as a result.

In short, interaction is necessary for trust and trust is necessary for collaboration, dialogue, and effective communication. The key to success, however, lies in listening to people and using their views to inform decisions that are being made. As noted above, the more internal communication and shared governance are effective, the less need there will be for public airing of grievances and disputes. Not only can negative publicity damage a university’s reputation, but it also may serve to dampen the enthusiasm of donors, and hurt the recruitment of students, faculty and staff to the institution. The result could be a downward spiral that may take years to recover from. For example, lack of donations or student tuition revenue due to negative publicity for even one year means there is less money available for pay raises and scholarships. As these diminish, it becomes harder to recruit high quality students, faculty and staff.

VI. ISSUE: No one is attending to internal communications, assuming that “someone else is doing it.” Presidents, provosts, and vice chancellors are extremely busy individuals who do not have time to plan communication strategies and reach out to target audiences.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES: Most of the negative examples listed above have a communication or public relations gap which began as an internal issue and moved to a public relations debacle as it intensified.

STRATEGY: We recommend that there be a staff assistant, communication specialist, or public relations director who will have the responsibility of tending not only to external university relationships, but who is also attentive to the relationship between the President, Vice-Chancellor and Provost, and university employees. We suggest that this person monitor the sometimes tenuous but always critical relationship between faculty and administrators, in an effort to maintain a constant two-way flow of information between the groups.

VII. ISSUE: Universities struggle with outdated organizational and communication channels that are not effective in today’s rapidly changing landscape for higher education. Endless committees exist that deliberate for entire semesters (and years, in some cases), have no clear

line of sight to decision-makers, and are uncertain what type of decision rights their committees even have. Many universities have committees that are initiated by the faculty senate, but are not aligned with any channels where decisions are made.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES: Faculty who devote time to these orphan committees feel that their views are ignored and that they are wasting their time. The university may feel that it has met its obligation for shared governance, when in fact there has not been meaningful participation.

STRATEGY: We recommend that the university work towards the goal of instituting participative management practices (McGregor, 1960; Stohl & Cheney, 2001), by starting with support for shared governance on campus and moving from there into broader participative management. Broadly defined, shared governance is the involvement of faculty at a university in making decisions regarding the curriculum and educational standards and their involvement in describing and implementing selection, promotion, and tenure policies for faculty (Hagedorn & VanSlette, 2008). Participative management takes those principles a step further. Faculty and non-academic staff are not merely consulted in decisions; they are the decision-makers and the agents of change. In other words, as Hagedorn and VanSlette (2008) note:

True participative management is the antithesis of the “program of the month” mentality in which external consultants conduct focus groups (to “involve employees”) and then pronounce solutions that are implemented by management. True participative management charges each person in the organization to seek out the best way to achieve the organization’s mission and transfer that learning to others within the group. Managers become facilitators of learning and agents of change, but the employees are the ones ultimately charged with implementing the strategy and achieving the results needed for success. (p. 7)

While this sort of shift in management requires large scale organizational adjustments, there are many benefits associated with participative management, including increased job satisfaction among faculty and administrators, increased productivity and personal accountability, the cultivation of leadership skills at every level which aids succession planning, and more informed decision making at all levels of the university (Hagedorn & VanSlette, 2008). McCown (2007) found that university staff “expressed increased trust and participation satisfaction from being a part of the governance structure” (p. 60).

A collaborative approach to leadership from the self-governing body of the faculty (sometimes referred to as a senate or advisory committee) is a critical factor, and the leader of that governing body should be included on key university committees, such as the chancellor’s meetings with senior executives. Management may be invited to convene with the senate of the faculty at its meetings, enhancing the two-way dialogue so necessary for successful shared governance. The president of the faculty senate (i.e. elected leader of the faculty) at many universities writes regular email messages to all faculty, which reinforces the faculty’s trust that she or he is actively involved in management discussions and decisions. Professors and deans should be invited to chair key university management committees, involving them as partners in setting the direction of the institution. A clear process for committee appointments utilizing dialogue between University management and the professors will ensure that respected opinion leaders gain access to internal university

activities. A fair and effective means of resolving disputes should be described in the handbook of the faculty, so that when grievances arise, they are dealt with expeditiously and in a manner that is perceived to be fair by all parties. Successful dispute resolution increases the level of trust that faculty will have in management. Even better is when a dean or provost can resolve a conflict before it rises to the level of a formal grievance.

Deans, provosts, presidents, chancellors, and vice-chancellors have the burden of management combined with the need to maintain connections to the faculty. The truly successful ones have earned the respect of the faculty by communicating their understanding of the interests of professors, and balancing those interests with the overall needs of the institution. Participative leadership within departments and schools can be mirrored at the provost/vice-chancellor level so that faculty have a direct connection with decisions and outcomes at the highest levels. This practice also serves to educate faculty on key issues of academic, financial, and institutional importance.

Conclusion

The recent economic crisis highlights and intensifies the need for improved internal communication structures, channels, and opportunities between hierarchically differentiated groups. Sources of revenue have decreased, causing colleges and universities to look for short-term and long-term solutions to real financial concerns. Faculty members and administrators both are worried about the lack of resources to fund critical programs, and what the impact will be on students and colleagues. If these two groups do not partner in finding answers to these very significant concerns, the university will splinter into antagonistic groups and battlefields, certainly not a fertile ground for learning. The strength of internal communication channels and the use of proven employee relations principles will be critical to how effectively colleges and universities work through the financial crisis. Those universities without effective internal communication processes and who lack a climate of openness, trust, and civility, will struggle with the difficult decisions that need to be made. Those universities with established partnerships between management and faculty will have access to creative and strategic options to address the challenges, and will find the strength to implement these strategies in a way that will transform their institutions for the future.

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