

FACULTY FOCUS

## Special Report

# Academic Leadership Development: How to Make a Smooth Transition from Faculty to Administrator

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# Academic Leadership Development: How to Make a Smooth Transition from Faculty to Administrator

Remember how you felt during your first semester of teaching? Excited? Nervous? A little over-whelmed? At times you even might have wondered how the school could give you a job with so much responsibility and so little training.

Now you're a seasoned educator making the move from faculty to administration. And guess what? You're excited, nervous, and a little overwhelmed. And, once again, you wonder how the school could give you a job with so much responsibility and so little training.

Inadequate preparation, unrealistic expectations, and increased workload can create undue stress on faculty members making the transition to department chair or other levels of administration. This special report features 14 articles from *Academic Leader* newsletter that address many of the challenges faced by new leaders, from establishing a leadership style to redefining relationships with former peers.

Here are some of the articles you will find in *Academic Leadership Development: How to Make a Smooth Transition from Faculty to Administrator*:

- Look Before You Leap: Transitions from Faculty to Administration
- Translating Teaching Skills to Leadership Roles
- The First 1,000 Steps: Walking the Road from Academic to Administrator
- Why New Department Chairs Need Coaching
- 10 Recommendations toward Effective Leadership

This report will help new administrators navigate the potential minefields and find their voice when it comes to leading effectively. It also may remind experienced leaders what it was like that first year in hopes that they might reach out to help make someone else's transition a little easier.

Rob Kelly  
Editor  
*Academic Leader*

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# The Transition from Faculty to Administrator

By Rob Kelly

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Like many deans, Monte Finkelstein did not plan to be a leader. He began as a history instructor, gradually took on more leadership responsibilities, and came to his division deanship at Tallahassee Community College through his desire for challenges beyond the classroom and the retirement of the previous dean.

“I had been teaching for 21 or 22 years and had sworn never to get into administration. The history program chair wasn’t doing such a good job, so the dean said, ‘Monte, why don’t you do it?’ I said, ‘Fine, I’ll try it out for a while. It will give me something to else to do’ because I was kind of getting bored with the classroom,” Finkelstein says.

Soon after, the division dean unexpectedly announced his retirement, and Finkelstein made an uncharacteristic spur-of-the-moment decision to apply for the position. Looking back, his career to that point had prepared him somewhat for the challenges he faced; as program chair he worked with adjunct faculty members and often dealt with student issues. He also served as faculty senate chair, which enabled him to see the big picture beyond the history program. “It showed me that there are five academic divisions on campus, each one with unique problems, and that gave me the idea that even as dean of history and social sciences, I would have to take those other divisions’ situations and problems into consideration,” Finkelstein says.

Some things he was not prepared for, such as the change in the way that others viewed him. “Within my first week as dean, we had welcome back workshops. I had participated in these workshops before, and people would listen to my comments—no big deal. When I opened my mouth

**“They have a great deal of respect for me because I come from the classroom, and since many of the issues deal with the classroom, they feel they can talk to me. And I haven’t forgotten what it’s like to be a teacher,” Finkelstein says.**

as dean for the first time, it was like that E.F. Hutton commercial—everybody all of a sudden started looking at me as if anything I said was the gospel. I think that was the biggest challenge for me. People were looking to me for leadership, and it continues. I sit on a bunch of study groups, and the tendency is for others to look at me and listen to me closely,” Finkelstein says.

Another difficult issue has been managing the changing relationships with long-time colleagues. One of the

advantages of moving from faculty member to dean is that Finkelstein knows everybody and the specific challenges that faculty members face on campus. On the other hand, familiarity with colleagues has posed challenges.

“There are people in the division who I’ve known for 30 years. Some were my roommates before we even worked here. I announced very simply that I was going to separate the personal from the professional. I told them, ‘If I come down to your office to discuss a professional issue with you, take it as such. I hope it doesn’t ruin the friendship.’ I also told them that I know the position I’m in and that I’m fully prepared to lose friendships. It wouldn’t be on my end. I would be on the other person’s end. It hasn’t happened yet. Luckily, I work with people who know that what I’m trying to do is for their benefit,” Finkelstein says.

However, he has reduced his social activities with colleagues. “I feel a bit awkward when I’m at a party and [faculty members] are discussing TCC. I don’t want to stifle the fun or conversation,” Finkelstein says. “I spend a lot less time in the break room because faculty tend to discuss faculty issues, and I don’t want to get in the middle of it,” Finkelstein says.

Although relationships with long-time colleagues can be a challenge, Finkelstein’s colleagues are happy that a colleague with a thorough understanding of the issues they face took the dean position rather than somebody from outside the college. “They have a great deal of respect for me because I come from the classroom, and since many of the issues deal with the classroom, they feel they can talk to me. And I haven’t forgotten what it’s like to be a teacher,” Finkelstein says.

As a faculty member, Finkelstein

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never saw the relationship between administrators and faculty as an adversarial one, and he still doesn't. "I thought that sometimes the administration didn't understand faculty issues or problems, but I always thought that we could work it out together. Now that I'm an administrator, I still see it that way. I don't go out of my way to make trouble for anybody. As dean I go out of my way to run the division as best I can, get the faculty the resources they need, and, if there's an issue, I try as hard as I can to resolve it at this level," Finkelstein says.

Finkelstein also does not view other divisions as adversaries. When a new dean is hired, the deans serve on the screening committee. During his interview for the position, Finkelstein was told that the divisions do not compete for resources, and in his view, his dean colleagues have held to that philosophy. "There have been times at the end of the fiscal year [when] divisions would have money left over and would give it to other divisions. We do so much planning and data collection here that [the resources] we get is based on data. [Recently,] we had to justify new positions, and it was all based on data. My division got one new position and another division got three or four. I know that these decisions were based on the data we turned over. Since the position criteria included enrollment numbers and data that we all shared, I know that the decisions were made honorably and justifiably, and that doesn't spark my competitive nature," Finkelstein says.

In addition to his dean colleagues, Finkelstein draws on the experience of the program chairs, teaching faculty who are given 40 percent release time to handle administrative duties such as hiring and scheduling adjuncts and addressing student complaints. "I'm with Dr. Finkelstein

every day. Our offices are two doors apart, and because I'm the longest standing program chair, he relies on me to do a lot of leadership activities," says Jeanne O'Kon, behavioral sciences program chair.

As program chair, O'Kon straddles the fence between administrator and teacher, something that she thinks all

## The transition from faculty member to administrator entails a shift in perspective, autonomy, and recognition.

administrators should do. "I feel that all administrators should be teaching. I wish that even our president and vice president would teach one class a year just to keep their hands in the classroom and to know the kinds of things the teaching faculty are dealing with every day because it's too easy for administrators to get out of touch with what really takes place in the classroom," O'Kon says.

Finkelstein teaches one course a year. "I like to keep up with the technology and the changing student population.... It also reminds me what faculty deal with on a full-time basis."

Finkelstein offers the following advice for faculty members making the transition to administration.

- **Understand why you want to do it.** Finkelstein took an administrative position because he wanted a new challenge. "I've heard others say that they got into administration because of the money. It's not worth it be-

cause it can be a real headache. It can exhaust you," Finkelstein says.

- **Understand your new role.** There are different levels of deans, and the roles vary among institutions. It's important to understand what the position entails and how it will change your daily activities. The transition from faculty member to administrator entails a shift in perspective, autonomy, and recognition. "As an instructor, you really have a lot of autonomy. It's your classroom. You deal with it, and there's very little interference with what you do," Finkelstein says. As a dean, you are accountable to the faculty and the administration and need to adopt an institutional perspective and "walk the middle line." "I had a fan club on campus. Everybody knew me. My classes were full. Students loved me. Now that I'm dean, I don't have that fan club anymore. You've got to be ready to sacrifice your ego and think about why you want to do this job," Finkelstein says.
- **Give yourself time to learn the job, and monitor your progress and satisfaction.** When Finkelstein took the job in 2004, he decided to allow three years to learn the job and another two years to determine if he was doing an effective job and felt comfortable with it. He constantly asks, "Am I making progress?" "Do I feel better?" "Am I growing into my skin, or do I hate coming to work every morning?" "When the day comes where I say, I'm not satisfied anymore, I'll walk away and probably go back to the classroom," Finkelstein says. ●

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# ‘It Seems Like Only Yesterday...’: The Challenges Faced by Recently Appointed Administrators

By Jeffrey L. Buller, PhD

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Nearly every college and university has established its own version of a first-year-experience program that is intended to help students make an effective transition from high school to their new academic environment. Additionally, many institutions have now developed comprehensive faculty first-year experience programs, recognizing how ineffective orientation for new instructors can be when it lasts for only a day or two and is scheduled right before classes begin.

On the other hand, recently appointed administrators are all too often left to fend for themselves, having to learn “on the job” many of the skills they will need to know in order to succeed in their new positions. Is there any way to shorten this “learning curve” for new administrators? What are the special challenges that newly appointed administrators will face, and what kind of advice and considerations should these administrators be given?

**Remember that your responsibilities have changed and that you are no longer in charge of the specific area that you supervised before.**

This is a common failing of recently appointed administrators. New deans keep trying to chair their old departments. New provosts feel

tempted to dean their former colleges. New presidents try to step into the discussions that are underway within their institution’s academic programs or development office or

Recently appointed administrators are all too often left to fend for themselves, having to learn “on the job” many of the skills they will need to know in order to succeed in their new positions.

whichever area helped them reach the presidency. This course of action is nearly always a mistake. Not being able to give up your old job conveys the impression that you lack enough vision to succeed at your new challenges. Moreover, it causes the current department chair, dean, provost, or vice president to feel that you don’t trust the incumbent to do his or her job correctly. At best, you will gain a poor reputation as a micro-manager. At worst, you’ll become so

focused on your old responsibilities that you’ll end up neglecting some of your new opportunities. This problem can be particularly acute for people who are hired into an institution from outside. Attempts to keep running your former department (or school, college, or whatever) will then not only look as though you are incapable of grasping “the bigger picture,” but will also give the impression that you can only do things the way they did “back at Nostalgia State.” Save the day-to-day management of the unit for the person now responsible for your old job. You have new, more important concerns.

**Keep in mind that certain implications follow from your new status.**

It is extremely easy for new administrators to forget that their words and actions will be interpreted quite differently now that they have taken on their new positions. For instance, a remark by a faculty member that would be viewed as harmless banter can assume a far different level of importance if it is made by the chair or dean. Newer faculty members, who may be feeling a great deal of anxiety during their probationary periods, often find themselves wondering, “What did the chair mean by that? Is s/he trying to send me some kind of message?” In a similar way, a deprecating remark that would be treated as a joke among staff colleagues can be taken very seriously if it is made by the dean, provost, or president. People frequently assume that administrators (particularly new administrators whom they don’t know very well) only make jokes about things that they really mean. For this reason, your words may begin to take on nuances you had never intended. Be particularly careful about situations in which you can be perceived as

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showing favoritism to a small group of individuals or to be holding others to more stringent standards. For instance, it may have been your custom for years to have a weekly lunch with a colleague on the faculty. Once you are that person's chair or dean, however, even this innocuous custom may start being viewed in a different light. Naturally, you do not need to abandon all of your old friends or to censor yourself every time you are about to speak. But you do need to be aware that your words and actions assume a different importance now because of your position than they did before you assumed these new responsibilities.

**If you were hired into your position from outside the institution, give people plenty of time to “size you up.”**

There are special complications that arise when you are both recently hired into a position and other people's new boss simultaneously. Those who report to you do not yet know you very well, and many of them may be trying to figure out how you will respond in various situations. Since your arrival represents a new beginning for them as well, many members of your faculty and staff may seek to please you, saying what they think you would like to hear rather than expressing a candid opinion. If you propose a new idea, they may express heartier support for it than they actually feel. They may leave their own objections unstated for fear of making a bad first impression. Moreover, since there are so many aspects of your new institution that you do not yet know, people will frequently attempt to get you to see matters from their perspectives, particularly if they were unsuccessful with your predecessor in this regard. For all these reasons, you need to be aware that you cannot always count

on those who report to you to give you objective advice or impressions. Listen to all the opinions that are offered, but rely on your own best judgment before making a decision. Be as clear as possible about the reasons for each decision, so that people will begin to understand your values and the way in which you operate.

**Strive to make a difference, but don't try to accomplish too much too soon.**

It is natural to want to make some changes or introduce new ideas when you have recently started in a posi-

**Your overall goal in your new position should be to learn as much as you can, both about your new responsibilities and about how they fit into the needs of the institution as a whole.**

tion. You may feel that you were offered your position largely because of the innovations you are expected to bring about. You may believe, too, that there will be only a short “window of opportunity” available during which you can effect substantive changes. You may be afraid that, if you don't act now, people will soon settle back into their old patterns and you will be unable to bring about the improvements you believe are necessary. These are understandable concerns, and you certainly don't want to squander the opportunity you've been given to demonstrate significant leadership. Nevertheless, always try to balance your desire to make a dif-

ference in people's lives with an understanding that most institutions function at their highest level when they can absorb change in a predictable manner. A person who is new to his or her position can easily undermine the very innovations that are most important to them by attempting to change too much too soon. If you are perceived as “coming in here and turning everything upside down, not respecting anything we've done before,” you will meet with resistance for every new idea you have for the rest of your tenure. It is almost always best to go a little slowly at first, gain people's confidence, and then build on that confidence as you move forward.

**In general, consider your primary task to be learning as much as possible.**

Your overall goal in your new position should be to learn as much as you can, both about your new responsibilities and about how they fit into the needs of the institution as a whole. You have new colleagues or staff members to work with; spend some time getting to know their individual strengths, areas of greatest needs, and idiosyncrasies. Remember that no one ever objected that a new administrator wanted to understand things too well. You will need all of this knowledge in order to help your area go forward.

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# 10 Recommendations toward Effective Leadership

By Willis M. Watt, PhD

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David W. Leslie, chancellor professor of education at the College of William and Mary, notes that “colleges and universities have presented leadership conundrums...from the most varied perspectives...Yet this vast trove of purported wisdom remains somehow unsatisfying and desperately random” (Wergin, 2007, p. xv). That is to say, despite all that has been written about leadership, the question still remains: What does it take to be an effective leader?

At the risk of being redundant, I wish to share 10 recommendations that I am convinced enhance an individual’s ability to be an effective leader. These principles are based on the concept of “leading in place” as recently popularized by Wergin and Shapiro. Shapiro (2005) states, “Leadership is an action, not a title, and the ability to lead can be found in every person. Each of us must claim our authority to lead at the right time and in the right place” (p. 1).

Here are 10 characteristics that I have found to positively contribute to effective emergent leadership. My suggestions are presented in a David Letterman-ish style, beginning with the least and advancing to the most important.

**Number 10: Follow procedures and adhere to policies. Effective leaders are essentially good followers.** They understand that they are accountable to those in authority. They know it is not a good idea to behave as a lone wolf, but that they must instead keep

their work priorities aligned with the organization’s goal and have an appropriate sense of self-importance. People who lead in place value the necessity of following procedures and adhering to established policies.

An effective leader is a person who can commit to using his or her ability to lead others, perform technical skills, and conceptualize situations, thus helping to ensure goal achievement.

**Number 9: Submit to the authority of others.** Closely related to number 10 is the recognition that we are all under the authority of someone, whether it is a supervisor, director, president, board of governors, or whomever else.

**Number 8: Take risks.** Sometimes it is necessary for leaders to step outside the box, to be innovative. Leaders must be flexible enough to know when it is time to try a new procedure or implement a new policy. For many taking a risk is frightening, but such behavior can be invaluable, benefiting the entire group.

**Number 7: Commitment.** Any person who assumes a leadership role needs to be committed to the group. The group’s vision and mission must be internalized by the leader. An effective leader is a person who can commit to using his or her ability to lead others, perform technical skills, and conceptualize situations, thus helping to ensure goal achievement.

**Number 6: Be proactive.** Covey (1989) points out the need to be proactive. Individuals who assume leadership must take the proverbial bull by the horns and move forward to be successful.

Number 5: Expect conflict. Conflict among people is a natural, inevitable, and constant factor of human interaction. An effective leader expects conflict and is able to manage it in a productive manner.

**Number 4: Tell the truth, but with compassion.** To some degree conflicts occur because people are not able to differentiate between task-related conflict issues and their personal investment in a given situation. Bracey, Rosenblum, Sanford, and Trueblood (1990) point out the importance of truthfulness in leadership. Yet at the same time the leader must compassionately tell the truth (e.g., about a faculty member’s job performance, etc.).

**Number 3: Listen.** Communication plays a vital role in the achievement of interpersonal and organizational goals. Communication is a two-way process. Effective communication requires leaders capable of effective listening. Covey’s (1989) Habit #5, Seek First to Understand, Then Seek to Be Understood, reflects the epitome of effective listening. Ineffective listen-

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ing undermines people's self-esteem, self-confidence, and creativity. Remember, hearing and listening are not synonymous terms.

**Number 2: Love people.** Roger D'Aprix stated that leaders must be "loving in [their] organizational relationships" (cited in Goldhaber, 1993, p. 217). "Loving" in this context means that we acknowledge the value of our coworkers and respect them with the dignity they deserve. We let them know that we care for them whether we like them or not. The bottom line is that individuals must value people and relationships with them if they are to claim their "authority" to lead.

**Number 1:** Check your attitude. I contend that effective leadership begins with a correct mind-set. That mind-set is founded upon an individual's willingness to lead, to serve others. An effective leader desires the opportunity to step up to be involved in controlling not only his or her personal actions, but the actions of those being led. This leadership attitude flows from a reasoned choice; it is a conscious decision to take on the role with all its rights and responsibilities. Amid the natural chaos and interpersonal interactions, effective leaders are able to demonstrate a fixed purpose. Such leadership is determined to ensure not only that personal goals are reached, but more important, that the group achieves its objectives and fulfills its mission. Those who seek to lead in place must be compelled to lead no matter the personal cost.

In closing, allow me to point out that these characteristics are not some magic formula for success, nor do they serve as a 10-step program like the A.A. 12-step recovery program; but when you adopt these

characteristics and their underlying principles, I am certain that you will be a more effective leader.

I agree with David W. Leslie, chancellor professor of education, that there has been a lot of thinking, theorizing, and writing about leadership. Yet I am convinced that we should continue to explore what constitutes

**Amid the natural chaos and interpersonal interactions, effective leaders are able to demonstrate a fixed purpose. Such leadership is determined to ensure not only that personal goals are reached, but more important, that the group achieves its objectives and fulfills its mission.**

effective leadership. In doing so it may be that we can bring greater clarity to what it takes to lead effectively.

Based on what I have shared, I do not pretend that I have answered the question of what it takes to be an effective leader. Hopefully, however, by sharing my thoughts about leading in place, I have added to the wisdom of literature concerning effective leadership.

These characteristics are based on my leading in place for more than 30 years in the academic community. Let me encourage you to take action, to claim your authority to lead when the time comes, in the right place.

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# Where Concept Meets Detail: How to be Neither a Micromanager nor an ‘Absentee Landlord’

By Jeffrey L. Buller, PhD

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Academic administration must be characterized as one of those professions in which no one size fits all. Though there are those who believe that anyone whose Myers-Briggs profile is not ENTJ need not apply for a position of academic leadership, there will always be excellent administrators who are introverts as well as those who are extroverts, administrators who tend to respond emotionally to challenges and opportunities as well as those who invariably respond rationally, and administrators who are terrific visionaries as well as those who are better at building on a foundation already in place. Of all the diverse leadership styles that are possible, however, there are two that most people would regard as the least effective and that are most likely to cause rebellion among those who report to such leaders.

Unfortunately, both of these personality types are all too common among academic leaders.

- The micromanager is the administrator who not only is obsessed with details but also seeks to control those details to a level that is neither effective nor appropriate for the institution. At times, micromanagers refuse to delegate responsibilities that should rightly be assigned to others. At other times they delegate poorly, revising and altering work

that has already been satisfactorily completed elsewhere within the college or university.

- The “absentee landlord” might be thought of as the micromanager’s photographic negative. If the micromanager is obsessed with details, the absentee landlord cannot be bothered by details, even those that are appropriately addressed at his or her level. Sometimes the administrator is physically absent from campus in order to focus on relationships with donors, legislators, or supporters. While these contacts are necessary, they become a problem when they become such a fixation of the administrator that essential decisions on-campus cannot be made. At other times the administrator may be mentally “absent without leave,” either disengaged from his or her primary responsibilities or so visionary that his or her ideas fail to reach the point of practicality.

While these two means of operation differ, they do have one feature in common: they are equally to be avoided by any academic leader who wishes to be successful in his or her position.

Certainly it is true that some administrators are by nature more visionary while others are better at

mastering the details involved in implementing an idea. In addition, some institutions need leaders who are more visionary or more detail-oriented because of the particular problems that the institution has or the particular stage it has reached in its development. Nevertheless, academic leaders may wish to complete the following self-assessment to determine if they may be veering too far in one direction of the continuum that lies between the micromanager and the absentee landlord.

1. When you review work that has been completed by those who report to you, do you find yourself either redoing it or suggesting wholesale revisions on more than a very few occasions?
2. Do you find yourself taking on tasks that most of your colleagues who are in your position at similar institutions have delegated to others?
3. Have you left more than one position that reports to you unfilled for an extended period of time, taking on the work yourself because you simply weren’t satisfied with the quality of the applicants despite an extensive search?
4. Have you justified to more than one person your need to be particularly hands-on after someone expressed surprise that you’ve become involved in an activity that others should rightly have accomplished?
5. Do you find yourself stepping in to complete tasks not in your job description “because no one around here tends to do them or to do them properly”?
6. Do you repeatedly have to refer questions to others that someone at your level in the institution really ought to be able to answer?
7. Have you noticed that people who once came to you for con-

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sultation and to solve problems now appear to be taking their questions to other individuals at your institution?

8. Have several people expressed surprise at finding that you are actually in your office on a normal workday or made ironic statements about your “accessibility”?
9. When people have said that one of your ideas might be impractical, have you ever said or thought something along the lines of “My job is to come up with the ideas. Figuring out how to implement them is your problem”?
10. When one or more of the people who report to you is missing, do you find yourself becoming frustrated that, without help, you “can’t get anything done”?

If you replied “yes” to three or more questions from 1 through 5, you may be displaying the characteristics of a micromanager. If you answered “yes” to three or more questions from 6 through 10, you may be veering too close to what many would regard as an absentee landlord. In either case, your responses suggest that it’s time to reassess your approach to the balance between concept and detail. Of course, one other good indication that you may need to reexamine your management style would be someone either mailing you a copy of this article anonymously or slipping it under your door, with certain phrases “helpfully” highlighted.

If you tend to micromanage, you should realize that you are actually doing your institution a disservice by spending your time redoing tasks that have already been assigned to others. It may be a hard reality to accept, but for 95 percent of all the decisions made at a college or university, it really doesn’t matter if they are done

precisely your way. A document that is phrased in a style different from yours is unlikely to cause serious damage. The room that is configured with the lectern on the wall by the door rather than on the wall by the windows is unlikely to cause the school’s retention rate to plummet. That the academic year calendar begins on August 14 rather than August 21 may seem crucially important now, but it is often merely just a matter of

**It may be a hard reality to accept, but for 95 percent of all the decisions made at a college or university, it really doesn’t matter if they are done precisely your way.**

preference. By focusing your attention on reopening and reconsidering these issues, you are depriving your institution of time that you could have spent with a donor, discussing new funding sources with a trustee or legislator, or promoting your unit in a presentation to a local service organization. You also dilute the impact your voice will have in those 5 percent of cases for which a change really does matter, such as in a gift agreement with a donor, an institutional “match” in a grant proposal, or the phrasing of a policy that could place your accreditation in jeopardy. People stop listening if you tend to intervene too often.

If you err more on the side of the absentee landlord, you should realize that you risk the integrity of your vision by not keeping up with details and campus developments as well as you should. It may be time to get yourself invited to department or staff meetings, not to make a presentation but simply to learn more about the issues affecting the institution. Take

one of those policy manuals or annual reports down from your bookshelf and spend half an hour a day reading it. It does not help you to become a more effective leader if you see yourself as so “visionary” that you treat with contempt “the bean counters” who must then implement your plans. Ask someone knowledgeable about such matters to walk you through a budget line by line, to go over the details of the benefits package offered by your institution, or to summarize your unit’s articulation agreements with other institutions. You don’t have to resort to the level of detail of actually sorting through those old catalogs in your storeroom or choosing the two-shelf as opposed to the three-shelf credenza for the conference room, but you should master enough of the details involved in your unit’s day-to-day function that you can be sure your vision for the future is healthily grounded in reality.

All administrative positions entail the mastery of some details and the development of some visions for the future. It is natural for academic leaders to begin spending their time doing more of what they most enjoy doing and what their talents allow them to do best. Nevertheless, the continuum of detail-orientation versus concept-orientation is one on which no academic leader can afford to veer too closely to either end.

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# Learn to Unlearn: Five Key Belief Patterns That Sabotage Leadership Effectiveness

By Tracey T. Manning, PhD

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Academics are in the knowledge business, and frequently get frustrated when learners don't quickly catch on. A physics professor says in exasperation, "Even at the end of the course, 90 percent of my students still hold on to their intuitive and wrong assumptions about the laws of grav-

In 25 years of leadership development in academic settings and with academics, I've seen five key sets of beliefs/assumptions that, when identified and unlearned, increase leadership effectiveness and self-efficacy.

ity!" A department chair has just given a faculty member constructive criticism. He appears to really absorb the feedback, but then continues the destructive pattern as if he has never heard the chair. In these cases it is as if new knowledge doesn't compete effectively with old learning. Brain research on learning indicates that this is often the case; humans are not "blank slates" to be written upon, but must unlearn old thinking or be-

havior patterns before they can really learn! That leads to the question "What do academic leaders need to unlearn to strengthen their leadership effectiveness?"

In 25 years of leadership development in academic settings and with academics, I've seen five key sets of beliefs/assumptions that, when identified and unlearned, increase leadership effectiveness and self-efficacy. However, because these belief patterns operate like computer software, usually unrecognized and activated only when the situations, people, or tasks faced trigger them, leaders are unlikely on their own to take the steps necessary to stop their habitual responses and learn new ones. This article will first help you expose these belief patterns and then suggest cognitive strategies to unlearn them.

## **Belief pattern #1: mindset**

Ask yourself:

- If you had to choose, would you take more success/validation or more challenge?
- When do you feel the most capable—after a notable achievement or when you've stretched yourself to learn?
- Has a previous evaluation or assessment of your ability somehow shaped your life?
- Do you assume that you can't really change how intelligent you are?

Carol Dweck (2006) believes that answers to these questions indicate either a "fixed" or "growth" mindset. People with fixed mindsets assume that ability is a fixed quantity revealed in performance. They focus on looking good, so they tend to see new endeavors as threatening, give up more quickly when frustrated, and insulate themselves from negative evaluation. In contrast, a growth mindset, assuming that people can improve just about anything through learning and practice, leads to openness to feedback, to seeking and enjoying challenge, to less threat and more appreciation of others' competence, and to resilience in the face of defeat. This is particularly relevant to academic leaders because, according to Lawrence Sternberg's research, competence in most domains results from determined striving rather than from fixed ability.

Fortunately you can change a fixed mindset, sometimes through a blinding flash of insight, sometimes by systematically recognizing and eradicating its remnants everywhere they crop up. For instance, if another attractive new role or responsibility opens up, you might find yourself saying to yourself, "That's just not me" or "I couldn't do that." Your belief that you can't do something resembles the thinking process of Dweck's fixed-mindset participants. A growth-mindset response might be, "I haven't done that before, but I'm willing to learn." In my academic leadership workshops, just helping science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) women faculty and administrators recognize the difference between growth and fixed mindsets gives them constructive perspectives on intelligence and achievement, resulting in both relief and strategies for change. They realize that one of the first things they need

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to change is their performance attribution biases, how they talk to themselves about successes and failures.

**Belief pattern #2: performance attribution biases**

Causal attribution is a persistent, often unconscious mental process that occurs whenever people try to understand why something happened (Kelley & Michela, 1980). It includes attributions of performance—why someone did or didn't achieve a desired result—and is influenced by mindset and other ability beliefs. For instance, faculty are often frustrated by high-achieving yet chronically anxious students, those who assume they'll fail at the next task while everyone else knows that they'll do very well. This probably results from performance attribution biases and can be true for faculty and administrators too. To reveal your own performance attribution tendencies, ask yourself how you've explained a recent success. Was it due to your personal skills and abilities, the hard work and effort you invested, the fortunate circumstances in which you found yourself, or the relative ease of the tasks you faced? Conversely, which is responsible for a recent disappointment you experienced?

You can credit your success to ability, hard work, luck, or task ease, and your disappointing result to lack of ability, inadequate effort, bad luck, or task difficulty. Making stable, internal attributions for success and temporary, external attributions for failure builds self-efficacy in that area. The bad news about attributing your success to effort: you are more likely to be promoted or otherwise recognized if your success seems due to ability rather than to hard work, and so talking about how hard you work may suggest to others that you don't have sufficient ability to do the job.

Though mindset isn't as influenced

by gender, performance attribution processes may be. Patrice Rosenthal (1995) found male leaders more likely to put a positive spin on their successes and disappointments than female leaders, perhaps because of gender stereotypes about how "natural" leadership is for men. Women also may be more likely to dismiss positive feedback if it's incongruent with their beliefs about themselves as leaders and about leadership generally. These examples also illustrate the importance of implicit leadership theories.

In my leadership workshops, I find that even successful, longtime leaders can believe that they're not really competent enough for their positions, a pattern known as the imposter phenomenon.

**Belief pattern #3: implicit leadership theories**

Implicit leadership theories are culturally shared assumptions about the origins of leadership and about how leaders look, behave, and develop (Lord & Maher, 1993). They include common beliefs: Leaders are born, not made. Men are more natural leaders than women. Leadership is a function of having a leadership position/role. Leadership involves charisma, confidence, strength, and power. Leadership means task leadership, not touchy-feely behavior.

These assumptions shape a whole range of leadership-related thought and actions, including leadership evaluation, expectations of supervisors, leadership self-efficacy, and receptivity to leadership learning. Implicit leadership theories help people clas-

sify themselves and others into leader and nonleader categories through comparison with their leader prototype. This becomes very salient for women or other nontraditional leaders when they evaluate themselves—or others evaluate them—by the predominant leadership style in their units. It also applies to new department chairs or institute directors, who are less likely to benefit from leadership development programs if they discount their leadership abilities. In my leadership workshops, I find that even successful, longtime leaders can believe that they're not really competent enough for their positions, a pattern known as the imposter phenomenon.

**Belief pattern #4: the imposter phenomenon**

This imposter phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978) probably results from attempts to reconcile the discrepancy between your accomplishments and your perceived ability, and is affected by biased performance attribution and fixed mindsets that lead to underestimating your competence. Believing that you are less competent than others, that your previous achievements are due to luck, and that you are likely at any moment to be discovered as a fraud has significant negative personal and professional consequences. (See *Academic Leader*, August 2005). The imposter phenomenon pattern has been especially noted in women in predominantly male academic fields and organizations. One consequence of the imposter phenomenon is low leadership self-efficacy.

**Belief pattern #5: leadership self-efficacy**

One of the most self-limiting beliefs academic leaders can hold is that progress and growth are fostered by identifying and working on weak-

nesses in themselves and others. Positive psychology research done by the Gallup organization (Clifton & Harter, 2003) has demonstrated that identifying, developing, and deploying your strengths in the service of the organizational mission increases productivity and morale. People with high leadership self-efficacy (McCormick, 2001) are confident that they can effectively work with groups toward goals, so they challenge and motivate others, build group morale and collective efficacy, reduce group stress, persist towards goals in the face of obstacles, and achieve group goals. Department chairs especially, with more responsibility than power, need both leadership competence and leadership self-efficacy to lead their faculty members.

Strategies for unlearning your own inhibiting belief patterns

- Become more mindful (self-aware) of the presence of these thinking patterns and intentionally challenge your evidence for your usual beliefs/conclusions.
- Critically examine your attributions for success/failure, your standards for excellence, and positive feedback you've may have discounted. Find new, more constructive ways to attribute your performance, practicing until new thinking patterns are stronger than the nonconscious ones.
- Identify your leadership strengths (through reflection, feedback, formal leadership development programs) and increase your leadership self-efficacy.
- Practice approaching new tasks with a growth mindset, emphasizing learning through mistakes and the opportunity to expand your abilities.

Helping others unlearn inhibiting belief patterns:

- Recognize clues to one of the five

key belief patterns in your staff: If someone consistently works harder than seems necessary on tasks, dismisses positive feedback, and/or seriously underestimates her or his ability and potential, help that person recognize the nonproductive assumptions underlying the behavior.

### Department chairs especially, with more responsibility than power, need both leadership competence and leadership self-efficacy to lead their faculty members.

- When your faculty or administrators seem reluctant to take on a new challenge that should be attractive to them, work carefully and thoughtfully to help them identify implicit assumptions behind their reluctance.
- Expand your definition of leadership, and look for leadership potential in nontypical places. Focus leadership development programs and coaching on helping participants to increase their awareness of their cognitive and behavior patterns and their impact.

You can increase organizational effectiveness and reduce stress by challenging these inhibiting beliefs in yourself and others. Beyond knowledge organizations, our colleges and universities can thus move closer to being learning organizations.

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# The Rewards of Our Work

By Roxanne Cullen, PhD

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I recently returned to the classroom after more than two decades of academic administrative work at a variety of levels within the university. Returning to full-time teaching has been a source of much reflection. I am enjoying myself immensely and have put forth considerable effort to incorporate new strategies and techniques to make my teaching more learner centered and more engaging for my students.

Recently, I returned some evaluated compositions to my freshman students. One young man read over his paper, looked up at me with a tremendous smile, and said, “I’m improving!” His sense of accomplishment and progress was so sincere, so hopeful, that I too began to smile. I felt wonderful for the role I may have played in his sense of accomplishment. As I related the experience to a colleague, I found myself saying, “I’m not sure that anything in my administrative work was so fulfilling.” My colleague, who has never taken on any administrative responsibility, nodded approvingly, adding a comment that I hear so often now that I have returned to faculty: “I don’t know how anyone can stand to do administrative work.” My great sense of joy was leading to a new sense of hollowness. Had I wasted the better part of my career doing work that is not appreciated, for which I could find no sense of fulfillment? Where do we derive a sense of accomplishment in administrative work?

Part of the problem in identifying the most satisfying facet of an administrative position lies in the difficulty administrators have trying to explain

what their jobs entail. Job descriptions for administrative posts include impressive-sounding requirements such as “outstanding scholar/teacher with administrative experience;” “creative visionary with proven record of academic leadership;” “must be collegial, respectful, promote collaboration and cooperation;” “must have ability to procure outside funding and assure successful accreditation;” “ability to walk on water preferred but not required.” Yet somehow the day-to-day work never feels as lofty.

One of my department head friends related the story of the time his six-year-old daughter asked him what he did all day. He thought for a minute and said, “Well, honey, I meet with a lot of people.” To which she replied, “What do you meet about?” He thought again and said, “I plan things.” The following night at dinner, after he’d spent a typical day solving one crisis after another, his daughter asked, “What did you plan today?” When he couldn’t think of an appropriate way to explain how he spent his day, she said, “Didn’t you work today?”

The nature of the job does not normally include immediate gains and rewards. Most of the time we are either solving problems—or, as we say in the profession, “putting out fires”—or we are making incremental steps toward long-term change that in the end we may not be around to see. Our biggest accomplishments often become part of a larger system, are transformed over time, and are the result of so much collaboration that it becomes hard to identify them as our own.

Twenty years ago I designed and directed the first open/referral Writing Center on our campus. It remains today an essential component of our writing program, our writing across the curriculum initiative, and our student retention efforts. It is a highly successful operation that affects student performance on a daily basis. But my role as an administrator in the development of that operation was in the background, behind the scenes, once, maybe twice removed from the student interactions that make the center such a valuable source for learning. Like all operations, it has evolved over time; processes have been refined; services have been changed to meet the changing needs of students. The role I played as the director, designing and promoting the center, and the role I later played as department head, providing resources for and supporting the staff and the new director, give me a sense of accomplishment, but it is minimal in relation to the actual function of the operation today.

I began surveying my administrative colleagues, asking them what gave them the most fulfillment in their work. This seemed to be a tough question, but upon reflection, most responded with some special project or initiative that they planned and executed. Those who had been involved with building renovation or procurement of necessary equipment commented on the satisfaction they felt because they had created something tangible, a physical manifestation of the work accomplished, something that people could see.

So much of our work is unseen and somewhat abstract that one can lose sight of its impact. While the influence of a revised transfer equivalency policy is far-reaching and impacts students and the institution in many significant ways, the written docu-

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ment doesn't reflect the tremendous amount of effort and negotiation that it took to create, at least not in the way that a multimillion-dollar library facility or a newly renovated student study center does. In that way, it is not surprising that building renovation ranks high in terms of providing a sense of accomplishment. But whether our accomplishment is a new policy, a new building, a new program, or a new service, we are always working as part of a larger team, which reduces our sense of individual accomplishment.

Trying to identify what was most fulfilling in my years as an administrator, I came up with a laundry list of projects that included new policies,

new programs and services, and new buildings that I had a hand in; but if I had to say what I look back on with the most sense of accomplishment, it would have to be my personal interactions, especially with faculty, when I was able to facilitate something for them or find a project for someone who had become disengaged in order to reengage them in the department, or to promote someone for an award or professional acknowledgement, or to mentor new faculty and aid them in their transition to a new community. And though they rarely expressed themselves with the unabashed sincerity of my composition student, I know that I did make a difference in the lives of many of those I served. Whatever our role is in the academic community of which we are members, the

difference that we can make in the lives of those around us will always be the most rewarding part of our work.

I also think that our administrative belief in planning and working to facilitate a better work environment and better educational experience for our students reflects a remarkable optimism that sustains individuals who are oftentimes expending tremendous energy in work that goes unappreciated. In the words of Ernest Shackleton, "Optimism is true moral courage." The academic administrator who maintains that optimism and continues to believe in a better future is truly a courageous individual.

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## Why New Department Chairs Need Coaching

*By Russ Olwell, PhD*

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### You want me to do what?

For faculty, being asked to step in and consider becoming a chair does not always follow a smooth or particularly well-thought-out process. The request might come during a phone call to an associate dean asking if she needs help while she is out of town for a funeral, or at lunch with a current chair. Most faculty, who have no management or supervisory training, need real support to make this transition, but today's "lean and mean" university structure provides relatively few resources to help them.

Traditionally, new department heads and administrators were hired and then left to sink or swim. Drawn from the ranks of faculty, many new

chairs have virtually no training or resources to draw on in their new role. And as the work of chairs has moved beyond schedules and payroll, the new demands of assessments, program reviews, strategic planning, and mentoring make the job a moving target.

In addition, the institutions in which new chairs and administrators find themselves have changed. Deans, associate deans, and other administrators have crushing demands on their time, including development, grant-writing, and accreditation, leaving less time for answering questions from department chairs, never mind mentoring them.

New chairs can also instantly become cut off from their former colleagues. With few new friends in the

administration and faculty members who may believe they have "gone over to the dark side," new chairs may not have anyone they can trust to run ideas past or to process problems with.

These institutional factors lead us to suggest that new chairs require intensive, one-on-one coaching from someone outside the university chain of command in order to survive and thrive. This kind of help should be part of the new chair and administrator "startup package." Universities that have used these programs report high satisfaction, especially as a means of helping administrators work better to create a more equitable work environment.

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## What a coach can do

Coaches do not have a high profile in the academy. When one thinks of coaching, one often thinks of sports: a figure with a whistle around his neck, barking out orders from the sidelines. However, academics have begun to use coaches to increase job performance, focus on personal goals, or achieve efficiency and job satisfaction.

As a metaphor, coaching has some advantages over mentoring. Unfortunately, while mentoring is valuable in areas such as education and human services, in the academy as a whole it can be taken as a sign of weakness. New faculty might be seen to need mentoring because they are poorly prepared to take on new roles. Women and members of minority groups may not want to be the target of mentoring “help,” as it can make them look as though they cannot cope on their own.

Coaching does not have this baggage. It has some positive association with sports, since athletes, no matter how accomplished, still seek good coaching. In fact, as athletes rise in status, they need coaching more, as each small increment of improvement yields more powerful results. The image of coaching does not mean that the person being coached is weak or lacks training. Coaching is a future-oriented activity, one that does not dwell on past performance except to improve future possibilities.

## Coaches can aid in processing problems

Most coaches specialize in nondirective discussions with clients. This means that clients lay out their goals and values early in the relationship and refer back to them throughout the process. Over time, coaches can zero in on patterns and themes in discussions and can point out when

their clients are getting lost in a maze of their own thoughts.

Coaches do not give people answers but focus on getting clients to think through their options and ideas. Coaching focuses on getting clients to the next steps that can initiate action. Having several options in a situation can help leaders avoid feeling trapped and can keep department chairs from “bunkering” in their office, locking

**In too many places, academic administration has simply become miserable. Budget cuts, layoffs, morale problems, unhappy students, faculty tantrums—all of these take their toll over time.**

the door and avoiding faculty, staff, and students.

Unlike therapists, coaches do not spend an endless amount of time processing issues with clients. Instead, the focus is on generating next steps, some actions that could make a difference today, and on creating a leadership agenda. This kind of help is exactly what many department chairs and academic leaders desperately need. There are too many people in these positions who have good intentions and ideas but little to show for them.

## Making the job of department chair flow

In too many places, academic administration has simply become miserable. Budget cuts, layoffs, morale problems, unhappy students, faculty

tantrums—all of these take their toll over time. Many chairs and other administrators are simply looking to survive, not to thrive.

When new chairs are not happy, their faculty, staff, and students are virtually guaranteed to suffer as a result. For chairs to be successful, they need their job to “flow.” As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes it, flow is a combination of challenge, interest, and skill. If chairs can confront the challenges they face with a sense of capability and can develop plans to tackle their obstacles, the job can move from overwhelming to simply challenging.

But in order to reach this state of administrative “flow,” chairs need tools, skills, and ideas. Coaching has been a promising strategy in helping new chairs and administrators find their feet, get in the game, and try to make significant changes in their workplaces. This is not to exaggerate what coaches can do—not every coach is going to be Phil Jackson, and not every client is going to become an administrative Michael Jordan. But this should not discourage efforts to improve performance through coaching. Sometimes all a new chair might need is a quick huddle and a firm “Get back in the game.”

*Russ Olwell is an associate professor of history at Eastern Michigan University. Currently, he is a visiting Fulbright lecturer at Kyoritsu Women's University in Tokyo, Japan.* ●

# A Practitioner Model for Ethical Leadership

By Rob Kelly

Academic leaders are often called upon to make difficult ethical decisions. From the daily issues of resource allocation to the unexpected misconduct of faculty or students, few ethical decisions are black and white. To deal with such issues, Perin Cohen, an associate professor of psychology at Northeastern University, together with his colleague Donna Qualters, an associate professor of education and the director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Suffolk University, recommends the Awareness, Investigation, and Response (AIR) model (Cohen, McDaniels, and Qualters, 2005), which provides an interdisciplinary framework for reflective ethical inquiry.

Practitioners who use the AIR model are present to, curious about, and responsive to ethical concerns as they arise in everyday situations. As such, AIR practitioners emerge as leaders who embody an ethical tone and set an ethical direction as well as ones who exert an impact through personal and collective works. The underlying AIR process of reflective ethical inquiry is the foundation for individual and shared ethical leadership and leadership training, both of which reduce costly mistakes and enhance productivity (Cohen and Qualters, in press).

The AIR model consists of three elements of ethical inquiry:

- **Awareness**—sensitivity or openness to ethical issues
- **Investigation**—research, analysis, and decision making

- **Response**—taking action based on the findings of the investigation phase

Awareness—acknowledging and identifying an ethical concern—is the most difficult aspect of the process, because people often have trouble distinguishing between the underlying ethical issues and their reactions to them. Making this distinction is essential because “you can’t really investigate, understand, and respond to an issue until you know what it is,” Cohen says.

An important aspect of awareness is understanding the larger context of the issue by reflectively considering one’s assumptions, beliefs, and biases about it. Because it’s often difficult to take a dispassionate view about highly charged ethical issues, it is necessary to create a safe and comfortable environment for reflective inquiry. “One can’t really engage in reflective inquiry if one feels threatened or challenged,” Cohen says. “It is important for AIR practitioners to have an agreed-upon set of ground rules for reflective inquiry, whether the inquiry occurs in the classroom, laboratory, seminar, department, or institution as a whole.

“Ground rules should address issues such as confidentiality, group interaction, goals, and restrictions,” he continues. “Engaging in the AIR process is not intended to cultivate self-righteousness, but rather to help oneself and others better understand the situation, to clarify and refine

ethical thinking, to cultivate institutional trust, and to make wiser decisions that are more caring, compassionate, and appreciative of oneself and others.”

Engaging in reflective ethical awareness in either an individual or collaborative way naturally leads to reflective investigation, which leads in turn to reflective responding. “Investigation involves applying interdisciplinary research tools—such as professional guidelines, stakeholder analysis, and ethical theory—to clarify and refine one’s thinking about the issue,” Cohen says.

How one converts a decision to practical action depends upon the situation. A practical response might include an administrative or educational innovation or a change in research protocol, for example. A direct action may be untenable and the best response might be “self-care,” which could involve “processing the issue with others to alleviate the stress associated with finding oneself in a compromising situation over a period of time,” Cohen says.

Cohen and his colleagues have used the AIR model in a variety of settings, including a university-wide ethics forum, faculty and teaching assistant workshops and trainings, undergraduate and graduate classes, and with students in the workplace (e.g., co-ops, internships, and service learning).

One of the challenges that AIR practitioners sometimes face is the need to immediately respond to an ambiguous ethical issue. The reflective aspect of the AIR process implies that decision making takes more time than it would if one were to simply react. To address this, Cohen recommends pausing for a moment of reflective inquiry (such as with a cup of tea or a trusted friend) or delaying the decision if possible. He also rec-

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ommends reflective inquiry into a decision after the fact by asking questions such as:

- What was going on here?
- What were the issues?
- Did I really understand everything?
- What were my assumptions about what was going on?

“The AIR process engenders ethical leadership,” Cohen says. “Ethical leadership emerges out of individuals or groups practicing reflective ethical inquiry. AIR practitioners are also ethical leaders who set an ethical tone and direction and who have a beneficial impact through their work at all levels of the academy.”

Cohen, P., M. McDaniels, and D.M. Qualters. 2005. AIR Model: A Teaching Tool for Cultivating Reflective Ethical Inquiry, *College Teaching*, 53, (3), 120-127.

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# The Balancing Act: Managing the Chair’s Role as Teacher, Scholar, and Administrator

By K. Denise Bane, PhD

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I have just completed my first year as division chair. To say that it was a “learning experience” filled with “teaching moments” is putting it mildly. I had no idea what I was getting myself into! In addition to the normal duties of chair, my division was moving to a new building, the college was working on its accreditation self-study, we began collective bargaining, we added two new members to the division, we conducted a search for an additional new member, and I taught a fully online course for the first time.

How did I do it all? I’d like to say that I have learned the secret to balancing the teacher, scholar, and administrator roles of my position. I’d like to say that, but it simply is not true. I found, in this first year, that I spent almost all of my time on the “administrator” role. Teaching and scholarship came in a very distant second and third. I’d like to share my thoughts about what I wish I had done and what I plan to do in the future.

## Just say “no”

Easier than it sounds, especially when the person asking is a dean, vice president, or president, but sometimes the best thing you can do for yourself and your division is to say “no” to new commitments so that you can focus on the ones you have already made.

## Top five

I have learned that I tend to work better when I have a “to do” list; however, I never get through all the items on the list because of meetings, classes, interruptions, and so on. So I have started creating a list of the five most important things that I want to accomplish each day. I feel a much greater sense of accomplishment at the end of the day, and it forces me to prioritize.

## Get help

I have been extremely fortunate to be blessed with a secretary sent from the heavens! She has access to my Outlook calendar, and she prints a

copy of my schedule each morning and leaves it on my desk. She is also able to schedule appointments for me. She answers my phone when I am out and sends me an email summary of any calls that I have missed. I’m not sure that I would be able to be as effective without her. Not everyone has a terrific secretary, but try to establish a good working relationship with whomever you have.

## Delegate

This goes hand-in-hand with having a terrific secretary. Being division chair does not mean that you have to do everything yourself. This is a particularly hard lesson to learn for those of us who are perfectionists and control freaks! What can you ask others to do? In our division, each discipline has a coordinator. I have asked my secretary to reroute all discipline-specific issues to the appropriate coordinator. This frees me up to deal with those issues that truly af-

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fect the entire division. Along these same lines, the chair does not have to be the division representative at every meeting. Ask for volunteers among your division colleagues.

### Schedule time for scholarship

This is one of those tips that I plan to start implementing next year. I am going to schedule time to write and conduct research. I will actually schedule this time in Outlook. The “trick” is to keep the commitment to myself the same way I would keep it to others. That means that if I say that I will devote 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. each day to scholarship, I need to hold that time sacred. If someone asks to meet during that time, I can say I already have an appointment (rather than “that’s my writing time”). I know that the only way this will work will be to spend this time outside my office, not in it. If I try to work in my office I will inevitably be interrupted.

### Revise your teaching

This will be another challenge for me. I simply do not have the same amount of time to devote to my classes that I had in the past. So how can I maintain my integrity in the classroom while maintaining my sanity? First, I will take a course release rather than a course overload as compensation for my work as chair. More money is not as valuable as more time. I will examine the assignments I require so that students are getting the same quality of education but are not generating the same quantity of assignments to be graded. I will consider group projects, oral presentations, and different exam formats. I will try not to schedule brand-new preps for the spring semester, so that I have the summer to prepare for new material.

### Schedule “artist’s dates”

This idea comes from *The Artist’s Way*, by Julia Cameron, one of the oft-cited self-help gurus. It truly is important to schedule time for yourself, by yourself, each week. She calls this spending time with your inner “artist.” This is separate from the time you spend on scholarship, teaching, and administrative duties.

Often you have so much on your plate that something is going to fall off. If you have made too many commitments, you can either continue to disappoint yourself and others or you can admit that you took on too much and give up something.

Do something fun, something that you find interesting. Visit a museum, go for a walk in the park, take a drawing class, practice the violin—it doesn’t matter. Just do something that takes you away from your work and is focused entirely on you. Personally, I practice my ukulele! Research on both stress management and creativity suggest that this time away from work can bring positive results including stress reduction, increased creativity, and increased productivity when you do return to work.

### Recognize your limits

Often you have so much on your plate that something is going to fall off. If you have made too many com-

mitments, you can either continue to disappoint yourself and others or you can admit that you took on too much and give up something.

### Develop systems

According to another self-help guru, Susan Silver (*Organized to Be Your Best!*), a system is merely tools plus habits. There are several great time management tips, techniques, and tools out there, but they will all be wasted if you do not actually use them regularly. The key is to try something new, see if it seems like it would work for you, and then make a conscious effort to use that new tool regularly until it becomes a habit. Once you develop new habits, you are on the way to creating a more balanced life.

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# Study Identifies Five Most Helpful Experiences for Moving from Faculty to Department Chair

By Rob Kelly

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Inadequate preparation, unrealistic expectations, and increased workload can be overwhelming for faculty members making the transition to department chair. Brenda Coppard, chair of occupational therapy at Creighton University, found this transition “just a little mind boggling” and decided to focus her research on it.

Coppard chose a grounded theory approach to answer the questions, “What experiences do first-time chairpersons perceive as meaningful in transitioning from a faculty to a chair position?” and “What are the principle factors associated with the process of transitioning from a faculty to chair position?”

Coppard compiled a list of current department chairs in occupational therapy departments at four-year institutions throughout the country and decided to conduct extensive interviews with four relatively new chairs. “I wanted to speak with fairly new chairs so that the [transition] experiences were still fresh in their minds, but I didn’t want them to be too new because I wanted them to have gone through the things that normally happen in the cycle of a year, such as budgeting,” Coppard says.

The group of four chairs was varied: two chairs were at private insti-

tutions, and two were at public institutions; two were internal hires, and two were external. Before the interviews, Coppard collected their CVs and listed each activity on a separate note card. Coppard had each chair rank these activities in order according to those that helped most prepare them to be chair to those that helped least.

The activities that were the most helpful in preparing them to be chair were

- completing a doctoral degree
- teaching experience
- committee work
- involvement in university governance
- involvement in national associations.

The activities that were somewhat helpful in preparing them to be chair were

- scholarly presentations and publications
- strong clinical experience (because occupational therapy is a health care profession)
- chairing committees.

The following activities had no benefit at all:

- service work external to academia
- early clinical experience.

In addition, Coppard talked with these chairs about the formal preparation they had for the chair position and things that would have helped them in this transition. She came up with the following three factors that affect this transition:

- external environment—the institution’s values, credibility, and support
- internal environment—the chair’s values, identity, attributes, and philosophy
- resources—orientation, mentoring/ networking.

“The most ideal fit for a person getting into a chair position would be that the resources and internal and external variables are aligned with each other. I found, for example, a couple of chairs who had different values than their institutions’ values. Interestingly, they are no longer chairs,” Coppard says.

One of these chairs was at a state land grant institution, where getting grants and doing a lot of publishing were the top priorities. This chair had difficulty with that because teaching was her top priority, and she didn’t get as many grants as her dean expected, “so there was some tension,” Coppard says.

Another chair was good at getting grants and was very active in national and international organizations, and therefore traveled frequently. But this was at a liberal arts institution, where the dean did not want the chair to be away from campus so much. “When the values of the institution and personal values don’t mesh, something’s got to change, and usually the institution isn’t going to change its values to fit. I think this was a big reason why one of the chairs was asked to step down,” Coppard says.

A common refrain from these chairs was how their institutions did

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not talk with them about their values. “I think some institutions are so desperate to hire chairs that they may not think those value differences are a significant problem. One recommendation both for the person who’s seeking a chair position and for administrators seeking to hire chairs is to talk about values and to make sure there’s a match or if not a match to figure out how to come to a consensus on how to resolve these value differences,” Coppard says.

The biggest change in the subjects’ work was in how they spent their time. As faculty members their time was private, and they had more autonomy in how they spent their time. As chairs, they lost some of that au-

tonomy and had to be more available to the administration, faculty, and students.

They also talked about the difficulties of the changes in their relationships with colleagues. “If they were internal candidates, they went from peer to supervisor. Colleagues would try to take advantage of that friendship,” Coppard says.

The time commitment of being a chair was significantly higher than that of a regular faculty member for participants in this study. Each reported that they spent less time with family and friends and pursuing scholarly activities after becoming chair.

Surprisingly, the participants in this study did not talk about the rewards of being chair. “No one said, ‘I get

recognition’ or ‘This is rewarding,’ which is interesting. I don’t know if it was because they had less than four years experience and were still caught up in the evolution. It may be a possible area that administrators need to think about. How do we reward chairs?

“I think the rewards are more internal than external—seeing curriculum changes, seeing students graduate, being successful in mentoring new faculty to get a grant. That’s sort of what keeps me in my job. As academics we like the challenge. When it is still challenging, we might not realize we’re in it for certain rewards, but more like, ‘I’ve got to succeed. I’ve got to make this happen,’” Coppard says. ●

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## Academic Leadership Qualities Include Good Listening Skills

By Rob Kelly

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**H**ow do you come across to the people you work with? Do what you say and how you say it send mixed messages? Are your actions consistent with your words? Do you listen intently? Do you acknowledge others’ ideas? All these questions are important for any leader, and answering them honestly can help you become a more mindful leader, says Florence Richman, special assistant to the president for academic growth at Northern Virginia Community College.

Richman, a former dean of nursing who also has a background in corporate leadership, recommends that leaders work toward becoming more

mindful—engaging with what others are saying and “being present in the moment” rather than leading with one’s own preconceived ideas about the way things ought to be.

This is particularly important in academia, where input from all levels goes into the decision-making process; whereas in the corporate environment, leaders can be more authoritarian.

“Faculty are very powerful. They can get rid of a dean or even a president if they want to. It would be very misguided not to utilize all the talents you have in being engaged and really listening to your followers,” Richman says.

Failing to listen intently or giving the impression that you do not take input from others seriously can suppress good ideas as well. “Some people in a group may be silent, not because they have nothing to say but because they might feel or interpret that they are not heard. What’s the effect of that? The division or group could lose out possibly on a wonderful bit of information or idea from a possible contributor who is silent,” Richman says.

Some of the skills of being a more mindful leader are basic “Communication 101” skills such as acknowl-

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edging others' ideas by saying, "What I hear you saying is . . ." nodding, maintaining eye contact, or asking for more information, Richman says.

But mindful leadership goes well beyond giving the impression of being a good listener. It also requires that you become more reflective about your communication and the messages you get from others.

"After communicating, you've got to step back and ask, 'What was said? How did I come across? Did I truly communicate my goal, my ideas, my intent?' These are really simplistic notions, but to really implement them into our everyday lives is another story," Richman says.

The method of engaging in this type of reflection is up to the individual. Options include taking a few moments after a communication session to think about what transpired, keeping a journal, or even asking a

trusted colleague to give his or her impressions.

When you reflect, you don't have to sit quietly. You can simply jot down what you heard, how you practiced listening and mindfulness, and any reflective thoughts you have about the communication. By keeping a journal, you can monitor your progress; however, Richman cautions, progress will not be automatic.

"We're not always one hundred percent all the time. It depends on the situations that come up. Keeping a journal and constantly practicing can be tough at first. As you keep practicing—it is practice—you will improve."

Here's an exercise that can help get you in the proper frame of mind to reflect on your communication: "Take a raisin. Look at it in your hand. What does it look like? What does it feel like? Place it on your tongue. How does it feel on your tongue?"

Move it around in your mouth. Chew it. What is its texture like? That's being mindful to every detail," Richman says.

The same concept can be applied to communication: "Am I really looking into the person's eyes? Am I really hearing what they're saying? Is their body language matching what they're saying? Are they just being diplomatic and agreeing, or do they really agree?"

Getting a second opinion from a trusted colleague can help you become more aware of your communication skills and habits. "After a meeting I might say to the dean, 'How do you think that went? Do you think I communicated what I needed to? Do you think I heard what the group had to say?' I ask for honesty.

"You've got to be open to the risk of changing your practices and your thoughts and maybe hearing some critical words," Richman says. ●

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## Look Before You Leap: Transitions from Faculty to Administration

By Cheryl Achterberg, Ph.D.

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**T**he leap from a faculty position to one in administration is full of risk. When this transition fails, faculty and their universities lose a great deal of time, training, resources, and opportunity. Few of us can afford such losses.

The 10 issues listed below are often stumbling blocks in such transitions. All 10 pertain to a change in work style that affects management and leadership in dramatic ways. A discussion of these points may help candidates, mentors, and search

committees determine the readiness of a faculty member to pursue a position as department head or associate dean.

**Working hours** — Administrators usually need to be in the office from 8 a.m. until 5 p. m. for meetings, drop-in visitors, and other events that can be scheduled at any time; private work hours generally extend beyond those. Also, administrators routinely have public events to attend on evenings and weekends. If family or

other demands prohibit such a schedule, then administration might be ruled out until circumstances change.

**Public accountability** — This is one of the more difficult transitions. People need to know where you are and how to reach you every working hour of the day. There are no secrets in terms of your calendar, nor is there much personal control!

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**Frequency of surprises** — There are constant interruptions and changes in plans. It makes for an unpredictable work schedule. Flexibility is key, both intellectually and emotionally. Can you tolerate it?

**Pressure points** — An administrator has to be tolerant of pressure coming from many directions at once. Semester schedules and grant deadlines are still considerations, but add to these alumni weekends, visits with major donors, promotion and tenure decisions, football games, board issues, personnel problems, space arguments, parking, and more. Financial pressures overlay everything, and personnel issues never seem to go away. Is that OK with you?

**Multitasking** — Administrators need to be able to “turn on a dime” in terms of priorities, shifting workload, and meeting unexpected deadlines. There is never the luxury of working on only one project at a time. A good administrator can shift full concentration from one thing to another instantly, but still keep everything moving forward at once. It is like fighting a war on many fronts. Are you prepared for this?

**Working with staff** — Most faculty have little experience working with staff as most are, by definition, self-reliant. Administration demands a certain yielding of control, relying on others to get things done. A person who prefers to do it herself might rethink administration as a career option. Administrators also need to work as a team with staff, respecting and leveraging their skills to maximize efficiency and effectiveness while maintaining good interpersonal relations. Do you have this skill?

**Reporting lines** — Most faculty are unfamiliar with “being a boss.” Having to conduct lengthy, written annual reviews of staff takes some getting used to. Hiring and firing are also part of the job. Learning, re-

There is never the luxury of working on only one project at a time. A good administrator can shift full concentration from one thing to another instantly, but still keep everything moving forward at once.

specting, and knowing how to use chains of command is essential too, along with organizational policies and law (on worker’s compensation, pregnancy issues, retirement, etc.).

**Voice changes** — The administrator is no longer heard as a faculty member (first big lesson), but rather as the voice of the organization. Even a raw, brainstorming idea may be taken as new policy if not properly packaged (second big lesson). The personal voice is often lost. What is not said becomes as important as what is said.

**Information management** — One of the biggest challenges for any administrator is the shift in the depth, breadth, and amount of information that must be processed. The e-mail load will instantly triple, but getting the information you want may be

more difficult. Information organization (and retrieval) skills are critical. Decisions almost always are made on partial information. Knowing what to act on and when is key.

**Strategic and pragmatic thinking** — Administrators have to “get it done.” Vision is important, but no more so than planning, execution, and follow-through. A good administrator will be comfortable moving back and forth between the abstract and the concrete and passionate about doing both.

Some of these skills will improve with experience, but most of these transitions require a certain mindset to make them work. Determining if that mindset is present before embarking in a department head or dean’s job will be to everyone’s benefit.

*Cheryl Achterberg, Ph.D. is dean of The Ohio State University College of Education and Human Ecology. ●*

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# Translating Teaching Skills to Leadership Roles

By Rob Kelly

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On the surface, the skills it takes to be a good professor would not seem to translate very well to academic leadership positions. But the similarities between a good seminar teacher and a good department chair or committee head are striking, says Elizabeth Boylan, provost and dean of the faculty at Barnard College. Faculty need to recognize this, and institutions need to be more intentional about developing these skills in their faculty.

“Being in ‘the administration’ is considered by many faculty to be a bad and ugly thing, and many shy away from taking on leadership roles because they don’t think they have been trained to do it. We need to help faculty understand that they have more skills than they know they have,” Boylan says.

Consider the following skills it takes to be a good seminar teacher and how they might apply to a leadership role outside the classroom. A good seminar teacher understands

- the importance of pacing and organization;
- that the seminar is about the learner, not the teacher;
- the importance of being prepared and of setting the tone and expectations;
- the importance of using the ideas that students bring to the table rather than talking at them;
- that the teacher’s main role is to serve as a resource, sending students off to places for them to gather their own material, which

they then bring in and work with.

Although not all leadership abilities can be developed by becoming an exemplary seminar teacher, framing leadership this way helps faculty see that just like in the seminar, they don’t have to have all the answers. Faculty leaders do need to have and maintain the trust of members of the department or committee, and that takes managing the process of group work. It means that they have to be prepared, respectful of participants’ time, and clear about participants’ responsibilities. They should aim to draw out the best from members of the group and derive a substantial amount of their own sense of personal achievement from what the group has done together. These capacities can be quite easily mapped back to the skills and attitudes that characterize the effective seminar teacher.

To give faculty leaders some specialized skills, Barnard is planning to devote a portion of the regular department chair meetings to short, optional workshop-like discussions on topics such as handling interpersonal conflict, managing departmental governance, and supporting the development of faculty to assume leadership roles. “We’re working from a set of skills faculty feel they own and showing them how they can expand them into being an effective leader,” Boylan says.

Another important part of develop-

ing knowledgeable leaders is Barnard’s manual for department chairs. “We deliberately gave a copy to every faculty member so that they would know what the chair is and should be doing. We didn’t want to have secret information that only the chair knows. We wanted to have the information about how to hire a faculty member, how to set up search committees, and what the tenure guidelines are available to all the faculty. It serves as a department chair manual and also in a faculty development function in a broader sense in that everybody knows what a chair and the rest of the faculty should be doing through all these faculty governance issues and processes,” Boylan says.

The manual also takes the mystery out of the role of department chair for faculty who may be department chairs in the future.

It is important to be intentional about leadership development because academic leadership is not limited to department chairs and administrators. For example, faculty members often need to take the lead on institutional grants and interdisciplinary programs. Grants require faculty to work with outside agencies, develop budgets, and write reports.

Interdisciplinary programs often require faculty to develop curricula, administer budgets, and work with a diverse group from different disciplines. At Barnard, certain interdisciplinary programs can be a lot more complicated than small academic departments because these programs must borrow full-time faculty from different departments. (Each faculty line belongs to a department, not an interdisciplinary program.)

Boylan sees her role in developing leaders as matching faculty members’ skills with the institution’s needs. “My job is to find ways that best match what a person is capable of

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and has a predisposition for and what the college needs in the way of teaching, research, and service. I don't expect every faculty member that we tenure to be a charismatic leader. What I do expect is that everybody is able to contribute to the overall func-

tioning of his or her department and then ultimately the college in an important way.

"I am always searching for ways to develop the confidence of faculty members in their own abilities to take on larger and larger leadership roles. It helps that we are a small college and I know all the full-time fac-

ulty. I serve on a lot of committees and see them in action a lot. I hear from other people and their chairs who give reports back on things. I think we have a good idea of and need for the contributions of these folks. It's a matching exercise," Boylan says. ●

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# The First 1,000 Steps: Walking the Road from Academic to Administrator

By Andy Curtis, Ph.D.

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"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Chinese proverb

In an article in the *Academic Leader* Cheryl Achterberg wrote, "The leap from a faculty position to one in administration is full of risk," echoing C. Kristina Gunsalus on "surviving the jump from faculty to administrator," in an earlier *Academic Leader*. Having recently completed my first 1,000 days and nights as the executive director of a Canadian university English-language school, I can see what Achterberg and Gunsalus meant.

Going from being a tenure-track professor at a prestigious American graduate school to leading and managing a language school at one of Canada's highest-ranked universities has been tremendously challenging but also very rewarding. Although there are some similarities, such as the importance of time and task management both as a teacher and as an administrator, there are a larger number of differences, many of which my academic training did not fully prepare me for (see also Curtis, 2005).

The Queen's University School of

English in Ontario is one of the oldest schools of its kind in the country and is entirely self-funded. We have a staff of 25 to 30 part-time and full-time administrative staff, teachers, and student assistants working on up to 10 different programs and courses every year with international students from more than 30 countries. It has been an intense and challenging three years, during which time I have kept copious notes. However, many of the lessons I have learned go against commonly accepted beliefs.

## Contradictory Learning Points

### 1. Consensus is not necessary.

Given the tremendous importance placed in so much of the literature on obtaining consensus, to state that it is not necessary might seem almost heretical in some management guru circles. However, academic institutions are generally made up of groups of intelligent and articulate people, most of whom are well-informed and have strong opinions. Therefore, consensus is highly unlikely.

I once asked a group of staff to look out the window and to each write a

single sentence describing the weather they could see. I collected the anonymous statements and read them out loud. Even within a small group, the descriptions ranged from "a great day, bright and sunny" to "oppressively hot and humid." I explained that, based on their different perspectives on the same scene, it could take us all day to reach consensus on the weather. So what makes us think we can reach consensus on anything important?

Cooperation and collaboration are essential, just as it is essential to give staff the opportunity to express their concerns and for them to know that their voices have been heard by senior decision makers. But consensus is often neither necessary nor possible.

### 2. Aim for maximum redundancy in the minimum time.

This may go against the grain even more than my first contradictory learning point. But I have found that, instead of securing my position and ensuring that I can keep it for as long

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as possible, I have achieved much more by training and developing, coaching, and mentoring the less experienced administrative staff so that they are able to take on more and more of the higher-level decision making competently and confidently. It has been pointed out to me on several occasions that if I am highly successful in this, I might soon be unnecessary, to which I reply, “Great!” Although there are many differences between the academic and administrative professional lives, this is an area of similarity, i.e., as a teacher, I know that I have created a successful task when I can leave the classroom and the course participants are so engaged in the task that they do not notice that I have gone. One of the most important roles of all leaders is to prepare their successors so that the organization can run smoothly without them.

### **3. Invest as much as possible in professional development for all.**

Although many academic institutions claim to be committed to professional development, there is often little evidence of this beyond the mandatory appraisals required for promotion, tenure, etc. This is partly a result of limited funding, but it is also due to a sense that administrative staff may not need as much developmental support as academic staff, which may not be true. The notion of “teacher as reflective practitioner” is now well established, but rarely do we hear the phrase “administrator as reflective practitioner.”

One of the more unusual aspects of our school is that every staff member—all teaching and all administrative staff—makes a commitment to engage in ongoing professional development. Some of this is provided by the university, at no cost to the school, but some is provided by commercial training agencies that the

school pays. Although we no longer have annual performance appraisals, all staff at the school are required to set professional goals and to regularly review their progress toward attaining those goals. This has helped to promote and develop a more professional and more reflective administrative support staff.

### **4. There are no prizes for good administration.**

This may seem obvious, but all the institutions I know celebrate teaching excellence with some kind of award or other forms of recognition. Having taught more than 50 different courses at a dozen universities and colleges in half a dozen countries, I received a number of teaching awards. This was partly because I enjoyed so much being a part of the positive development of international students, sharing in their successes and failures, and seeing them on graduation day, knowing I helped them get there. But in administration, especially at the senior levels, few teachers tell their students to make an appointment to see the director because the student is doing so well. Usually, it is for some kind of reprimand. This is one of the reasons that I have worked so hard to get back into the classroom, even if for only a few hours a week to teach one elective course. However, the sense of satisfaction—of being appreciated—that teachers experience at the end of a successful lesson is much rarer for administrators. Perhaps if universities and colleges were to start giving awards for good administration in the same way they do for good teaching and/or good research, this would help create that same sense of achievement.

### **5. Don’t say “Yes.” Don’t say “No.”**

In spite of being trained as an academic to give clear, concise answers, as an academic leader, I have learned that it is often more important to meet questions with questions and to avoid

agreeing or disagreeing, accepting or rejecting. Although this can be frustrating for staff who bring me potential problems and difficult decisions and who want a quick, clear “yes” or “no,” experience in this role has taught me to always look for what I call “the third way.” Edward de Bono became famous in the 1970s for his work on lateral thinking and creativity. In his book *Po: Beyond Yes and No* (1972), de Bono claimed that “No” was the basic tool of the Logic System, that “Yes” was the basic tool of the Belief System, whereas “Po” was the basic tool of the Creative System. Although I have not yet had to resort to making up words, de Bono’s work has helped me learn to resist the temptation and the pressure to come up with a response to an apparent yes/no, can/cannot, possible/not possible dichotomy and try instead to find at least one more possible response and an alternative pathway.

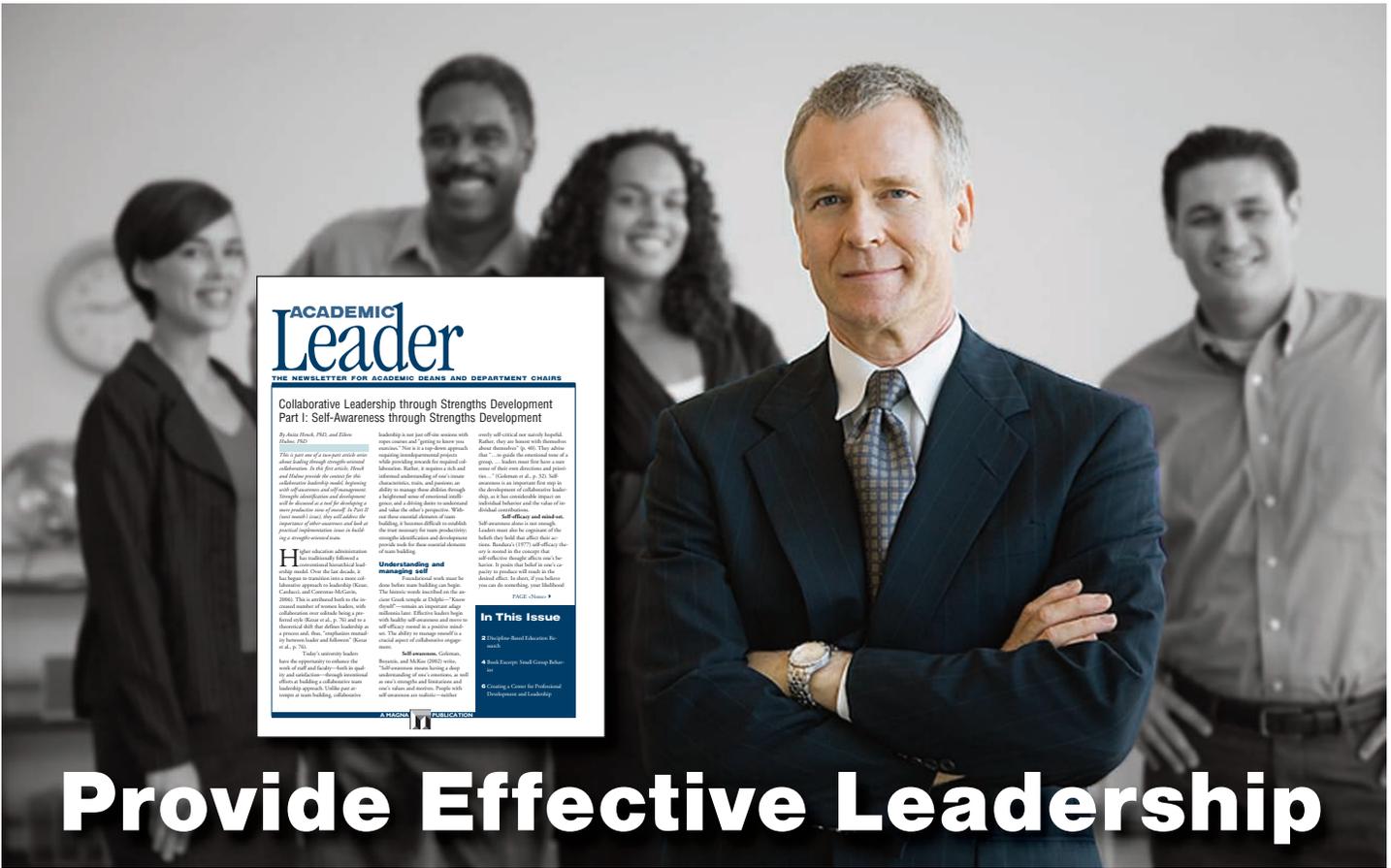
## **Conclusion**

Luckily, I work with staff who ensure that I am constantly learning and regularly stepping back from what I do, to consider and reconsider why I am following this particular course of action, to see how it might be done differently and hopefully better next time. Moving from “teacher as reflective practitioner” to leading and managing reflectively has been perhaps one of the greatest challenges of this first 1,000 days and nights, but it has also been tremendously rewarding.

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