The Roles and Challenges of Deans

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Demands from superiors (administrators and boards of regents/trust-ees), constituents (faculty and students), and benefactors (taxpayers, legis-lators, and endowers) blend to create a turbulent environment in which deans must thrive. Because the success of a college depends on the interac-tion of all its players, these special interest groups will shape a dean's role (Rhoades, 2000). For instance, when dealing with a college's faculty, the dean may serve as a "buffer . . . from the university's intrusion upon and usurpation of [the faculty's] professional autonomy" (Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1999, p. 81). Or, in an administrative context, a dean may be called upon to act as persuader, negotiator, or arbitrator, convincing faculty to endorse central administration policy. Paramount to a dean's survival,

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then, is the ability to maintain the equilibrium between his or her value systems and the situations that present themselves.

The deanship of today must accurately reflect the face of the college's populace and the external environment with which it ultimately interacts. Even as modern organizations seem to be moving away from the industrial, manager-and-employer model (Rhoades, 2000), leading colleges and universities continue to require "eminently rational solutions to a massive problem of human and technological organization" (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, & Snoek, 1964, pp. 4–5). Indeed, deans, along with other university leaders and administrators, must make the parts and functions of the university fit with the appropriate behavior of its members. The conundrum, of course, is that such a task pits interest group against interest group, which results in frustration for its leaders. Given this juggling act, it seems inevitable that deans ask, "What does it *really* take to get the job done?"

To get at what it takes, it is necessary to understand what it is that deans do. It is also important to look at the interconnections between their current tasks, role conflict and ambiguity, and the tasks that deans perceive as their greatest challenges in the near future. These areas of interest were explored in a larger study, the National Study of Academic Deans (NSAD) (Gmelch, Wolverton, Wolverton, & Hermanson, 1996), conducted in 1996 through the Center for Academic Leadership at Washington State University.[1] Study participants experienced both role conflict and ambiguity to some extent as they went about their tasks as deans. Further, as they made clear, many of their current roles will be sources of challenges in the future. In this paper, we postulate that deans will view these challenges as either opportunities or threats to the viability of their colleges and that unconstrained conflict and ambiguity will lead to the latter rather than the former. We conclude by discussing the ramifications of this speculation and pose

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suggestions for easing the burden of the deanship from personal, administrative, and positional perspectives.[2]

Deans' Roles Yesterday and Today

The academic deanship in American universities has evolved considerably since its meager beginnings in the 1800s. The chief function of the dean of Harvard's medical school in 1864, for example, was to maintain "friendly and charitable intercourse with the students" (Dill, 1980, p. 263). Academic deans in the 1960s focused on the ends and means of higher education in the institution, the teacher-scholars or scholar-teachers of the faculty, the academic program and its recipients, and academic budgets (Dibden, 1968). By 1980, deans were academics disguised as managers dealing with extraordinary circumstances (such as student protests), budget items (salaries and operating expenses), curriculum and program development, and faculty personnel issues (resignations, replacements for retirements, and tenure failures) (Scott, 1979). They engaged in strategic planning, fund raising, and developing and meeting institutional and external accountability measures—each managerial addition creating additional challenges for deans (Dill, 1980).

In the 1990s, the breadth of the dean's roles expanded to include representing the university within the community and recruiting diverse faculty and students from previously underrepresented groups (Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999) as well as becoming political advocates and solicitors of influence from college-outsiders, such as legislators and potential donors (Gardner, 1992). Today, the academic dean is involved with the college, its external constituents, the president, the faculty, and the curriculum in many ways different from other institutional members (Fagin, 1997). Evolving roles are constantly juggled as the constituents and their demands change. The ability to reconcile disparate demands, Fagin (1997) notes, is related to "the individual's clarity of what others see and value, recognition of the vital aspects of the role and responsibilities of dean in a particular university, and a honed balancing act" (p. 97).

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[2]*The Changing Nature of the Academic Deanship* (Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez, & Nies, 2001) discusses these strategies extensively. Deans also have numerous resources at their disposal that expand on these strategies and others. An appendix to *The Changing Nature of the Academic Deanship*, for example, is rich with resources on diversity, law, technology, finance and budgeting, balance tools, ideas for organizational integrity, and a survival reference library. It also lists other monographs in the ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report Series that provide broadened coverage on related topics for deans and administrators.

ROLES: THEORY, CONFLICT, AND AMBIGUITY

We examined the functions and behaviors (roles) of academic deans today through the filter of role theory. The fundamental proposition of role theory is that behaviors within contexts (roles) are associated with persons who share a common identity (in positions) and who are aware of their roles (by expectations). Roles persist because of their consequences within a larger social system (functions) and, thus, persons must be taught (socialized into) these roles (Biddle, 1979). The integration of roles, positions, and expectations form the basis of this theory (Biddle, 1979; Kahn et al., 1964). Establishing a clear relationship between these elements for a dean is requisite; without it, the role stresses of conflict and ambiguity emerge (Biddle, 1979; Gross, Mason & McEachern, 1958; Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970; Wolverton, Wolverton & Gmelch, 1999).

Role conflict occurs where deans are confronted with "incompatible expectations" (Gross, Mason, & McEachern, 1958, p. 248). The pressures of the position, whether internal or external, will redirect the behavior of a dean and result in stress and disequilibrium (Biddle, 1979; Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo et al., 1970). Caught between the faculty and administration, between students and faculty, or between administration and public, a dean is expected to advocate for opposing sides of issues. Invariably, a dean in such a situation must choose to perform one task at the expense of another, adding to the stress of not being able to fully meet the expectations of his or her superiors or constituents.

Role ambiguity is a second undesirable consequence of position-related pressures. A dean requires certain information to perform adequately in his or her role: what the expectations (rights, duties, and responsibilities) are, what activities must be done to meet the responsibilities of the position and how they are best performed, and what the potential consequences of role performance are (Kahn et al., 1964). Role ambiguity results when information about the scope and responsibilities of a dean's job is inadequate, unavailable, or contradictory. Issues such as change in organization size, growth, technology, personnel, and culture create a complex environment that oftentimes exceeds the dean's "span of comprehension" (Rizzo et al., 1970, p. 155), thus muddying his or her vision of the job. Common reactions to role ambiguity are increased tension and anxiety, hostility or a less favorable attitude toward a superior, and decreased productivity (Kahn et al., 1964). When a dean experiences these reactions, he or she may engage in adjustive and/or maladjustive coping behaviors, such as emotional management strategies, attempting to solve problems by avoiding the stress, or using defense mechanisms that distort reality (Gates, 2000; Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo et al., 1970).

It is within the construct of role theory and, specifically, the consequences of role ambiguity and conflict that we shaped the current study. In this

paper we examine the roles of today's deans, the sources of conflict and ambiguity they experience, and the resultant challenges that they perceive as imminent in the future.

THE STUDY

Deans who participated in the NSAD worked at universities in one of the following three Carnegie classifications—Research, Master's (Comprehensive), or Baccalaureate. We selected 60 public and 60 private institutions randomly from each category, resulting in a sample of 360 institutions. At each institution, we asked deans of the colleges of education, business, liberal arts, and nursing to complete the survey. We purposefully selected these four colleges so that we could compare like deans across institution type. A totally random sample, where deans of law, engineering, medicine, agriculture, and so forth, were included, would have hampered any such comparisons. Our decision to include colleges of nursing in the sampling frame was an effort to increase women's participation, since earlier studies that randomly sampled department chairs resulted in less than 10% female respondents (Gmelch & Burns, 1993).

For this study, we drew NSAD data from the "Deans' Task Inventory" (DTI) (Sarros, Gmelch, & Tanewski, 1998), the "Role Conflict and Ambiguity Questionnaire" (RCAQ) (Rizzo et al., 1970), and an open-ended question about future challenges. To reduce the dimensionality of the data generated by the DTI and the RCAQ, we employed principal components analysis with varimax rotation using the SPSS statistical package. Herein, we report the factor analysis of the DTI but not the factor analysis of the RCAQ, because it served only as confirmation of previous research results (Rizzo et al., 1970). We present the mean scores of the individual RCAQ responses to provide a better picture of what constitutes role conflict and role ambiguity for deans than the two composite factor scores alone reveal. In an effort to assess the strength of the relationship between the deans' perceived roles (DTI dimensions) and role conflict and ambiguity, we also computed Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients across these constructs.

Finally, we conducted a content analysis of the responses to the open-ended question in the survey about future challenges (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994). One researcher pattern-coded the responses while a second researcher verified them, thus providing definitional clarity and contextual agreement to the dimensions (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Pattern-coding qualitative responses is analogous to the numerical data-reducing process in factor analysis; the dimensions derive from the emergence of themes, patterns, and/or explanations from the responses to a given question (Miles & Huberman, 1984). We then compared the challenge groups that emerged

to the dimensions that factored in the DTI for semantic similarity (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994).

DEANS IN THE STUDY

The overall sample consisted of 1,370 deans, with a response rate of 60%. The genders were relatively well balanced: 41% of the responding deans were women. Roughly 12% of the respondents were ethnic or racial minorities, with African Americans comprising more than half of this segment of the sample.

Deans, on average, were 54 years old. Fewer than 10% were under age 40 while fewer than 5% were 65 years or older. The average length of time spent as dean was 5.6 years. Sixteen percent of the respondents had served in their positions for one year or less and only 12.8% had been deans for more than 10 years. Of the respondents, 58% worked in public institutions, 42% in private universities. One-third were deans in research universities, 46% were at comprehensive universities, and the remaining 21% were located at baccalaureate institutions.

DEANS' TASK FACTORS

The factor matrix for the DTI is presented in Table 1. Thirty-one of the 32 statements from the DTI loaded along six dimensions: external and political relations (23.5% of the variance in the data); personal scholarship (8.3%); leadership (6.1%); resource management (4.6%); internal productivity (4%); and academic personnel management (3.9%). The variable "develop and evaluate curriculum" did not load on any of the six role dimensions and was subsequently treated as a unique variable.

The dimensions of resource management, internal productivity, and academic personnel management explained very little of the variance in the data, suggesting essential agreement among deans that these are fundamental roles of their positions. Personal scholarship and leadership accounted for a slightly higher percentage of data variability, indicating some disagreement among deans about the importance of these roles. It is clear that the most controversial part of their work focused on roles that fell within the realm of external and political relations; almost one-quarter of the data's variance was accounted for by this factor.

Ranking the Importance of Deans' Tasks

The ranking of the six task dimensions by mean scores provides an indication of their importance by the deans in this study. Internal productivity ($\bar{x}$ = 4.37, on a 5-point scale with 5 = high, s.d. = 0.43), academic personnel management ($\bar{x}$ = 4.27, s.d. = 0.59), and external and political relations ($\bar{x}$ =

4.16, s.d. = 0.56) were the three highest ranked dimensions. The relatively small standard deviations in these three dimensions indicate a fair amount of agreement among the deans about the primacy of these roles. And, while the mean scores of the remaining three dimensions of leadership ($\bar{x}$ = 3.76, s.d. = 0.66), resource management ($\bar{x}$ = 3.62, s.d. = 0.68), and personal scholarship ($\bar{x}$ = 3.52, s.d. = 0.87) do not reflect the same levels of perceived importance as do the first three, deans do seem to agree on their relative ranking as reflected by standard deviations of less than 1.0 in each case.

The task dimensions and deans' perceptions of their importance provide a clear picture of the work that confronts deans. That deans ranked internal productivity and managing academic personnel as among the most important is a given; the work of a college and its faculty are at the core of the college. Resource management may have been given less importance because of the involvement with, or restriction by, the central university administration. External and political relations accounted for 23% of the variance in the factor analysis, yet it ranked third in importance to deans. This finding may reflect the area of greatest conflict and ambiguity for deans; either they see this dimension as necessary but unapproachable as directed by the administration, or their time constraints may simply preclude involvement. The dimensions of leadership and personal scholarship likewise accounted for significant variance, but still received moderately high importance ratings.

Ranking the Items of Conflict and Ambiguity

The RCAQ sought deans' impressions about role conflict (8 items) and role ambiguity (6 items). They cited as sources of role conflict: working with two or more differently operating groups ($\bar{x}$ = 4.72, on a 7-point scale with 1 = "not true of my job," 7 = "extremely true of my job"), doing things that are accepted by one person and not by others ($\bar{x}$ = 4.38), and receiving assignments without proper resources/materials to do them ($\bar{x}$ = 4.15) or without proper staffing ($\bar{x}$ = 4.14). On the measures of role ambiguity, these deans indicated: they are quite clear in understanding what their responsibilities are ($\bar{x}$ = 5.51 on a 7-point scale, 1 = "not true of my job"; 7 = "extremely true of my job"), how much authority they have ($\bar{x}$ = 4.99), knowing what is expected of them ($\bar{x}$ = 4.67), and knowing what has to be done ($\bar{x}$ = 4.66). In a confirmatory factor analysis, the first six variables in this inventory factored out as the latent construct—role conflict; the remaining six variables loaded on the role ambiguity dimension. This arrangement fit previous research findings (Rizzo et al., 1970).

Relationship between Roles and Role Conflict/Ambiguity

We next examined the relationships between the importance of the role dimensions and role conflict and role ambiguity. The role dimensions of

TABLE 1

PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS ANALYSIS—DEANS' TASK INVENTORY (DTI)

Variable	Varimax Rotated Factor Loadings					
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
External and Political Relations						
Build relationships with external community/stakeholders	.73	.16	.22	.03	.05	-.10
Obtain and manage external funds (grants, contracts, donations)	.68	.02	.15	.21	-.08	.07
Foster alumni relations	.67	.13	.25	.02	.08	-.09
Develop and initiate long-range college goals	.49	.06	.33	-.13	.07	.21
Financial planning, budget preparation, and decision-making	.46	.01	.02	.40	.22	.28
Foster gender and ethnic diversity in the college	.46	.10	.01	.23	.23	.20
Represent the college to the administration	.41	-.08	.11	.02	.21	.28
Cronbach's alpha	.75					
Personal Scholarship						
Maintain own scholarship program & associated professional activities	.07	.88	.09	.11	.04	.05
Remain current with my own academic discipline	-.01	.81	.11	.15	.12	.03
Demonstrate scholarship and model scholarship by publishing and/or presenting papers regularly	.18	.77	.06	.05	.02	.03
Maintain and foster my own professional growth	.04	.70	.06	.17	.33	-.01
Cronbach's alpha		.84				
Leadership						
Solicit ideas to improve the college	.27	.15	.64	.07	.13	.13
Inform college employees of university and community concerns	.07	-.04	.63	-.02	.06	.08
Plan and conduct college leadership team meetings	.32	.11	.63	-.02	.06	.08
Assign duties to chairs and directors	.04	.087	.61	.27	-.07	.38
Coordinate college activities with constituents	.26	.11	.52	.21	.12	-.01
Represent college at professional meetings	.32	.28	.40	.13	.27	-.12
Cronbach's alpha			.76			
Resource Management						
Manage nonacademic staff	.03	.16	.20	.66	.02	-.02
Assure the maintenance of accurate college records	.01	.18	.13	.65	.23	-.06
Manage college resources (grants, facilities, and equipment)	.44	-.03	-.06	.60	-.01	.22
Keep current with technological changes	.17	.25	.18	.44	.17	-.04
Comply with state, federal, and certification agency guidelines	.18	.21	.32	.33	.25	-.02
Cronbach's alpha				.66		

Table 1 (Continued)

Variable	Varimax Rotated Factor Loadings					
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
Internal Productivity						
Maintain effective communication across departments/divisions	.14	.09	.12	.05	.72	.04
Foster good teaching	-.06	.14	.01	.13	.59	.13
Communicate goals/mission to college employees/constituents	.46	-.02	.24	.07	.51	-.02
Maintain conducive work climate (i.e., manage conflict situations)	.06	.07	.11	.11	.46	.36
Encourage faculty, chair and staff professional development activities	.17	.22	.16	.06	.42	.25
Participate in college and university committee work	-.13	.19	.34	.33	.41	-.12
Cronbach's alpha					.65	
Personnel						
Recruit and select chairs and faculty	.07	.01	-.02	-.07	.04	.71
Evaluate chair and faculty performance	.03	.06	.11	.02	.19	.68
Supervise department chairs and directors	-.08	-.03	.32	.38	.02	.46
Cronbach's alpha						.49
Eigenvalue	7.4	2.7	2.0	1.5	1.3	1.2
Percentage of variance accounted for	23.0	8.3	6.1	4.6	4.0	3.9
Cumulative percentage of variance accounted for						49.9

external/political relations and personal scholarship correlated with role conflict, positively (0.095; p = 0.015) in the first instance and negatively (-0.096; p = 0.013) in the second. As role conflict increased, the importance of the external and political relations dimension appeared to increase. This relationship suggests that, if role conflict exists, deans may find it easier to concentrate on activities such as generating support for the college and fund raising. On the dimension of personal scholarship, it appears that, as role conflict increases, the importance of pursuing one's own research and writing decreases, perhaps indicating that deans, when forced to choose, really no longer see scholarship as part of their job. However, while the p-values are significant, they are not highly significant and the correlation coefficients are quite small, which means that the coefficients of determination are minuscule. As a consequence, no causality can be assumed and, in fact, we might conclude that each relationship is a spurious one with little to no meaning. (Role conflict and each of the remaining dimensions do not seem to be directly correlated.)

A more interesting insight can be drawn from the relationship of role ambiguity to all six role dimensions. In each case, the correlation was either moderately or highly significant (from $p = 0.000$ to 0.039) and negative (from -0.080 to -0.171). We conclude here that, when role ambiguity is present, deans may have difficulty determining the roles in which they should engage at any one given time. Ill-defined responsibilities, mixed messages about how much authority deans actually have, unclear or unstated expectations and goals, and a lack of clarity about what is to be done and how much time should be spent doing it leave deans in a kind of leadership limbo.

Role ambiguity develops when information that is vital to the institution's effectiveness is withheld from its players. For instance, a dean who does not receive clear guidelines from his superiors about budget priorities may end up making capricious and indefensible decisions. The ambiguity that the dean experiences can lead to dissatisfaction, anxiety, and ineffectual performance (Rizzo et al., 1970). In effect, universities may be setting up deans to fail.

TOMORROW'S CHALLENGES TODAY

Challenges are roles in the making. They do not go away; they simply become routinized. The addition of new or transmuted roles can consume deans' time, potentially undermining their effectiveness. When we asked deans to list the three greatest challenges they faced in the next three to five years, they listed seven categories of anticipated challenges. These categories are shown below with a sampling of the responses for each group:

1. *Fiscal:* budget and finance, allocation and use of resources, internal and external fund raising.

2. *Administration:* public and legislative accountability, working with top administration, long-range planning, reorganization, community outreach.

3. *Curriculum and program development:* development of curricula and programs, recruiting high quality students, dealing with unprepared students.

4. *Faculty:* recruiting and retaining faculty, dealing with difficult personnel, moving faculty toward change.

5. *Technology:* Distance learning, upgrading technology.

6. *Personal balance:* Balancing personal and professional lives, attaining personal goals.

7. *Diversity:* Ensuring diversity of faculty and student population,

More than 75% of the deans agreed that the fiscal, administration, and curriculum and program development challenges were their three most important challenges. Almost 30% of all respondents to this question rated fiscal challenges number one. Twenty-six percent chose administration first; 20% chose curriculum and program development, and about 14% chose

faculty issues. Fewer mentioned technology (5%), personal balance (3%), or diversity (<2%) as top choices. (The small number of responses on the topic of diversity may indicate either that other issues are more important or that respondents believe that they are able to meet the challenge.)

Interestingly, when we compared the challenge categories to the task dimensions, most of the identified challenges bore a resemblance to the DTI's role dimensions. (See Table 2.) The fiscal, administration, and technology challenges that deans anticipated correspond to the tasks delineated in the dimensions of external/political relations and resource management. The faculty and diversity challenges are similar to the tasks of the internal productivity and academic personnel management dimensions. The challenge of curriculum and program development relates directly to the unique "develop and evaluate curriculum" variable in the DTI. The personal balance challenge that deans anticipated equates with the personal scholarship dimension. The only role dimension not readily identifiable in the challenges categories is leadership.

Fiscal management and the administrative functions of the deanship go hand in hand. Decreases in public funding to higher education over time reflect not only a growing social skepticism but also a reordering of governmental priorities. Today's deans must often try to convince a college's external constituents that higher education is a public benefit. To do so, a college must initiate new programs that provide accountability through quantifiable measures designed to assuage the public's doubts. To complicate matters further, funding such accountability mandates eats into program budgets, which can curb faculty scholarly and teaching pursuits and put them at odds with their deans. In addition, accountability goes to the heart of curricular development and the ability of faculty to determine just what constitutes a university education. Quantifiable measures lend themselves far more easily to skill acquisition than liberal education (Eamon, 1999). If mandates are clear, deans may experience role conflict. If the mandates are unclear, ambiguity sets in because they can find no mechanism by which to set priorities.

This perceptual battle manifests itself in grumblings and dissatisfaction from the business sector over the skill levels of college graduates. Corporate America wants team workers; the engineering and computer science professions want workers with updated skills and current knowledge; and the public demands better teachers and school administrators (Levine, 2000). In-house mini-universities are cropping up in corporations to facilitate this result (Thompson, 2000). Thus, deans' work must bridge old traditions with new expectations; sometimes, they are pushed along with no clear understanding of what really matters in the long run (Levine, 2000).

Likewise, varying demands of the student populace can create a myriad of problems for deans in recruiting and retaining faculty. Deans are ex-

TABLE 2

A COMPARISON OF CURRENT ROLES AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

Role Dimension	Future Challenges

External/political relations
  Funding
  Financial planning
  Build constituency involvement
  Promote diversity
  Ensure alumni support
  Represent college to administration
	Fiscal
	  Budget and finance
	  Allocation and use of resources
	  Internal and external fundraising

Resource Management
  Proper record-keeping
  Resource & nonacademic staff management
  Compliance with state, federal, and
    certification agency guidelines
  Keep current with technological change
	Administration
	  Work with top administration
	  Long-range planning
	  Reorganization
	  Community outreach
	  Public/legislative accountability
	
	Technology
	  Distance learning
	  Upgrade technology

Internal Productivity
  Teaching
  Meet goals of the college
  Realize mission of the university
  Maintain healthy work environment
  Encourage faculty, chair, and staff
    professional development activities
	Faculty
	  Recruit and retain faculty
	  Deal with difficult personnel
	  Move faculty toward change

Academic Personnel Management
  Recruit, select, and evaluate chairs
  Recruit, select, and evaluate faculty
	Diversity
	  Ensure diversity of faculty and
	    students

Personal Scholarship
  Maintain personal scholarship agenda
  Keep current in own discipline
  Demonstrate/model scholarship
	Personal Balance
	  Balance personal and profes-
	    sional lives
	  Attain personal goals

NO PARALLEL DIMENSION	**Curriculum and Program Development**
	  Development of curricula and
	    programs
	  Recruit high-quality students
	  Deal with unprepared students

Leadership
  Inform employees of university/community
    concerns
  Solicit ideas to improve the college
  Assign work
  Plan/conduct college leadership meetings
	NO PARALLEL CHALLENGE

pected to hire faculty who can engage young students in learning activities that comport with their knowledge of computer-based delivery systems— on-line libraries, video production facilities, virtual classrooms, and interactive Web sites. Deans must juggle between the expense of creating these environments and that of hiring and maintaining faculty who can teach within it to produce sophisticated thinkers (Tell, 2000).

The question becomes: how virtual should a university be? And at what cost? (Finkelstein, Frances, Jewett, & Scholz, 2000). Technological advancements double every two years. Central administrators, trustees, and legislators enamored with their potential push colleges to keep current (Privateer, 1999). At the same time, deans must weigh university teaching in traditional classrooms on traditional campuses against becoming, or being replaced by, "knowledge industries, which can deliver needed, just-in-time knowledge to workers [with] no [need for] formal university training" (Eamon, 1999, p. 200). Today, proprietary institutions offer sophisticated, professional degree-granting programs, delivering the curriculum in evenings and on weekends to an already employed population of students. Unlike the vocational programs of yesteryear, institutions such as Athena University offer on-line courses that are part of a liberal arts, interdisciplinary curriculum that emphasizes "development of critical thinking skills" and the "free exchange of ideas in a nonphysical setting" (Athena University, 1999). Deans in this study housed at traditional universities have, until recently, not faced such competition. In some cases, it may force them to justify their colleges' existence.

Diversity emerged as a challenge to deans, specifically, making the campus climate conducive to learning for minority groups. The diversity of a college embodies race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and religion/philosophy. Members of any of these groups seek mentors for representational, emotional, and cultural support (Burgos-Sasscer, 1990). The dean's challenge is to hire faculty who can provide such support in addition to teaching, researching, and writing. Where this challenge has not been met, the disengagement of faculty and students creates an environment where some are uncomfortable at the mention of controversial topics and the expression of unpopular views (Stage & Manning, 1992).

Finally, the challenge of personal balance pits dean against self. This challenge not only manifests itself within the job but seeps across the personal/ professional boundary. Maintaining balance between personal and professional lives is a significant stressor in deans' work lives (Gmelch, Wolverton, & Wolverton, 1999). The long hours at work, the social activities, and the general need to be seen are high stressors that take deans away from home and family (Wolverton et al., 2001). The redefinition of a scholar as an administrator and leader as he or she enters the deanship is the first of two within-position balance issues. Scholarly work often does not continue once

a dean is thrust into the administrative arena simply because he or she has little support for taking the long periods needed to contemplate and write. Instead, deans live by "calendars filled with fifteen-minute time slots and days crammed with meeting upon meeting, week after week" (Sarros & Gmelch, 1996, p. 16).

The second within-position balance issue stems from whether deans perceive themselves as leaders or managers and how they might balance the two roles. They must weigh the consequences of dealing with short-term, daily tasks, such as recordkeeping, filing reports, and settling personnel squabbles, with long-term tasks, such as planning and reflecting on "what we're all about" to provide colleges with the leadership that many desperately need (Wolverton et al., 2001). Even deans with established goals and priorities wage battles between urgency and importance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DEANS AND THEIR COLLEGES

Fundamentally, these responses, when considered from the perspective of role conflict and role ambiguity, indicate that deans today are inevitably confronted with situations that require them to engage in roles that conflict and manage priorities that remain unfocused. The fact that they identify future challenges as similar to their current roles suggests that this inherent conflict and ambiguity will carry forward. That is, deans may indeed perceive that they must be all things to all people. In listing their challenges, they added such comments as "never have enough time," "frustrated at having others control much of my day," "limited resources and unlimited ambition makes for high stress," and "not for the faint of heart." Such responses conjure up images of puppets on strings being pulled in multiple directions.

The deanship as it exists today is enigmatic. Internally, the position sits within a complex web of faculty, students, and administration; it is here that needs, disputes, and demands between faculty and administrators get arbitrated. Externally, the deanship is the representative conduit through which funding bequests and program requests pass. Moreover, it imposes upon one person the demands of a myriad of jobs, all within the context of serving the institutional good while trying to retain some semblance of normalcy within the individual. Above all else, it should serve as the model of innovation and advancement upon which the reputation of the college depends. Thus, while the deanship manifests itself in the individual who fills the position, the onus of its perpetuation rests, at least in part, with the greater academic organization.

We might raise the following questions: Do deans believe that the challenges they face will either expand or be redefined? Don't the demands associated with their current roles and future challenges suggest, indeed, beg

for change? And, if so, doesn't constructive change require leadership? Are deans confident in their ability to lead or are they simply responding as managers, not as leaders, to these challenges.?

The importance of the deanship is not expected to dwindle in universities; indeed, the fact that more universities are evolving toward a postindustrial model (devoid of manager-employer roles), suggests that deans will face greater and more diverse challenges (Rhoades, 2000). The responses of deans in this study reflect this understanding; they indicate that maintaining the status quo will undermine this very important position.

The first version of this paper raised a couple of possibilities for fixing either the dean or the deanship. In the interval since writing and delivering that first version (Wolverton, Montez, & Gmelch, 2000), we published *The Changing Nature of the Academic Deanship* (Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez, & Nies, 2001) which offered, among others, several additional strategies for deans as they deal with the challenges of their positions and the inevitable conflict and ambiguity. This article captures the essence of that discussion.

We often couch deans' concerns in the euphemism of "leadership," but deans want to know "what *really* gets the job done?" We offer several strategies that we believe may be useful as deans adapt their colleges and pilot them through the mire of higher education. Although these strategies are not the ultimate solution, we researched and derived them in response to the challenges that deans identified and find them generally applicable to those challenges. They are: Create a diverse culture, know the legal environment, become technologically connected, strategically manage and secure financial resources, seek and maintain personal and professional balance, and nurture the integrity of the college. Each strategy focuses on what the individual dean can do. A final strategy moves beyond the individual to the institution and proposes rethinking the deanship in the context of position definition and the organization of the dean's work.

Create a Diverse Culture

For many deans, cultivating a spirit of celebration around diversity has long been a part of their work. The task is a formidable one, and deans can either help their colleges take advantage of diversity or allow them to cower in its presence. The nature of diversity work is often a sensitive and emotional issue; how a dean communicates the work to the college is as important as the work itself (Cox, 1994).

The success of any college-wide diversity effort rests on the firmness of its dean's commitment, which is reflected through resource allocation; an ability to engage faculty, staff, and students collaboratively; long-range planning; and continual monitoring of progress (Cook & Sorcinelli, 1999; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1999). Implicit in the effort is the principle that

organizations bent on embracing diversity must ultimately change—their culture, their people, their management systems—and continually educate and communicate (Cox, 1994). Helping faculty to become aware of the assumptions they make about how learning occurs and how these assumptions can disfranchise a growing number of students is a beginning. Deans can sponsor workshops on alternative ways of learning, more inclusive teaching strategies, and using a variety of formats to present material and evaluate students to improve the learning experiences of students from varied cultural backgrounds (Stage & Manning, 1992). Finally, deans must engage in ongoing evaluation and monitoring of diversity efforts to determine their effectiveness (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1999).

Know the Legal Environment

While deans are not expected to be legal experts nor should they try to be, they should possess a grasp of commonly litigated issues sufficiently clear that they understand the rights and responsibilities that will inform their decisions and their colleges' responses and help them determine when to seek counsel (Kaplin & Lee, 1995; Toma & Palm, 1999). Among the most pervasive legal concerns that deans face are issues of discriminatory student admissions and faculty hiring, tenure, and promotion practices. Cases dealing with academic freedom and student expectations of program quality also devolve to colleges and are included in the dean's work. The greater challenges in antidiscrimination issues concern the rules and regulations regarding affirmative action, equal opportunity, and disability legislation. Deans must weigh the consequences of poorly made decisions on issues of faculty tenure, promotion, and/or dismissal (Leap, 1995). In addition, the sensitive area of sexual harassment must not be avoided; now labeled as the "hidden campus violence," harassment is pervasive in higher education (Dziech & Hawkins, 1998, p. x). Not only are deans left to explain the college's position in litigation, but their work must preliminarily include a critique of the institutional factors that pose risks or foster forms of discrimination. They must also evaluate and revise policies, procedures, and efforts in education and counseling that are in place to mitigate the incidence of such discrimination.

Become Technologically Connected

Deans must address technology issues from three perspectives. First, they must ensure that technology is used to enhance student learning and education delivery. Second, the effective use of technology must be appraised in the context of personnel productivity (Van Dusen, 2000). Third, and perhaps most important to deans, technology use must be fiscally efficient.

Technology offers the opportunity for a pedagogical shift from teacher-initiated instruction, in which the instructor is the center of knowledge, to

student-focused instruction, in which computer-based curricula force students to struggle with multiple sources of information and take control of their own learning (Finkelstein et al., 2000). Deans can make the entire process of distance education and on-line course development proceed smoothly and purposefully by continuing to ask fundamental questions about need and feasibility and by observing environmental trends that shape the future (Massy & Wilger, 1998). In essence, they must plan for and implement the integration of technology into teaching and learning.

In terms of managing the costs of instructional technology, deans face three realities. First, instructional costs will increase when technology supplements existing activities or becomes an add-on to current courses. Second, acquiring, developing, and using instructional technology will inevitably require new expenditures; cost savings, if any, will come from other activities, such as future course delivery. Last, instructional technology is better suited for some types of courses (i.e., large lecture-style courses) than others (seminars). Deans will not be able to manage costs without revisiting both instructional practices in their colleges as a whole and current budgeting practices (Finkelstein et al., 2000). In short, colleges must live within their means, and deans must help them prioritize how they spend money.

Strategically Manage and Secure Financial Resources

Fiscal management and resource procurement comprise funding issues for deans. Primary financial responsibilities for deans exist at two levels: consequential and important but incidental. At the first level is assessing college revenue needs, making allocation decisions, establishing expenditure targets and strategies for the college, and retaining and developing good faculty and staff through salaries and other types of fiscal support. It also entails evaluating financial planning and adjusting college budgets based on changing conditions and perceived future needs, controlling fraud and mismanagement, and searching for more cost-effective ways of delivering services (Vandament, 1989). Deans can delegate many of these consequential fiscal tasks to business managers but must be cognizant of the underlying concepts that drive financial decisions in the college. Deans are ultimately responsible for their colleges' well-being.

Incidental duties can be assigned to nonacademic support staff trained to carry them out within the constraints of set college or university procedures. These include evaluating and adjusting programs and colleges processes to reduce waste, ordering general building repairs, maintaining appropriate supply levels, and providing timely income and expenditure information to departments and programs (Vandament, 1989).

Resource procurement refers to soliciting unearned gifts or engaging in revenue-generating activities that lie outside the normal purview of colleges (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; Elliott, 1995). Such activities require

that deans define and plan development activities. To do so, they must build organizational infrastructures to accommodate such work and probably involve themselves directly in solicitation activities (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; Elliott, 1995; Hall, 1993). Today, deans often hire development officers who specialize in this type of work (Kelly, 1991). Because integrity is central to long-term success in development work, deans who employ development staff must make certain that these officers adhere to acceptable practices (Hall, 1993).

Seek and Maintain Professional and Personal Balance

Establishing balance is an issue of time. In truth, demands on time consume and control many deans. Deans must pay attention to time, stress, and boundary management as they strive for balance. Conducting a time audit will help clarify which activities consume most of their time. They can then ask: "What is the *best* use of my time?" The answer might be that it is time to quit trying to do everything (Oncken & Wass, 1999).

Boundary management at work is a matter of planning and prioritizing for the college. It begins with a vision about what the college is and what it wants to be, a set of long- and short-term goals that serve as guides to help the college reach that vision, and a clear understanding of where the dean fits into the overall scheme of bringing the vision to fruition. Boundary management at home is a matter of finding balance. Begin by listing personal and professional priorities, combine these lists, and prioritize them again. These priorities emanate from a vision of who the dean is personally, as a family member, and as a professional (Friedman, Christensen, & DeGroot, 1998; Grace, 1982). Effective deans realize that an enriching personal life makes for a more productive work life, while striking a "work-life" balance can also result in a more satisfying personal life (Friedman et al., 1998).

Nurture the Integrity of Your College

Institutional integrity hinges on the success universities have in building alliances with people and organizations in a fashion that fulfills recognizable public needs. Deans play a critical leadership role in reclaiming the public trust (Krahenbuhl, 1999). There are several approaches to this endeavor—redefining faculty work, reframing academic departments, refocusing department chairs, reconnecting colleges with communities, and revisiting the concept of change leadership.

First, universities and their colleges create faculty positions to meet the needs of the institution. As needs change, so must faculty work (Ehrmann, 1994). Deans can design workload systems where participants agree on yearly responsibilities that make sense for the college and challenge faculty to remain engaged in fulfilling institutional needs (Krahenbuhl, 1999).

Second, regaining or building public confidence requires that academic departments perform effectively—in terms of educating students and interfacing with the communities they serve—and efficiently—in terms of resource use. Deans can reinforce the importance of this goal by using report card systems as guides in determining salary adjustments. The mere existence of a report card creates social pressure on departments to give greater attention to the core meaning of the institution (Wolverton et al., 1999).

Third, without a doubt, the leadership role of a department chair often gets summarily ignored (Gmelch & Miskin, 1995; Keller, 1983; Tucker & Bryan, 1988). Many universities invest in training their department chairs, but too often it remains sporadic and narrowly focused on fiscal and reporting responsibilities. The obvious solution is to strengthen chair leadership preparation through more consistent development opportunities (Edwards, 1999). A less obvious solution is restructuring the position. Under this scenario, deans help chairs delineate between the work that must be done *within* the department and work which can be done *for* the department. Deans can also strengthen the competencies of the support staff assigned to a department through selection, evaluation, and training. Large departments may run more efficiently with an assistant to the chair, an associate chair, or a department coordinator to carry part of the daily work load (McAdams, 1997).

Fourth, deans can hold their colleges accountable to their various communities by providing a report card of sorts. Building awareness of the contributions that colleges make to their communities, region, and nation provides a starting point from which deans and their colleges can build their colleges' integrity (Mitgang, 1996).

Finally, deans who are serious about changing their colleges must educate themselves about the concept of change. They must signal that change is valued, create an environment conducive to change, and understand how people respond to change. The first step toward rebuilding institutional integrity rests entirely with deans. They must determine where their goals lie; and once they have done that, their actions must reflect their beliefs (Katzenbach, 1998).

Rethinking the Position

We cannot assume that "fixing" deans will alleviate the problem posed by the challenges they face. The larger issue may rest with colleges and universities. For deans to remain effective as leaders and administrators, institutions must respond. First, deans must receive clear signals about institutional priorities. Second, continually expanding the responsibilities of the position only weakens it. Even though the future challenges that deans predict for themselves fall within today's general role categories, the num-

ber of tasks associated with each role continues to proliferate. The current hierarchical approach to college management allows for shifting some work to subordinates—assistant and associate deans, directors of all sorts, and administrative assistants. But the underlying premise for all these arrangements, whether they carry the leadership team title or not, is that one individual, the dean, is responsible for what takes place in the college.

Consequently, although it is uncommon for a traditional institution like a university to rethink positions of authority and organizational structure, such an approach offers the most fruitful potential for maximizing the effectiveness of the position and organizing its work most effectively. Deans oversee professional organizations (colleges) that are in some ways similar to large professional partnerships or organizations in the private sector (e.g., attorneys, accountants). These colleges operate within the greater enterprise (or partnership) we call the university. Often the responsibilities exceed the management and leadership capacity of one person.

Fifteen years ago, Austin (1984) suggested that universities look at innovative arrangements of work loads. One possible starting point is the concept of shared leadership. Its general premises—shared responsibility, a tangible vision, mutual influence, and a proclivity for taking action—seem directed at moving the concept of leadership from a person-centered to a team-based philosophy (Yukl, 1998). Despite agreement in theory, interpretation varies about the mechanics of implementation. Ostroff (1999), for example, suggests a cluster of empowered leaders and followers engaging in cross-functional purposes. Others refer to the coordinated efforts of "post-heroic leadership," which makes everyone in the group a leader, responsible at all levels, and collaborative in their management of the group (Bradford & Cohen, 1998; Yukl, 1998). Katzenbach (1998) advocates a leadership team, which comprises "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to common purposes, performance goals, and leadership approaches for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (p. 217). In the end, however, these models preserve a sole leader at the top of the organization. Katzenbach (1998) recognizes this dilemma and comments:

> We create a contradiction for those in the "leadership" role: the expectation that work would be better served by a team approach runs up against [traditional] expectations of the position. As a result, in most organizations, leadership at the top rarely functions as a team. Team performance at the top is all about doing work together, about collective action. [In such situations] real work [goes beyond] open discussion, debate, decision making, and delegation of authority. (p. 111)

Bensimon and Neumann (1993) proposed a variant of shared leadership in their examination of the concept of complex, team-centered leader-

ship in colleges and universities. They asserted that teams dominated by solo leaders are limited in their abilities to effect and respond to change. They proffered the concept of the complex team, advocating a "more open and equalized . . . conception of leadership . . . as a shared process and a shared responsibility" (p. 145).

Team leadership in its purest sense, although rare, is by no means a new concept in business. In 1991, Nordstrom, Inc., created a copresidency consisting of four nonfamily members. It instigated this effort at shared leadership to pull the national retailing firm out of a financial slump. These copresidents described their functions as concentrating on different parts of the business, while speaking with one voice on company matters (Spurgeon, 2000). Likewise, Charles Schwab Corp., an investment brokerage firm, employs co-CEOs to separately handle the responsibilities of president (David Pottruck) and chairman (Charles Schwab) (McGeehan, 1997). The investment banking business of Goldman, Sachs & Co. has a history of using coleaders to run its corporation in a collegial culture (Lublin & Schellhardt, 1998). Centigram Corporation, a communication technology company, created an interim co-CEOship while it sought a permanent CEO. The two-person team comprised the general manager/executive vice-president (whose strengths were in sales and marketing) and the CFO (whose strength lay in operations). These two individuals jointly exercised their respective expertise in the day-to-day executive functions (D. Barsema, personal e-mail, October 17, 2000).

Even educators are beginning to test the waters. In 1999, Harvard's Graduate School of Education innovated a codeanship: two administrators share the position, an office with two desks and two computers, and a joint space for meetings. They share the administrative work, split the salary, and work jointly on some research projects in addition to their own ("Peer Review," 1999).

These variants on shared leadership, both in education and business, are not without problems. As Lublin and Schellhardt (1998) document, "The co-CEO role is tough to make work" (p. C14). Given how some of the organizations mentioned here have responded, this structural innovation seems to be an as-yet-unperfected possibility, one that must be judiciously applied. It is not, however, an impossibility, and presents yet another viable alternative for universities and deans to consider.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a clear glimpse of two glaring truths. First, it affirms that the position of academic dean is a vital component of higher education administration. Second, and of greater import, it suggests that deans believe that their current roles will contribute to the challenges they face in

the future. As universities experience the fallout from the current economic downturn and worldwide political turmoil, we can safely predict increased responsibilities and expanded roles for deans. In these circumstances, deans will have less time to do their jobs. In effect, if roles continue to remain ill-defined and university priorities continue to be vague but grow in number, deans may be unable to meet these priorities and could be less effective administrators than they have been in the past. In this paper, we have offered two possible avenues—one for deans as individuals and the other for institutions that employ them—which, if taken, could contribute to leadership effectiveness at the college level.

For deans as individuals charged with the well-being of their colleges, we identified six specific strategies. Implicit in them is the concept of change. For example, creating and maintaining cultures of diversity, acceptance, and involvement within their colleges takes perseverance and a commitment to change the organizational view and structure of the college. Likewise, if deans are to become knowledgeable about the legal environment they must step outside the culture of the college as it exists and identify factors that create hostile environments or discriminatory practices, and work to change that environment. Deans' efforts to put antidiscriminatory policies and procedures into practice will go a long way toward fostering a healthy work environment in which diversity is valued.

Similarly, by keeping up with the technological changes that affect instruction, deans can stay focused on planning and implementing the most cost-effective use of technology for their colleges. In today's economic environment, any technology strategies become intertwined with all other fiscal aspects of their colleges. Knowing about available sources to tap in fund-raising efforts and the political inclinations of legislators will help deans deal with the inevitable questions and unrest that follow budget cuts and fiscal reallocation plans.

Each of these strategies—building a capacity for diversity, understanding the spirit and the limit of laws that directly impact college and university operations, and spending money wisely (whether on technology or not)—impacts a public's understanding of what colleges are all about. Combined, these strategies form a basis upon which the integrity of a college lies.

However, unless they embrace one final personal strategy—balance—deans who successfully go down this person-centered path as they seek to effectively lead their colleges run the risk of early burn-out. Maintaining balance between their personal and professional lives requires a dean's ability to not only "roll with the punches" but to step back and say "time out; we need perspective here." Thus, what deans accomplish or manage at the professional level leaves them with more personal time, and vice versa. Remaining cognizant of the need for such balance and perspective, and acting on that need, contributes to ongoing leadership effectiveness.

However, deans acting alone may find it difficult to remain effective over time unless institutions also embrace change. As a final strategy, we offered one of a myriad of possibilities—shared leadership—for strengthening the position itself. We phrased that proposal in extreme terms—literal sharing of responsibilities between equals. Yes, universities can advocate that work be shared with assistant and associate deans. Yes, they can suggest that deans hire business managers and more support staff. In fact, many universities already do so. We suggest, however, that doing more of the same is not necessarily better—that in fact, it may be time to try something different, something less hierarchical. Truly shared responsibility coupled with university efforts to select deans more wisely and to socialize, develop, and evaluate them better, could well determine whether deans actually lead.

For too long, deans have existed within the context of a tension-ridden climate. Ultimately, deans succeed if they can maintain an equilibrium between their values system and presenting situations. Approaches taken to alleviate the stress of this position will surely stretch the bounds of personal and institutional imagination but, in the end, will be well worth the creative exercise if we can preserve the quality of our institutions and the persons who run them.

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