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Relationships Among Central Administrators, Chairs, and Faculty: Academic Change Agents in Theory and Practice

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Most contemporary textbooks in organizational communication explain three "schools of organizational behavior" (Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers, 1976). The "scientific management" school, created by Frederick Taylor, represents employees as parts of a machine which produces a product or service. Time-and-motion studies are used by this school to increase the productivity of the organization. Generally there is little concern for the worker, except that he or she should attend work and produce each day. Excessive absenteeism and laziness are reasons for replacing the "part" in this well-tooled machine. The employer is not especially interested in what this worker has to say about work, unless it might increase productivity without side effects. For this reason, the traditional upward communication approach was through the "suggestion box."

The Human Relations School was developed by Chester I. Barnard and Elton Mayo to some extent as a reaction against the scientific management approach, because the latter did not do much for the workers. In this approach, informal communication is used as a basis for improving worker satisfaction, in hopes of increasing productivity. "The happy worker is the good worker," might be a motto of such an approach. But the empirical evidence did not seem to indicate that this was the case (Tannenbaum & Seashore, no date).

By the late 1960s , general systems theory became the more popular theory for organizational communication researchers. It was concerned with "wholeness." Organizations produced outputs from inputs and exchanged information with their environments. This school of thought, though popular, particularly for its investiture of new terminology, declined and gave way to a series of new approaches, virtually creating a "theory of month." These have included theory Z, the search for excellence, critical incidents, re-engineering, downsizing, and the list goes on. One should not forget the approaches of the post-modernistic, phenomenological ideal, a sometimes thinly-veiled, neo-Marxist approach.

But organizations are composed of people, most of whom do not want to bring down capitalism, because they are a party to it. Neither do they want to be treated as tools or machines. They do engage in informal communication at work and at home. They talk about baseball, their children's grades, the pressures of always having to increase productivity, what they might do about winning the Yankees' game, tutoring their children, and improving conditions at work. As Van Maanan (1988, p. 3) suggests "experience underlies all understanding of social life." Experience, in this case, refers to the experiences of the workers and the experiences of the qualitative researcher. Most of the previous theories were first developed and implemented. However, the theoretical approach of the new academy arises from a series of trial-and-error applications, which can be detected only through this qualitative, observational perspective.

METHOD

Tackling such an important element of our daily lives, work, is a difficult and trying process. Most of us want to work, if only to reap its benefits. Most academics, however, do not work at the jobs that they research. Thus, a participant-observer is usually more of an observer. But academia, too, is work. Professors rise in the morning, dress, go to school, check phone messages and e-mail, prepare for class and/or research, read memoranda from superiors, talk with colleagues, teach classes, listen to complaints and kudos, collect a check, and recycle.

As Selltiz, Jahoda, Deutsch, & Cook (1959) have indicated: "If people feel that they are 'guinea pigs' being experimented with, or if they feel they are being 'tested' and must make a good impression, or if the method of data collection suggests responses or stimulates an interest the subject did not previously feel, the measuring process may distort the experimental results (p. 97)." Such was the problem with the Hawthorne studies. Certainly, then, it would appear, a researcher looking at communication in academia should understand what is going on, but she/he should dissect it from afar.

While individual cases may provide few generalizations, such cases provide a basis upon which to analyze instances that may be re-created elsewhere. Using a number of such instances, from a variety of sources, provides a basis to establish what may be referred to as an **empirically-derived model** (or emergent, isomorphic model) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Such a model can provide valuable information, which when compared with an idealistic model of how an organization **should** function, assists us in the formulation of a grounded theory.

The purpose of this paper is to present such an empirically-derived model based on the observations of administrative behavior at two institutions of higher education, along with unstructured interviews from faculty at other institutions, untrained in participant observation and in organizational communication theory, which have confirmed or denied the elements in the model. Validation and reliability were confirmed through providing data and seeking responses faculty at other institutions. However, reliability ultimately will be determined only through replication.

BACKGROUND

Times have changed in higher education in the United States. In the 1960s and 1970s, higher education grew rapidly. Baby boomers entered college, and many were first generation students. State and local governments, as well as private donors, willingly and enthusiastically supported higher education. But the Vietnam conflict brought changes in that colleges were often considered the training grounds for protesters as well as escape routes from military conscription. Despite the fact that most of the population, even including members of the Cabinet who supported the war effort at the time, now admit that the war was a mistake, the public relations and funding war for dollars continues at our universities.

Today it appears that most of what we hear are requests for raising money, not at the president's level nor by the alumni associations, but at the dean's level and the department chair's level. During this down period, when many communication textbook authors advocate various theories of management **other** than scientific management (Conrad, 1994; Frank & Brownell, 1989; Pace & Faules, 1989), there can be little doubt that some upper-level managers (administration) often use scientific management, with a "twist" of "democracy," what may be described as academic bureaucracy.

If one received a Ph. D. degree in the 1960s and 1970s, that person was likely to think that she or he could enter a position as an assistant professor in a major institution of higher education in the United States. With the degree, one was to publish a certain number of articles, usually five to fifteen, over a period of three to six years while teaching in an adequate manner, at which time tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor would be granted. Should one decide to go on, she or he could then progress to full professor in another five years or so and establish a career, either remaining at the same institution or moving to another or others over the next fifteen to twenty years. The qualifications included a terminal degree and the ability to teach and undertake research. That is what was meant by being a faculty member.

The consideration on the part of central administrators was rarely how easily or how cheaply this professor could be replaced. In fact, full, tenured professors with prestige from their publishing some esoteric book was what the institution wanted. But today's institutions of higher education expect more, or at least something different. The once-cherished notion of faculty publishing books and articles in respected academic journals has been replaced by a machine-like, funding mentality. Academic organizations are undergoing change, not because they necessarily want to do so, but because of necessity. And necessity breeds invention.

The necessity has been caused primarily by two factors. First, there is **technological** change. No longer does a professor hand write his tests to be typed, proofread, copied, collated, and stapled by some secretary, who may have had little else to do anyway. The computer is the secretary. The faculty member is the typist, spell check is the proofreader, and the professor is the copier, the collator, and the stapler. This is not necessarily harmful in and of itself. But now the secretary has a thousand other things to do, and the professor may not know how to type. Second, the institution is undergoing **economic** change. What were once plentiful sources of grant money have dwindled. Federal and state authorities have focused their attention on other matters, leaving higher education to fend for itself.

But in addition to those two types of changes, the university finds itself undergoing other changes at the same time. There is a change in knowledge/information, politics, cultural arenas, demographics, and tasks (Hickson, Stacks, & Padgett-Greely, 1998). The time has passed when the professor can walk to the library and read a couple of hundred of the dusty books from the basement, uncover some esoteric theory of the eighteenth century, publish a book, and remain at the school for the rest of her life. Knowledge is on the computer, and its credibility is less than the dusty rare book. As well the politics of leaving the office to read books in the library, in today's world, is certainly questionable. The Great Books are no longer the mainstay, because many of the students are from other cultures, including not only African American but Asian and Hispanic. The demographics have changed in many ways, not the least of which is that females compose a majority of the students, and American students in sciences and mathematics are often outnumbered by international students. Where people live has changed. And states that had perhaps ten or fifteen state institutions of higher education in the 1960s now may have thirty or more.

Thus, in part, the institutions have themselves transfigured the college map through their own proliferation.

It becomes frustrating to faculty who are no longer asked to be scholars, but salespersons. Interestingly, many scholars entered their professions to **avoid** sales work. They did not want to enter business. The idea of asking someone for their money did not appeal to these intellectuals. Even in the classroom, the registration and tuition collection is done by someone else. Unlike their colleagues in K-12, they do not have to take up money for the school yearbook or graduation gowns. Faculty often do not even know what the cost of the tuition is at their own institutions.

This new, mammoth change of tasks is disheartening not only for the faculty but also for the administration. After all, the administrators must devise a method of changing the pool of faculty over the next few years. **Techno-salespeople** are what they want. Anyone who can be either a technologist or a salesperson may be sufficient, but a new assistant professor with technological skills who can sell is a catch. In the meantime, central administrators must "re-educate" the faculty they have to see how many meet the new position qualifications. While some of the "old guard" are provided "retirement incentives," and others are eliminated through unacceptable course schedules or courses to teach, the final method available for making this transition is through change agents.

CHANGE AGENTS

For decades, businesses and governmental agencies have used change agents to generate change in their organizations (Rogers, 1995). Bennis (1966) has referred to such agents as behavioral scientists brought in to help a client system (p. 82). The idea is that such an agent is "brought in" from the "outside" to assist the organization with its "problem(s)" through eliciting what Bennis refers to as "valid knowledge" through collaborating with the members of the organization. Historically, then, change agents were from **somewhere else**. Typically they remained in the organization for a temporary period, collected data, and made recommendations for change to solve what the organization had referred to as its "problem." The agent soon left the scene and the implementation was left to the organization. In many cases, the top management of the organization had in mind a particular kind of change that it needed [wanted], and the agent's function was merely to convince the rest of the organization that such would be a good idea.

The "problem" for most organizations was usually the lack of productivity. In profit-making organizations, the problem was not enough profit. Of course, this problem could be rectified through either increasing productivity, reducing costs, or both.

Only in the past few years have public universities joined the ranks of those needing change agents because historically colleges have not changed and most have had no need to raise either productivity nor "profits." In short, universities were state bureaucracies, on the public dole. But much like their business and governmental counterparts, higher education has learned that tuition can be increased only so much, and those institutions that are state-supported have learned that governmental support has a ceiling. Therefore, new ways must be invented to gain monies for doing what universities do.

It is typical that the first notice of the need for a change agent comes through some mass mailing of photocopied articles on the dismal situation that universities find themselves. These articles are found in journals and newspapers, such as the ***Chronicle of Higher Education,*** all which have a virtually exclusive readership from the ranks of academe. The purpose of this step is to put the faculty on notice that things are worse in other places, but that it is about to get bad here, too.

Articles and books on topics such as Responsibility Center Management are the tools of change.[1] Such articles provide anecdotal and statistical information about one university's terminating faculty or another's losing students through poor recruitment and retention practices. These photocopies are distributed to deans and department chairs who are encouraged to "share" them with the faculty. The photocopies serve the purpose of "putting the faculty on notice" that something is about to happen which will not be pleasant. Worse yet, because the administrator has read so many of these articles and books, he or she may decide that perhaps money can be saved if the changes come from **inside** the institution.

THE DO-IT-YOURSELF APPROACH

Following the notice through the distribution of photocopies, central administrators then begin the often arduous task of doing something about "the problem." In reality, if there is a problem, the problem has been created by a number of factors. Universities, being the conservative institutions that they are, resist change as long as possible. One can witness this simply by perusing catalogs to see how much a curriculum has changed over the past twenty years. In many cases, the only changes will be the adding of courses which were created for new professors to teach their favorite topics, often from their dissertations. Rarely, however, are courses **deleted** from the curricula. Because the curricula change quite slowly, there is the added difficulty that the number of faculty lines remains virtually the same over a twenty-year period. That is, no one is added because there is no money, and no one is terminated because of tenure or turf issues.

It should also be noted that the number of lines rarely changes **between** departments. Were they to change, this would imply that some programs have lost enrollment and others have gained. Such an admission could force departments with traditional political clout to reduce faculty. Certainly no dean would want to be in a position to do that. The same is true for programs. Were one to go back 25 years, for example, and list the number of institutions offering Ph. D. programs in communication alone, the number would be less than half of what it is today. For example, in the southeast, there were programs at Florida State, Florida, Louisiana State, Southern Mississippi, and Texas. Only Florida has discontinued its program. However, programs have been added at Georgia, South Florida, Alabama, Kentucky, Memphis, Texas A and M, Georgia State, and North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The proliferation of masters programs would indicate a more exaggerated position. Little wonder departments now have trouble getting students to accept their assistantships.

It is often forgotten that some of the turf issues were created during the 1960s and 1970s when there was more money. The method used at that time was as follows. A department would indicate that new courses were needed because of student demand. Curriculum committees approved. The departments listed the courses, often without an instructor available. Soon the argument was that the department needed more faculty. During those times many departments were created from personality differences between individuals. As a result two or three departments replaced what was formerly one department. The same holds true for colleges or schools.

The turf argument also carries with it the "no one understands my discipline" argument. Using this sub-argument, a department claims that because the dean is from another discipline or area, he or she does not understand some of the faculty or what they do. Certainly communication falls into this category. Because a communication department cannot explain what it does, it has often been delivered its own school.

Another issue is that some departments that were built on "soft positions." In these cases, departments hired people to assist some research professor through governmental grants that were previously more easily obtained. Many of these "soft money" faculty were tenured [on the assumption that there would always be new grants]. When the grants ended, the faculty member, the line, the salary, and the benefits remained. Now they were the responsibility of the institution, and the money would have to come from another source. In addition, it became prestigious for a university to offer release time for research. What may have been an annual courseload of eight courses, became across-the-board: six or even fewer. Instructors, part-timers, and graduate teaching assistants were hired to teach the other courses. And at our conventions one could claim higher prestige based on the fewer of credit hours one taught per year. Rarely was the release time questioned. Even when an associate professor published nothing over a five- to ten-year period, he kept his release time, for he was probably working on a "major project."

Because central administrators were themselves often turf managers and empire-builders, they lack a consciousness of what these historical processes have created. Rogers (1995) has written: "[The] circle of relationships means that change agents are helping the clients who least need their help (p. 347)." Only other turf managers and empire-builders have contact with the central administration. Nevertheless these administrators do have in mind a means for changing the organization, which is usually a means of reduction of faculty. For legal reasons, especially when faculty are tenured, the administrators must eliminate "programs" to terminate faculty while avoiding losing lawsuits. When a program is eliminated, this gives the administration legitimate authority to reduce faculty.

Of course, another difficulty is that universities have a reputation as "democratic" institutions. This means that a method must be created through which the faculty themselves "decide" how to bring about such reductions. This may be referred to as **scientific management through faux democracy**. There is, of course, an idealistic reason for the democratic argument about higher education, but mostly there is a pragmatic reason. Administrators want to keep their jobs or move on to others which pay more money at a more prestigious university. They do not want to aggravate the faculty too much, and they do not want to create a reputation for themselves as aggravators of the faculty because letters of recommendation go both ways. Academia is virtually the only place on earth where the employees evaluate their "bosses."

THE RHETORIC OF CHANGE

Once having decided that the university can bring about its own change and having decided that it must appear to be democratic, the hypothetically well-intentioned administrator is on the way to using the cook books of change as the local do-it-yourselfer. He or she is armed with the tools, which include (1) faculty retreats (2) hiring new and more upper-level administrators (3) painting some doors and rooms (4) creating added bureaucracy (5) co-opting the faculty newsletter and, if possible, the student newspaper and (6) using statistics to create confusion.

THE FACULTY RETREAT

One stereotypical method to bring about change within the organization, through "democratic" means, is to institutionalize the faculty retreat. The administration hand picks different sets of faculty and administrators to solve the problem. It is important to note that the central administration must hand pick such faculty. The most rebellious will be full professors, with tenure, who are not administrators. The reason that these faculty are so "difficult" is that the administration has no hold on them. The greatest penalties available for these professors are no salary increases, and some states and unionized faculty do not allow this. In addition, these senior professors are often the more productive faculty and it would be difficult to overlook them with salary increases when trying to establish that productivity will be rewarded with merit increases.

The best option is not to place them on the retreating committees in the first place. For the most part, then, full professors who hold no administrative appointment are "mysteriously" omitted from those chosen to attend the faculty retreats. Assistant professors are good candidates as well as some associate professors who wish to be promoted and professors who do not wish to lose their administrative positions and salaries.

The retreats are most often held out of town, which adds the "external" dimension to the change agent process. This allows the administration a means for temporarily placing the faculty committee **in communicato** with other faculty who are not on the committees, thereby lowering resistance. Each committee or group of faculty deal with an issue. Two issues are fundamental: student recruitment/retention and fund-raising.

Recruitment and retention. On the issue of recruitment, the mentality is that the student is "a consumer [or customer]."[2] In other words, the students pay tuition. The university needs the tuition. Therefore, the university must come up with ways to entice more bodies to pay money. [Obviously any customer would like high grades for her/his money, but this would be an unethical idea.] Means include raising tuition, raising fees, and creating fees. The point is, of course, that **customers must pay more for their customer satisfaction**. The satisfaction is obtained through better advising, more parking spaces, better university dining facilities, more fraternities and sororities, and generally making everyone happy.

The data for making decisions and the agenda for these retreats are provided by the administration. The faculty are provided data on income to the university, emphasizing the importance of tuition. They are also given credit hours generated (CHG) and headcount (number of majors) data. The charts typically appear like a depression in the economy, although the reality is probably a flat line. If it looks like a flat line, then the chart must be redrawn so that losing 100 students appears extremely dramatic. In addition to data, the administration places one or two "leaders" of the group into the situation. These are people who have been propagandized into the decisions the administration wants made and/or to serve as "spies" for the administration.

Fund raising. It becomes obvious that continually raising tuition and fees will not solve the economic problem of the school. The major cost increase is in faculty benefits, which is often used as an enticement to recruit new faculty. Additional fund raising must be through grants, contracts, and contributors. The administration will suggest that new sources must be found, but such administrators are reluctant in explaining that every other institution is seeking funds from the same sources. In addition, there is little understanding of the fact that traditional academics are not fund raisers. When "professionals" are brought in, there is no attempt to measure a cost-benefit ratio. That is, did these "professionals" raise even enough money to pay their own salaries?

Each group must have several retreats, for obviously these problems are too complex to be resolved quickly and efficiently. For example, has there not been a Student Affairs Recruitment/Admissions Office employing people to recruit students for the past thirty years? Of course, they have a representative or two or three on the committee. They say that they cannot do it all. The faculty must get involved. The faculty need to make telephone calls, go to PTA meetings, telephone parents of new students, phone alumni, have high school camps in the summer (such as band camp, physics camp, communication camp), and meet with potential recruits on weekend events. The university must put some money into creating new brochures [how many students decide on a university based on a brochure?] and to add a number of new recruiters (often students who were enthusiastic about student government). Departments must change their names to make them appear more attractive. In communication alone, there are departments of communication, speech, speech communication, communication studies, communication arts, and others. A marketing specialist might suggest Human Information Technology (HIT).

More and more remedial courses must be created so that those marginal recruits can stay (pay). At last, there is a final report that looks amazingly similar to what the administrators would have done in the first place. However, no one ever sees any of the reports.

They are usually available in the library for anyone who wants to see them. It should be noted, though, that one must "sign out" the report. Even then, however, as Coffman (1999) reports, no one sees the full report. Instead, it is the administrative abstract, including some faculty input.

HIRING NEW AND MORE ADMINISTRATORS

With the problem being like it is, the structure of the university itself must be changed. Typically this calls for either more vice presidents or more associate vice presidents or both. Of course, these new officials must have a secretarial staff. The first new face is likely to be the "capital campaign team." These are professional, vagabond do-nothings. Their plan is usually to have meetings in which they ask colleges and schools to develop a **plan** for their needs over the next ten years. If they are good at this, they have a Power Point presentation. In addition to developing the needs, the schools must develop some contacts for funding ("friend-raising") as well as sources for the money ("fund-raising"). These vagabonds stay about two or three years, depending on how long it takes for the administrators to figure them out. The vagabonds are well dressed, have a nice oral presentation, and have an extraordinary ability to appear as if they care. Then, on to the next university, preferably far away. Sometimes, however, they remain in the community, working for another institution and using whatever contacts they have made at the new house. If anything is accomplished, it is done by those people who would have done it anyway.

It is also a good idea to change the provost or academic vice president. This illustrates that the president means business. Usually, but not always, an outsider, the change provost has some ideas. Of course these ideas came from the publications of the doom-and-gloom publications of higher education. They will stay, for now they have tenure in some academic department that never wanted them in the first place. They often have a mediocre, if not miserable, record of research or they are misplaced in such a position. This new provost hires some friend as an associate provost. The associate will cover "undergraduate or freshman affairs." For the most part, these changes create new levels of bureaucracy but most often do little harm.

Someone new in "enrollment management" may be added to the student affairs bureaucracy. How this position relates to what was **admissions** is a mystery. However, this person is an "expert" on increasing credit hours generated. Primarily this person creates new statistics and new ways of looking at statistics. At the end of three years, little is likely to have been accomplished here.

PAINTING SOME ROOMS AND DOORS

This may sound trivial, but it is the easiest way for the new president to illustrate that he or she has done something. For each school or college, the president has the physical plant people to select an area that needs renovation. This must be an area that is seen by others — no classrooms or laboratories. Offices are good. Exterior doors are good. And the "signage" is replaced outside and inside of buildings.

This area also includes redesigning the logo, the faculty newsletter, and perhaps the alumni magazine. The principle behind all of this is "That if it looks different, there must be change." If necessary, the president may hire a new publications vice president (now referred to Vice President for Communication) and a facilities coordinator (vice president or associate vice president for finance). After three years, a few walls appear to look better. Most importantly, though, all of these renovations appear on the vitae of the president, the facilities coordinator, and the director of publications.

CREATING ADDITIONAL BUREAUCRACY

Another reason that the university has a problem is that it is inefficient. Most often the inefficiency is attributed to not having enough forms or not having the right forms. Forms are created regarding leave, deleting and adding of courses, scheduling classes, and the like. The most important factor in the new forms, however, is the number of people who must approve them before they are implemented. Other "official documents" such as the policies and procedures manual must be "re-drawn." Accounting procedure must now be undertaken on line.

CO-OPTING PUBLICATIONS

Very much like the island dictatorship, it is important that publications present the right image. The right image, in this case, is the image that the central administration wants. The retreats must be reported in a very positive manner. New administrators are highlighted, along with their new, great ideas. The publication has a new look, which means that change is moving along smoothly. If possible, the student newspaper has positive things to say about the new administration. If through no other means, the student affairs people typically have ways to ensure cooperation from the newspaper.

STATISTICAL GOBBLEDYGOOK

One good thing about communication students and most of their faculty is that they do not understand that statistics are not magical. This is probably the case in many of the liberal arts departments. Therefore, the administration utilizes the ignorance of faculty to enhance its position. For example, if an English department is teaching more credit hours than anyone else, the complaint can be that they do not have enough majors or graduates. On the other hand, if a communication department has a large number of majors and graduates, one can always say they are not teaching enough credit hours. Then one can argue that a department is not teaching enough upper-level (junior and senior) credit hours or not enough lower-level (freshmen and sophomore).

The liberal arts will always look worse than other departments such as engineering and science departments, because the "formula" stacks the deck. The "formula" is a pre-determined measure, created decades ago, for placing all of the costs of a course (faculty, space, equipment, supplies) into a "weighted" concept for funding purposes. For example, if a student takes a three-hour public speaking course, this may be "weighted" as 3 hours generated and 3 weighted hours generated; a laboratory in medical school, with a student taking a 3-hour course may be 3 hours generated, but 51 weighted credit hours generated. Using this methodology, it is easy to see how 25 students in a public speaking course equals one and one-half in medical school (see Higgerson & Rehwaldt, 1993, pp. 19-33).

RESULTS OF DO-IT-YOURSELF

Fortunately or unfortunately, these ideas for change rarely bring in more revenue or a higher retention or graduation rate. Certainly it does not generate a more competent study body. The line still appears to be flat. The administration is mystified about how this could be. Surely the ***Chronicle of Higher Education*** and those university self-help books **must** have been right. So what's wrong here? Perhaps the problem is that the change agents have not appeared in low enough positions (strategic positions) to bring about the needed changes to solve the problems. Enter the acting dean.

THE ACTING DEAN

The good thing about hiring an acting anything is that one does not have to have a search. The acting (interim) dean is sought by central administration from among those they have known in the past, at other institutions. An institution cannot have an acting dean from on campus because the colleges and schools obviously know nothing about change or the institution would not have "the problem." Acting deans are usually what baseball fanatics might refer to as "all-purpose, utility infielders." They have most often been associate something-or-others at several different institutions in the past. Their research records are often weak or mediocre. In many cases, they never passed the tenure and promotion process in the standard way. Instead, they follow a pattern somewhat like this. One is an assistant professor, and the dean needs an assistant dean. A young, cheap assistant professor may be good for this position. Sometimes it is to create "gender equity" in the dean's office. Sometimes it's because the dean does not like to talk with students so a faculty member who is known to be liked by students works well. Sometimes it is a person who is exceptional at triviality who can do what the dean does not want to do. Therefore, the individual must reluctantly give up his/her research duties for these new administrative duties. [The idea behind this is that the administration will protect them when tenure and promotion time comes.]

When the assistant dean comes up for tenure, there is an explanation that the individual did not have time for research because of administrative duties. Faculty committees fear repercussions from not granting tenure to the assistant dean, or they refuse to "pre-rubber stamp" the decision. If they refuse, the dean overrules them. The individual becomes **associate** dean. Later, the individual moves into a position of associate provost. When promotion time arises, the same arguments are used. This is now a full professor with tenure. Another possible means of accomplishing the same is to leave one institution as an assistant professor and move to a smaller institution as a chair/associate professor. Another similar move can be made to professor. Then the person can become dean and professor at an institution similar to the first one, or at worst, he/she can become an assistant to the president. Usually acting deans have never been chairs, deans, or provosts.

The acting dean has no life beyond this job. The dean has moved from Tim-Buc-Tu, lives in an efficiency apartment, has no family, and is enthusiastic at the new work. He or she may have retired from one or more institutions (as utility infielders). They have been out of academia for a year or two, but the administration is looking for someone with "experience." No one ever asks, experience at what? The administration provides the acting dean with some additional funding to assure mild success.

In the beginning the acting dean will have meetings, and meetings, and meetings. The department chairs will bring up the same re-hashed ideas and complaints that they have had for the past ten or fifteen years with the preceding dean. The acting dean must sift her/his way through the political squabbles that have occurred for the past few decades to determine the seriousness of the talk.

The pattern for those whom the dean is supervising is to avoid change at any and all costs. These include no changes in personnel, no attempts to publish and/or write grant proposals from those who have never done it, no changes in teaching load, no changes in class limits. However, what they do want for change are reduced class limits, reduced course loads, additional staff support, and higher salaries.

In all probability, the changes will be few and far between. The faculty resistance will win out, because, after all, they have been there longer and they **will** be there longer. The question, then, becomes: "How can we improve at the University in a meaningful way?"

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WITHOUT CHANGE AGENTS

One does not have to be an empiricist to understand that some type of evidence must accompany arguments. Regardless of the soundness of an argument, evidentiary support is helpful. Most faculty, however, believe in their **perceptions**. One of the primary reasons that this is true is that most faculty (and chairs, for that matter) lack the evidence they need. Thus, step one for any new administration is openness of information.

OPENNESS OF INFORMATION

It is not uncommon for administrations to provide only the information they want released to become public. This is, however, dangerous for long-term thinkers. What kinds of information does one need? The credit hours generated, the weighted credit hours generated, the number of faculty, the number of staff, the number of graduates from a program, all are needed. Even so, these are somewhat isolated facts unless one department knows how it compares with others. At one institution, for example, one school (Social and Behavioral Sciences) gets only 15 percent of its budget from the state while another (Engineering) gets 77.5 percent of its budget from state appropriations (FY 1995-96, 1996). Yet one hears about all of the grant money available in engineering and so little in the humanities and social sciences. The administration should either be able to justify these figures or motivate the faculty in engineering before making additional cuts elsewhere to "save" a School of Engineering.[3] Administrators need to understand that most faculty are more concerned with the justification than the decision itself. That is, why is an unproductive civil engineering more important than an effective and productive communication department?

THE MEANING OF MERIT

Secondly, administrators must be able to communicate what it means by merit. Virtually every school advocates pay raises on merit. However, this is often meaningless because the merit is in competition **only** with others in one's own department. If merit really means merit, faculty from a variety of places should be in competition for pay increases; minimally an entire school should be in competition. In addition, merit should include more than simply pay increases. Resources such as space, operations budgets, travel budgets, equipment, and the like should also be based on merit (or what administration more often refers to as "productivity"). In other words, perhaps administration should consider "departmental merit" based on the administration's own criteria.

IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE

Third, administrations must create standards of what is meant by "excellence." Typically universities award tenure and promotion on the basis of excellence in research, teaching, and research. Most formulate some ambiguous standard so that choices **can** (although they may not be) be made on some other basis. Exceptions and "side-deals" should be eliminated.

Those are factors which must be considered from the viewpoint of the administration. From the viewpoint of the faculty, there are also perceptions that need to be corrected.

Most importantly, central administrators must resist the temptation to continue to be empire builders and turf managers in order to bring about change, for these hierarchical creations are what placed the institution in its predicament in the first place.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

First, individual faculty members need to learn to assess their own work more objectively. Most disciplines now have standards for research (Hickson, Stacks, & Bodon, 1999). In the discipline of communication, those standards certainly are not excessively high. Nonetheless, a faculty member should know where he/she stands both locally and nationally before complaining about salaries or course loads.

Second, individual faculty members should understand that universities have certain requirements that may not seem to apply to a department. For example, it would be ridiculous for a communication department to request the same amount of money for equipment as an electrical engineering department. Of course, the administration should understand that one of the reasons for formulae concerning weighted credit hours generated is that those considerations have already been established in the formulae; therefore, providing additional rewards simply for being an electrical engineering department is "double dipping."

Third, faculty should be aware of what they are asking. While many faculty claim not to have agreed with an administration decision, many often are more concerned about the reason(s) for the decision. Faculty should be forthcoming enough to ask and administrators should be forthright in answering.

CONCLUSION

In short, there is no doubt that economic and fiscal causes contribute to what has happened to higher education. In addition, however, some of the causes are self-imposed. Presidents and fund-raisers no longer do the fund raising. Faculty prefer teaching smaller classes, which generate fewer credit hours. Changes are slow in coming. Technology has begun the ouster of many fine professors.

The previous solutions do not appear workable. It is easier, for example, to appear to be a fund raiser than to be a fund raiser. Administrators do not always utilize an historical approach in resolving difficulties. "Across-the-board" policies, such as release time, should not always apply.

Most importantly, solutions are top down as opposed to bottom up. Faculty often do not understand the problem. Administrators provide only information they want to share. As a result an environment is created which is frustrating to all concerned. Stress is increased. Additional change is sought, and the cycle begins again.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

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[1]Responsibility Center Management is an approach to institutions in which each subunit is responsible for generating its own income. In a university setting, the income could be through credit hours generated in the form of tuition. Grants and contracts as well as gifts are other means for "making one's own way." Departments with large numbers of credit hours or alumni who donate large sums of money (such as business and engineering schools can usually abide by such an approach. The sciences and engineering as well as medicine attract huge sums through contracts with pharmaceutical companies and engineering firms. Departments such as art, music, theatre, philosophy, and foreign languages typically have difficulty, especially when they have no service courses which are taken across the board by undergraduates.

[2] The analogy student: consumer is often used by administrators. The basis for the analogy is that both pay for goods and/or services and expect a quality product. There are substantial differences, however. Consumers usually know what they want. They may choose a less expensive brand because they wish to save money. They may buy a brand name because they like its quality. Because students are generally less sophisticated as intellectual consumers they may not know what quality is. In a sense, they might be more like "garage sale buyers." Second, consumers are evaluated by stores. Students are evaluated by their teachers. In a sense, students are evaluated on how well they use what they have purchased. Third, as the saying goes, "The customer is always right." Such a position in academia would be ludicrous unless the institution is willing to give all A's. It should be noted that there is a tendency to do something quite similar in the higher priced outlets — higher tuition, private institutions — where tuition dollars account for a major part of the income. This, among other things, is what has caused grade inflation over the past thirty years.

[3] See FY 1995-96. The university found that even with high weighted credit hours generated, the School of Engineering had so few students that state monies had to subsidize it at a higher level.

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