

# Focus

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

## How to Be a Dean



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**A**CADEMIC DEANS are expected now more than ever to push their schools to evolve. They need to develop a vision, motivate the faculty, transform the curriculum, manage resources, and raise funds. Sometimes their jobs become even larger than that, as happened at the University of Missouri, where deans worked behind the scenes to remove the university's leader. This collection offers insights into how deans handle all the demands on them.

- 4** **It All Comes Down to the Dean**  
Deans have to balance a strong academic orientation with a business one.
- 8** **How Missouri's Deans Plotted to Get Rid of Their Chancellor**  
Nine deans lose confidence in their chief executive, and then he's gone.
- 12** **Colleges 'Unleash the Deans' With Decentralized Budgets**  
The budget model gives deans an incentive to cut costs and think more strategically.
- 16** **So You Want to Be a Dean?**  
Nothing in a dean's job is as exciting or complicated as turning ideas into reality.
- 19** **A Tale of 2 Deans**  
If you wait until you are ready to be a dean, you will never become one.
- 22** **Fund Raising for Deans**  
How to match donors' passions with your college's needs.
- 25** **Portraits of 5 New Deans**  
Serving as department chair or associate dean helps prepare professors for deanships.

Cover photo by Shawn Weismiller for *The Chronicle*



Cornell's Kathryn Boor (center) grouped several departments under a new school of plant sciences. More than ever, administrators rely on deans to push colleges to evolve.

SHAWN WEISMILLER FOR THE CHRONICLE

# To Change a Campus, Talk to the Dean

By AUDREY WILLIAMS JUNE

**W**HEN KATHRYN J. BOOR became a dean at Cornell University, change was at the center of her agenda from the very beginning. She began leading the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences in 2010, when the Ivy League institution—like colleges everywhere at the time—was in the midst of streamlining operations and cutting costs. Just four months into Ms. Boor's tenure, the college announced that its department of education would close. Cornell administrators said they didn't have the money it would take to raise the small department's national profile.

Since then, Ms. Boor has overseen a steady

stream of change. In the spring, for example, she grouped five departments to create the new School of Integrative Plant Science, with the goal of showcasing the university's strengths in plant and soil sciences and attracting federal grants, more students, and more top faculty.

"This took reorganizing people and getting people excited about a new structure and a new way of thinking," says Ms. Boor, a food scientist. "This is a way to ensure our pre-eminence five and 10 years down the line."

More than ever before, Ms. Boor and other academic deans are the ones top administrators rely on to push schools and colleges to evolve. As universities face new pressures to distinguish them-

selves from their peers and to demonstrate their worth, deans have their hands on more levers than almost anyone else on campus. Whether campuses can transform themselves, working within tight fiscal constraints, often comes down to their deans.

More than almost any other administrator, deans are in a better position to influence people and forge consensus. To succeed, they must manage up and down, engaging regularly with senior officials, the faculty, staff, and students.

As leaders of increasingly complex enterprises, deans must think big and be the public face of their schools even as they still tend to the day-to-day needs of professors and students. Deans must be able to motivate faculty and staff to embrace a university's broad, strategic goals. They need to be shrewd money managers who can attract donations to augment limited budgets.

"Deans today are almost like mini-presidents," says Jessica S. Kozloff, president of Academic Search Inc., a company that has helped colleges find deans for the past decade. "Like every other senior administrator today, they're being called on to make really tough decisions and to try to convince people to change." She adds, "You're in the line of fire as a dean."

**J**OB ADS reflect the kinds of pressures deans face. Institutions are turning to executive search committees to help them find movers and shakers who are part entrepreneur, part fund raiser, part marketer, and part seasoned administrator.

At Morgan State University, the new dean of the College of Liberal Arts will be charged with "transforming the curriculum to reflect the changes taking place in the world of higher education." Eastern Michigan University wants its next dean of the College of Technology to know how to "implement interdisciplinary programs and projects." Private institutions have big expectations for deans, too. Shenandoah University, with about 3,700 students, wants someone with "significant experience in faculty and administrative positions" and a record of landing donations and building community partnerships to be its next dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Compare that with the ads of two decades ago. Administrative experience wasn't always required. Searches were led in house. And the dean's role was described as being internally, not externally, focused.

The candidates who now prove the best fits for the job are often senior professors with administrative experience — stints as department chair or associate dean here, directing a center or institute there. And the deans of today need an entrepreneurial bent, too, with the ability to build partnerships and develop strong new programs capable of generating revenue.

Nancy B. Songer, a former professor of science education and learning technologies at the Univer-

sity of Michigan at Ann Arbor, directed a research center before becoming a dean.

As dean of Drexel University's School of Education, where she's been since August, Ms. Songer wants to build on the "mini-CEO role" she saw herself playing at the Michigan Center for Essential Science, which focused on getting more urban students into STEM fields.

At Drexel, one of Ms. Songer's main goals is to ensure that the school keeps making a difference outside of Drexel. The university wants to build a public school on land that it bought near campus. "This is not only a chance for us to define ourselves as a school," Ms. Songer said, "but to think of how we can redefine how a public school and a school of education partnership could be."

To help herself learn how to be a good dean, Ms. Songer is reading books about leadership written by a mix of higher-education administration experts and business executives. "I'm trying to look at what I know about being an academic and what I'm learning about being a good business leader and put them together."

Deans have to be careful, however, in how much of the corporate world they embody, says Mimi Wolverton, a retired professor of educational leadership who worked at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas and is one of the authors of *College Deans: Leading From Within*.

"If they're completely business oriented they alienate the faculty," Ms. Wolverton says. "The better deans are able to maintain an academic mentality at one level, but also embrace a business orientation on another level. Being a dean is more like running a family business than a corporate business."

In an academic environment, where shared governance is an integral part of the culture, the best leaders must be able to forge relationships with many people across a campus. If they are going to press change, they need a clear understanding of the culture where they work. They must be able to weigh multiple perspectives when making decisions, and to embrace the role of intermediary between professors and the provost.

Patrice Rankine, dean of Hope College's Arts and Humanities division, leaned on prior experience to shape his interactions with the faculty. He came to Hope from Purdue University, where he was a professor of classics and an assistant head of the School of Languages and Cultures, a position in which he first began to hone his interpersonal skills.

"I would be the person people would come to to talk things out," Mr. Rankine said. At Hope, where he became dean in July 2013, he has sought out opportunities to meet with faculty and alumni.

"I'm at a small college, and so alumni are really invested in what happens," says Mr. Rankine. "I like to spend time with people and listen to them."

But deans have to listen with a discerning ear to

figure out how to balance competing interests.

"Everybody's perspective collides in the dean's office," says Gary S. Krahenbuhl, a retired academic administrator whose career included 11 years as dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University. He is also the author of *Building the Academic Deanship*. "The dean is trying to manage the expectations of all the different people and move the college forward as best as he or she can," says Mr. Krahenbuhl. "It's not easy because each group thinks their way is the right way."

He says deans with a track record of advocating for both faculty and administrative goals are more likely to get the benefit of the doubt from faculty when administrative priorities win out.

"There's almost nothing that buys more good will than people knowing that you're going to be fair and objective and even-handed," Mr. Krahenbuhl says.

**“Deans today are almost like mini-presidents. ... They’re being called on to make really tough decisions and to try to convince people to change.”**

Cultivating internal relationships is part of the job, but now so is interacting extensively with outsiders. For the dean of the School of Education at Indiana University at Bloomington, external advocacy has taken the form of speaking out against proposed policies or laws that he believes could harm his school or higher education in general.

"There are a lot of attacks that are being launched on schools of education," says Gerardo M. Gonzalez, who has been dean for 15 years. "I spend a good deal of my time fending off policy initiatives that are ill-informed. I don't remember doing this in the early days of my career." *The Indianapolis Star* this month published a letter to the editor from Mr. Gonzalez, explaining how he sees Indiana's school-reform policies contributing to the drop in enrollment in teacher-education programs.

Another recent addition to the dean's job is the role of ambassador. Deans are now expected to

crisscross the globe to make connections with alumni, recruit students, and set up partnerships that will provide students with a global education. As universities branch out globally, establishing programs overseas and drawing more international students, that kind of outreach has become key.

In the spring, Mr. Gonzalez will travel to Cuba, his native country, for a cultural-exchange tour with a group of alumni. The School of Education also has a program that gives students the opportunity to teach in foreign countries, and it hosts scholars from around the world who work with education professors on research.

"None of these kind of agreements would happen without the dean," he says. "I'm the point person."

As the deanship becomes more complex, training for the job has become a bigger priority. The Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences holds a summer seminar for new deans. The American

Conference of Academic Deans created its Deans' Institute four years ago after its members—a mix of deans of all levels and provosts—asked for such a gathering. Attendees at next year's daylong institute, held during the association's annual meeting, will hear seasoned deans discuss how their role has changed, the challenges of the job, and how to achieve work-life balance.

Deans with years of experience may have a better handle on the job than newcomers, but they, too, are navigating change as the nature of their job constantly evolves. They're overseeing schools or colleges that have larger faculty ranks than in the past, growing student populations, and programs that are changing to reflect student and scholarly interests.

Deans are also spending more of their time as fund raisers, and they're focused on different markers of success than in the past. They are now being asked, for example, to do more to measure how much students are learning.

Graduate-school deans are starting to focus more on tracking student outcomes. Karen Klomparens, dean of the graduate school at Michigan State University since 1997, says she pays more attention now to collecting data about how graduate students move through, and out of, the university's advanced-degree programs.

The national conversation about graduate education has included vigorous debate about whether it takes students too long to earn a Ph.D. and what kinds of jobs await them. The changing academic workplace, in which tenure-track jobs are scarce, means graduate schools have to take a broader view than they have in the past of students' post-Ph.D. opportunities. Ms. Klomparens has, in recent years, works with Michigan State's Ph.D. ca-

reer-services office to offer graduate students career- and professional-development workshops, along with an interactive website to help them pursue careers in higher education and beyond.

“We’ve really invested resources in this new focus on career outcomes,” says Ms. Klomparens, who is also associate provost for graduate education.

It’s the kind of focus that calls for buy-in from the graduate programs on campus—a task that falls to deans like Ms. Klomparens. She relies on her reputation, in part, to help her drum up support.

“What I hope I have is influence. And that influence comes from being a trusted source of information,” Ms. Klomparens says. “I’m a pretty well-known quantity because I’ve been here so long.”

A key strategy to create buy-in, she says, is to be a reliable source of information and a frequent communicator with a wide range of people on campus.

“My email group on campus has 350 people—deans, associate deans, chairs, graduate program directors, graduate secretaries,” she says. “I think it’s important to have every level of person who is working with graduate students in the information loop.”

Ms. Klomparens, dean of a long-established graduate school, never faced the learning curve that goes with being a dean of a fledgling graduate school. That’s a position that Benjamin D. Caldwell

discovered he wasn’t fully prepared for, even with five years as a department chair behind him.

**M**R. CALDWELL, in his third year as dean of the graduate school at Missouri Western State University, has learned on the job how to do the kind of marketing needed to promote the new school’s programs to potential students so the graduate school can grow. He’s also been trying to bring in money to offer assistantships to the students in the master’s-only program.

Despite the challenges of the job, Mr. Caldwell wrote a column that ran in a magazine for his discipline this year, with tips on what readers should think about if they are considering a move to administration.

Among them: Ask what you can contribute to the larger goals of your unit or institution and how can you add to the institution’s main goals. Both questions underscore how critical it is for deans to maintain a bird’s-eye view. Ms. Boor, who has been a faculty member at Cornell since 1994, remembers how that shift in mind-set was one of her biggest challenges as a new dean.

“As a faculty member you’re generally doing things yourself as opposed to moving to the next level where you have to delegate,” Ms. Boor says. “One of the hardest things was just learning to look at things from the 30,000-foot level.”

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SHAWN WEISMILLER FOR THE CHRONICLE

# How Missouri's Deans Plotted to Get Rid of Their Chancellor

By JACK STRIPLING



AP PHOTO / JEFF ROBERSON

The resignation of R. Bowen Loftin as chancellor of the U. of Missouri's flagship campus, in Columbia, followed weeks of efforts by nine deans to force out a leader in whom they had lost confidence.



WHEN R. BOWEN LOFTIN announced his intention to resign as chancellor of the University of Missouri at Columbia this month, the decision was widely regarded as a surrender to student-led protests over race relations on the flagship campus. But Mr. Loftin's downfall was also, if not exclusively, the culmination of a well-orchestrated coup led by nine deans who had worked for weeks to secure the ouster of a chancellor in whom they had lost confidence.

Missouri's deans describe Mr. Loftin's tenure as a profile in autocratic leadership, where vindictiveness and ham-fisted decision-making were thinly masked by an affable and goofy public persona that won over students but never the university's academic leaders.

The campus's nine sitting deans agreed to talk in detail about their concerns with Mr. Loftin, but, as a condition of their participation in this article, they asked that questions be emailed to them together so that they could respond collectively. Their version of events, as described here, is drawn from those responses and an interview with the university's longest-serving dean, who was designated as the group's spokesman.

It was soon after Mr. Loftin's appointment, in 2014, that Missouri's deans say they felt the first pangs of buyers' remorse.

At first, there were the little things, like the fact that the chancellor sometimes seemed more interested in his phone than in his colleagues.

There was Mr. Loftin's habit of calling the deans "essential middle management," a title that, while technically accurate, sounded like a disparaging dig.

The deans cringed when the chancellor told them, "I can fire you," which he once said to the entire group and occasionally told the deans individually, according to their account.

"Those who worked with him on campus were told, in no uncertain terms, that they worked for him, not with him," the deans said.

In an interview on Thursday, Mr. Loftin responded to the deans' account, taking issue with many of their assertions. His comments about firing deans were all made in jest, he said, and he dropped the "middle management" talk the moment he heard it had offended anyone.

The deans' concerns, however, were less about the chancellor's words and more about his approach to governing, which they called secretive and scattershot. They were blindsided, for example, by a controversial proposal to cut health-care subsidies for graduate students.

That decision was later reversed, but not before considerable turmoil on the campus. On this point, Mr. Loftin said, the failure was one of communication. He said he did not realize that the decision would be announced before deans and others had been informed. "I was absolutely stunned by that," he said.

## 'IRREVOCABLY BROKEN'

The tipping point for the deans came when one of their own seemed to have been forced out. In September, Mr. Loftin announced that Patrice (Patrick) Delafontaine, who had been dean of the School of Medicine for less than a year, would resign. The chancellor told faculty members that Dr. Delafontaine had decided to resign on his own, but the dean's colleagues did not find that credible.

"All of the deans felt that Dean Patrick Delafontaine was doing a good job," the deans said. "To see his efforts dismissed and undermined, when added to our other concerns, led us to conclude that our relationship with the chancellor was irrevocably broken."

When the deans made their concerns known to the chancellor, he responded by arranging individual phone calls with them. The deans characterized the calls as "highly scripted" conversations that lasted about eight minutes each.

Again, this is a point at which the chancellor's and the deans' narratives diverge. What the deans perceived as an empty gesture of reconciliation, Mr. Loftin describes as a sincere effort to apologize for any transgressions and to forge a path for greater collaboration. The calls also lasted a lot longer than the deans have suggested, he said.

"The conversations ranged from 15 minutes to an hour," Mr. Loftin said. "I wrote down the time the conversation started, when it ended. I made notes."

Thomas L. Payne, the senior dean and spokesman for the group, said that during his phone call with the chancellor Mr. Loftin apologized for having publicly stated that he could have the dean fired.

Mr. Payne, who is vice chancellor and dean of the College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources, said that Mr. Loftin also had a habit of publicly saying, "CAFNR has all the money," using an abbreviation for the college. For the dean, this was often awkward, undermining his efforts to raise money for the college, whose donors were left with the impression that it was exceedingly well-off. The chancellor apologized for this, too.

By that point, however, Mr. Payne and his colleagues had already decided that apologies were not enough. The chancellor had to go.

"Since we're being candid," Mr. Payne recalls saying, "I feel I must tell you that I don't think your leadership of this university is appropriate. I don't think your approach, in many cases of fear and intimidation, is the way we operate in the Midwest or anywhere. I think you should resign."

Until a few days before those phone calls, Mr. Loftin said, he had no indication that the deans were so displeased with him. By the time the conversations began, there seemed little room for recovery.

“It was very surprising to me how strongly held their opinions were, and how much they kept it to themselves for a very long time,” Mr. Loftin said. “Why did they stew on it for so long? Why did it take so much time?”

### THE ‘STAR CHAMBER’

Two weeks later, on October 9, the deans gathered in a boardroom at the university-system offices for a meeting with Timothy M. Wolfe, who was then president.

“We indicated to President Wolfe that we believed our relationship with the chancellor could not be repaired and that he should be dismissed,” the deans said.

By that time, racial unrest was starting to bubble up on the flagship campus, where the student-body president, who is black, reported that a group of young white men in a pickup truck had screamed racial epithets at him. Mr. Loftin had called the incident and others like it “totally unacceptable,” but students criticized him as being insufficiently responsive.

The chancellor said that he worked tirelessly

**“It was very surprising to me how strongly held their opinions were, and how much they kept it to themselves for a very long time. Why did they stew on it for so long?”**

on race-related issues, but that he was also realistic about how challenging it would be to change things. “This is where I got criticism,” Mr. Loftin said. “I said, ‘Look guys, this requires changing hearts. We can fix a lot of things here, but we can’t change hearts overnight.’”

In the deans’ view, the chancellor’s response was anemic, and it gave students and the public a glimpse of Mr. Loftin’s ineffectiveness. Racism is

indeed a problem at Mizzou, the deans said, but the chancellor’s decisions on graduate-student benefits, including health-care coverage and reduced tuition stipends, had fomented the very resentment and distrust on which the protest movement fed.

The day after the deans’ meeting with Mr. Wolfe, student protests started to ratchet up. A group called ConcernedStudent1950, which took its name from the year Missouri admitted its first black student, organized a demonstration at a homecoming parade, where protesters surrounded Mr. Wolfe’s car. The president did not engage with the students but moved along the parade route, making himself a potent symbol of administrative apathy.

As the student-protest movement gathered steam and attracted national attention, the deans’ parallel effort to oust the chancellor continued quietly in the background.

On October 13, three days after the parade, Mr. Wolfe summoned the deans, Mr. Loftin, and Garnett S. Stokes, the provost, to the system office. What followed was a re-airing of grievances by six deans who were in the room, along with three more who joined the meeting by teleconference.

Mr. Loftin, hearing calls for his resignation, scribbled notes and remained silent.

The chancellor described the meeting as a “star chamber” where he was dressed down for more than two hours. “With a raised voice, one dean said right to me, ‘I don’t want you in my house,’” Mr. Loftin recalls.

The deans interpreted the chancellor’s silence as another sign of his disengagement. Mr. Loftin, conversely, saw no opening to do anything other than to take his licks. “How do you respond to that?” he said. “That was the wrong place to engage.”

Mr. Loftin said he followed up with the president days later, hashing out a plan to deal with the deans individually. But all the deans heard was silence. There was no follow-up, and the campus was growing ever more consumed with the crisis over race.

### BEGINNING OF THE END

In the fervor of the protest movement, scrutiny of Mr. Wolfe began to eclipse any student misgivings about Mr. Loftin. It was the president, protesters said, who had to go.

Jonathan Butler, a graduate student, began a hunger strike, saying he was prepared to die if

Mr. Wolfe did not resign. Members of the football team, showing solidarity with their classmate, said that they would boycott all athletics-related activities if the president did not step down.

Any target that had been on Mr. Loftin's back seemed to disappear. The chancellor befriended the student protesters, bringing food to their demonstrations and holding court with them on the quad. What few people knew at the time was that the wheels were already in motion for Mr. Loftin's resignation.

The first system-level conversation about his departure occurred on October 23, before the hunger strike or the football boycott. Mr. Loftin met that day with the president and two members of the Board of Curators. The only specific criticisms the chancellor says he heard were those put forward by the deans. There was no "proximate cause," he said, between racial discord in Columbia and his precarious leadership position.

"It became pretty clear to me," he said, "I didn't have the support from the president and others that I needed to be here."

On the eve of his resignation, on November 8, Mr. Loftin met again with Mr. Wolfe at University Hall, the system's administrative building. The two were focused on the circumstances of the chancellor's resignation, and Mr. Loftin said he hadn't an inkling that the president himself would resign the following day. In retrospect, however, the signs were there. "He seemed distracted," Mr. Loftin said. "He left the room several times."

Mr. Loftin may not have seen Mr. Wolfe's resignation coming, but that prospect concerned the deans greatly. The group, unaware that the die had already been cast for Mr. Loftin, feared that a new president might not carry out their will. They had one last chance, as they saw it, to overthrow the chancellor.

In what amounted to a Hail Mary pass, the deans fired off a letter to the president and the board, calling for Mr. Loftin's immediate dismissal. In short order, the letter was leaked to the news media, and the deans' weeks-long private efforts were made public.

They were all in.

The deans' high-risk strategy could easily have

backfired, and it is hard to see how many or any of them could have remained in positions of leadership at Missouri if Mr. Loftin had not resigned.

"All of the deans perceived risks to their careers," they said, "and the risk was felt most acutely by those who have long careers in higher education ahead of them. In the face of this risk, the boldness and conviction of the deans to persist with our

## The deans say the chancellor was secretive and autocratic. They were blindsided, for example, by a proposal to cut benefits for graduate students.

calls for the chancellor's removal are testaments to our level of dissatisfaction with the chancellor's leadership as well as our commitment to put the institution's interests ahead of our own."

Mr. Loftin is slated to officially step down as chancellor on January 1, when he will move to a position as director for research-facility development. But the chancellor, who is 66, expects that his journey will ultimately take him back to Texas, where his family has owned a small ranch since 1858. Maybe then, the chancellor says, a fuller picture of what happened at Mizzou will come to light.

"I will someday write this story," Mr. Loftin assures. "I have a lot to say about this."

*Originally published on November 20, 2015*



# Colleges 'Unleash the Deans' With Decentralized Budgets

By SCOTT CARLSON

**Brad Foley, dean of music at the U. of Oregon, was able to buy equipment for a music-technology program because he increased the number of students taking courses in the School of Music and Dance.**

JOHN GIUSTINA, U. OF OREGON

FOR many years at the University of Oregon, Brad Foley got a lump of money dropped in his lap to run the School of Music and Dance. It didn't matter how many courses he offered, how big or how small they were, says Mr. Foley, who has been the school's dean since 2002. "You seemed to get the same budget year in and year out."

Then, about six years ago, the university's budgeting system changed radically. Mr. Foley started getting a sum commensurate with the number of students in his school and how many made it to graduation. If he thought carefully about the demand for courses, adjusted offerings so enrollments grew, and trimmed costs, the school got to keep some of the money at the end of the year.

That spurred him to design more general-education courses that appealed to undergraduates, which helped pay for a couple of new faculty positions and a new program in music technology. At the same time, he had to track his costs for facilities and maintenance, services like the library and student recruitment, and salaries for faculty members, keeping all of those in check.

Sink or swim, it was on him—and he happened to thrive. "We found that we could control our own destiny," he says.

The decentralized budget model adopted by Oregon has a long history at some elite institutions and often goes by a jargon name: Responsibility Center Management, or RCM. But it's likely to be increasingly familiar. In recent years, as institutions have struggled with financial pressures amid declining sources of revenue, many more administrators have pushed RCM to "unleash the deans," as the budget model's advocates like to put it: to give deans and the professors under them a financial incentive to cut costs, find new sources of revenue, and think more strategically about where the college is headed.

Since 2000, the responsibility-center approach has spread across sectors. Iowa State, Ohio, Rutgers, and Texas Tech Universities have adopted it; so have the Universities of Florida, New Hampshire, and Virginia. Northeastern and Syracuse Universities are among private institutions to have made the move.

In theory, Responsibility Center Management has an elegant simplicity: A university calculates its revenues and expenses, allocating them to its various colleges and other divisions. Each unit brings in money—through tuition, grants, philanthropy, and other means—and pays "taxes" to the central administration to cover shared services, like the facilities Mr. Foley started tracking at Oregon, plus admissions, student affairs, and so on.

If a college draws in students or otherwise rakes in money, it gets to keep that for expansion or strategic investments. Colleges with few students or high costs remain poor. For almost two centuries, Harvard University has exemplified this approach,

which requires "every tub to stand on its own bottom," as a president put it in the 1800s, adapting a line from *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

It's a budget model that seems to fit the spirit of the times, given the focus on enterprise amid economic decline. "At a time of lean budgets and difficult decisions, people think of RCM as a way to make clear why they get money when they get money," says David Attis, senior director of academic research at the Education Advisory Board, who studies the model. It has become a popular topic of discussion among institutions, he says, something of a "religion" in higher education, attracting converts.

"People grow up in an RCM model, and they move to a new institution, and they adopt that model there," says Mr. Attis. But those without personal experience can be wary, he says: "They have heard the stories about the downsides." Some institutions have considered RCM and balked.

The model does come with baggage. Some find it too corporate for higher education. If improperly managed, it can pit college against college within a university, creating winners and losers, and leave the central administration with little cash. Experts cite the University of Pennsylvania, which adopted RCM in the 1970s, and where deans created their own fiefdoms. A chief budget officer at another institution recently told Mr. Attis that to buy a chiller or another piece of equipment for his campus, he has to go "hat in hand to each of the deans."

Moreover, Mr. Attis says, the model might just be a way for presidents and provosts to slough off the burdens of running a university in tough times. "Some think that this is a way to push the problem down to the deans and let them make the hard decisions and take the flak."

## MONEY TALKS

One appeal of the model is transparency. Both administrators and professors normally see a traditional budget process as a black box.

"Ultimately, money comes in, and money goes out," says Maria Pallavicini, provost at the University of the Pacific, which plans to adopt RCM in about two years. "We need people to have a broader understanding of the fiscal realities," she says, "how the university is run and what impact a program has on university finances."

But it's not like Responsibility Center Management is a formula that simply allows an institution to run itself. It has to be actively managed. That's partly because on any campus, even prominent schools or colleges are often money losers, in need of subsidies—and that doesn't necessarily change under RCM.

A strong central administration must help redistribute money within the university. That ad-

ministration also has to levy high enough taxes to maintain a strategic reserve and uphold rules both to prevent deans from haggling over the taxes and to bar competition, like an engineering school offering composition courses to draw students away from the liberal-arts college.

The model doesn't do away with negotiations over money between academic units. "Some people would like to think that RCM should be conversation proof," says John R. Curry, director of strategic initiatives in higher education for Deloitte Consulting and a leading expert on the approach. On some campuses, he says, standing committees continually revisit how much colleges are taxed and how money is distributed within the institution.

Under RCM, the finances of an institution are laid bare, allowing people to see which programs are costly and not strongly tied to the mission, making them candidates for elimination. "Most universities can't do that right now," Mr. Curry

**“People think of RCM as a way to make clear why they get money when they get money.”**

says, "because they don't know their costs."

The prospect of that knowledge can be promising and nerve-wracking. At the University of Vermont, which will adopt RCM this fall, administrators have held more than 200 meetings about the move, posted online all of the documents associated with the transition, and issued an open invitation to meet with "anyone, anytime, anywhere" about the process.

Faculty members there hope for continued transparency. "Everyone will be able to see the figures and know why a decision was made, even if we don't agree with it," says Julie Roberts, a professor of linguistics and president of the faculty senate. "Just getting the budgetary decisions out closer to the faculty has the potential to be very beneficial both to the faculty and to the teaching and research mission."

Vermont calls its new program "incentive-based budgeting" rather than Responsibility Center Management. ("Everyone avoids the term," says

Mr. Curry, as if to dispel doubts.) Tom Sullivan, president of the university, worked with the model as provost at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Vermont's existing budgeting system, he says, "did not have sufficient incentives built in."

In a state and region facing significant demographic declines, UVM is one of the costliest public universities. It had to find a budget model, Mr. Sullivan says, that pushed goals of affordability, financial sustainability, and innovation.

Incentives work best with entrepreneurial people on the front lines. And Ms. Roberts and other faculty members at Vermont point to the university's current lineup of deans as their main concern: Some will be very good at starting programs, boosting revenue, and cutting costs. Others, maybe not.

In fact, experts say that deans end up being the main casualties of a transfer to RCM. Mr. Attis, of the Education Advisory Board, says there is often a turnover of deans after a university adopts the budget model. If they have spent decades simply dividing up money handed down from the top, says Mr. Curry, they can forget how to be entrepreneurial.

But if they take to it, he says, "a good RCM system is a magnificent training ground to be a provost or president." Under the model, a dean has to understand costs, revenues, enrollment, facilities, human resources, and all of the other elements that presidents deal with. "Once you are in that kind of job and successful at it, you are a wonderful candidate for a big job," Mr. Curry says, "because you have to see the big picture."

#### **CHERRY-PICKING**

Of course the decentralized budget model isn't for every institution. It can be useful at large research universities, while smaller colleges might be able to accomplish similar objectives with a cost-accounting process that sets up rewards for meeting goals. Mr. Attis has seen many instances in which an institution decides to adopt RCM and gets most of the way through the planning process, only to give up and go back to a central budget.

Dominican University of California has a similar story. In 2010, at the urging of a business dean who eventually became provost, Dominican started planning a switch to RCM. Harlan Stelmach, a professor of humanities who became a champion for the new model, says faculty members were wooed by the possibility of a transparent budget (at the time, he says, the departing president was not known to be very open). The university had lined up administrators and deans who relished the entrepreneurial opportunities.

But sometime after Dominican hired a new president, Mary B. Marcy, the whole thing "fizzled," Mr. Stelmach says. Luis Ma. R. Calingo, the

provost who had pushed the idea, left to become president of Woodbury University, where he plans to adopt the model. At Dominican, discussions generated good ideas, Ms. Marcy says, and the budget process is no longer the work of the central administration. A committee representing faculty and administrators now takes part, and the university has set aside money to support entrepreneurial ideas.

As for a shift to RCM, Ms. Marcy was uncomfortable with the way the model decentralized fund raising. She believes it does not fit a small college like hers.

“We cherry-picked,” she says. “There were a lot of good ideas that we implemented. So, I didn’t feel that RCM was bad or good. I felt that we would take what was useful and not the rest.”

The University of Arizona took a run at RCM

several years ago but backed away when the recession hit. Experts say that RCM can be difficult to put in place during a downturn. It’s hard to sell something new to faculty members and the rest of the campus when money is drying up.

Now, though, Arizona is once again planning to move to RCM, starting next year. Andrew C. Comrie, the provost there, says the university, like others, wants to fire up innovation and entrepreneurialism. Meanwhile, he has to remind people that the mission is not just about dollars.

“Everyone wants to go to the bottom right-hand corner to see how much we cost or how much we’re getting—a natural tendency, but of course we’re not in the business of producing financial bottom lines,” he says. If you get right down to it, none of the colleges there makes money. Making money is not what higher education is about.

*Originally published on February 9, 2015*

# So, You Want to Be a Dean?

You'd better be skilled at  
risk management and compromise

By DAN BUTIN

**I** AM DONE. After six years of founding and leading the School of Education and Social Policy at Merrimack College, I have returned to the faculty. In those six years I hired 17 faculty members, started seven academic programs, and worked with two presidents, four provosts, and eight deans.

I started out idealistic, and adamant that I could develop a better model of a school of education. What could be so hard, I thought, in “operationalizing” one’s ideas? What I have since learned: Nothing is more exciting or complicated in higher education as turning ideas into reality. It is way harder than rocket science.

So for any of you faculty members considering moving into administration, I have good news and bad news. The good news is that your background

may be your greatest asset. The bad news is that it may also be your undoing as a capable administrator.

The role of a dean has been characterized as “dove, dragon, and diplomat.” A dean is often in the unfortunate liminal position of being no longer truly a professor but not completely an administrator, either (like the provost or president) — and thus prone to role conflict and ambiguity. One study found that deans perform as many as 168 different duties. The job has had its defenders. Back in 2003, Stanley Fish, in a column for *The Chronicle* called “First, Kill All the Administrators,” described administration as “an intellectual task” and, in his trademark brazenness, declared: “James I of England once famously (and prophetically) said, ‘No bishops, no king.’ I say, no adminis-



trators, no life of the mind.”

So what does it take to be an academic dean? I see three distinct characteristics central to the role: strategic thinking, risk management, and compromise.

Let me start with the good news. Strategic thinking is really what all of us in higher education have been trained to do. We thrive in the complexity of large heaps of often-conflicting data, searching for connections and implications and unexpected findings, striving to synthesize, or at least hold the tension in balance, of a wide range of stories and narratives, all the while working to articulate just the right framing to make sense of and give prominence to our key findings.

That, in a nutshell, is the power of academic deans who can think strategically. It may come into play in a decision about how an admissions policy is developed, what subfield the next faculty hire should be in, or where to allocate scarce re-

## You are just the leader. Your success is absolutely and fundamentally linked to, and determined by, the people you work with.

sources. As dean, you may have to think creatively about how to devise a new type of scholarship fund or how to restructure existing courses into an exciting program that will attract students from across the campus. The job is about moving a wide range of highly complex puzzle pieces around in real time with a foreknowledge that the implications could resonate for years or even decades.

It's exciting stuff, and it's what we as academics thrive at in our own research.

But that brings me to the bad news. Strategic thinking as a dean requires two other skills that most academics are lousy at: risk management and compromise.

Academics tend to be risk-averse. We are more than happy spending years in front of our comput-

ers in order to make sure we have every angle figured out, every argument thoroughly vetted, every last article read. An academic project may be years in the making and not bear fruit for a decade, if ever.

But that's not the world in which most colleges and universities operate. As dean, my day-to-day life has been a constant series of meetings that required quick decisions. It was like playing 10 simultaneous games of chess — blindfolded.

I would walk into a meeting more or less knowing who would be there, with what issues, and with what desired outcomes. Then someone else would show up. Or a new bit of information about budgets would be mentioned. Or a different idea would emerge. And I would have to pivot and decide: Was this new development important? Should we discuss it more? Should I steamroll ahead with my original plan or refocus? How will my actions be perceived by, and affect, the president, provost, department chairs, faculty, administrative staff, students, their parents, community partners, and key donors. (Did I leave anybody out?) How might it play out on social media or in the local press?

All of which brings me to my final characteristic of being a dean. If I had to articulate the one fundamental difference between faculty and administrative life, it would be the ability and need to compromise. As a professor, I would almost never compromise. Why should I compromise on how I think about a conceptual problem or how to best teach a specific topic? I can of course accommodate diverse student needs and abilities, and change my mind if I learn something new. I can be incredibly flexible in my ways of thinking and teaching. But compromise on what I believed or what I did? Nope.

As a dean, I compromised literally every single day. I compromised when a policy was vague on whether a student should be expelled, and when the marketing department wanted to rephrase how we described our academic programs to make them more understandable and appealing. I compromised when the provost asked me to reconsider a cap on our class sizes, and when I couldn't pay our adjuncts what they deserved. I compromised because, well, if I hadn't, nothing would have ever been done.

My six years have been very rewarding — but also very long. The average length of a deanship is about four years. It is a tiring job. So, dear reader, if indeed you desire to be an administrator and can deal with the risk management and the compromises, let me close by offering four “Deanship 101” suggestions.

**Follow the money.** Time and again, you will be put in positions where you have huge responsibilities and minimal authority. The quickest and sur-

# Deans should never see their jobs merely as making a system run smoothly, as if the institution were producing widgets.

est way to have any semblance of success is to be in control of the budget for those responsibilities. Ask for it, demand it, negotiate for it; get it if you can. You'll thank me when you do.

**Think in terms of systems.** No matter how well you work with your faculty and staff — or how much you believe that you (or someone you trust) have things all figured out — you still have to transform practices into policies and procedures. The point is not to create a bureaucracy; though if done poorly that is exactly what will happen. Rather, policies and procedures, when well crafted, will allow you to do your job carefully and decisively. They will facilitate communication, enhance buy-in, and mitigate unforeseen issues. Look at it this way: What happens when you're gone? Systems and processes are the heart and soul of how institutions continue to function long after you have stepped down.

**Within those systems are people. Never forget that.** Being a dean requires an immense amount of relationship-centered work. The nature of that work will change: negotiating, collaborating, mentoring, counseling, brainstorming, hiring, firing. But the big-picture reality is this: You are just the leader. Your success is absolutely and fun-

damentally linked to, and determined by, the people you work with.

**Always remember that you were hired (implicitly or explicitly) for your vision.** Academe is about ideas, and a dean is the representative of a vision. Deans should never see their jobs merely as making a system run smoothly, as if the institution were producing widgets. We are here to teach and prepare students to become thoughtful and engaged citizens of a complex and pluralistic democracy. Academe is about knowledge production and dissemination, and deans are supposed to have a vision for what that means and how it looks in their fields.

So as you consider whether to move into administration, dig deep into that most basic question: Why? If you can answer that confidently, and stomach the reality that success will be messy and complicated and never to your complete satisfaction, then ... welcome aboard.

*Dan Butin is a professor of education at Merrimack College, and executive director of its Center for Engaged Democracy. He stepped down as dean of the college's School of Education and Social Policy in December.*

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TIM FOLEY FOR THE CHRONICLE

# A Tale of 2 Deans

## What is the difference between an effective dean and a mediocre one?

By M. MARK WASICSKO and BRAD BALCH

**I**T IS THE BEST of jobs, it is the worst of jobs, it is marked by occasional wisdom and ample amounts of incredulity—well, you get the idea. Being a dean today is a challenging, daunting, and repeatedly gratifying experience—one that we would highly recommend if you have what it takes.

Effective deans are in high demand as baby-boomer deans like us continue to step down or retire. Returning to the classroom last fall has provided us with the time, space, and distance to reflect on our combined 65-year leadership ad-

venture that we call the “lifecycle of a dean.” What follows are our insights on the position to help you decide whether it is a career path you should pursue. Nancy K. Schlossberg’s theory on adult transitions applies well to the dean’s lifecycle: It is a “moving in,” “moving through,” and “moving out” process.

**How do I know if it is my turn to move in to a deanship?** If you wait until you are ready to be a dean, you will never become one. No one enters the job completely prepared to be a dean, no matter how confident some may seem. It’s like every-

thing else in life: You start where you are, learn by trial and error, improve as you move along, and discover things while practicing the trade.

There are, however, precursors for doing the dean's work well. Effective leadership, wrote the late Thomas J. Sergiovanni, takes three things—the head, hand, and heart. All three are important, but we believe the difference between a mediocre dean and a good one is primarily a matter of the heart or what we call “dispositions.”

Certain core dispositions are at the heart of good leadership and are a priori conditions for effective deaning. We have seen ample evidence that knowledge and skill can improve rapidly for the rookie dean. Dispositions, however, are more difficult to change and improve upon, as they emanate from our most deeply held values and beliefs. You either have them or you don't. Among the dispositions we see as necessary for success in the dean's office:

- Believing in the people you lead—that reasonable people provided with reasonable information will make reasonable decisions.
- A keen predilection for listening to diverse viewpoints, finding common ground on most issues, and seeing the big picture.
- Understanding that good relationships, effective teams, and shared responsibilities (and rewards) are the pathways to important accomplishments.

Some people might be able to fake such dispositions over the short haul. But since much of what a dean confronts requires improv, the mask quickly falls away and the soul of the leader is exposed.

So what indicators can help you decide if you would be an effective dean? A good clue is the degree to which others are telling you, unsolicited, that you would make a good dean and encouraging you to pursue the job. Another clue: Are senior administrators interested in nominating, sponsoring, or mentoring you on the administrative track? Several professional organizations offer annual institutes for aspiring deans. Those sessions are an excellent opportunity to hear from veteran deans and join others who are considering the position as well.

Other common indicators include a feeling of professional restlessness, a need for a challenge, a perceived duty to help an organization grow, and a sense of responsibility to channel criticism, both your own and other people's, into positive action.

Oddly enough, many of best deans we have known were initially reluctant to take the job. Reluctant leaders end up being some of the most effective and beloved. While a strong ego is essential for a dean to keep jumping back into the ring after each round, it has to be balanced with ample amounts of humanity and humility.

**Do I have what it takes for moving through?**

We think there is no better job in academe. Deanships come with: (a) resources that can directly affect academic operations, (b) decision-making authority to create and sustain changes, and (c) opportunities to interact with a wide range of people.

As a dean, to ensure the success of both students and faculty in your care, you need ample competence in the college's disciplines. You need a willingness to be honest and transparent, along with a healthy dose of naive optimism. All of those qualities can help you build a positive campus culture in which people enjoy their work and look forward to a personal and professional affiliation with the college. If all of that resonates with you—and you are willing to be vulnerable and persistent enough to model those imperatives—a deanship may be your cup of tea.

On the practical side, we would be remiss if we didn't mention the 60-hour work week (and sometimes more). There are no “spring breaks” or summer down periods; instead you have vacation and sick days. Student issues arise in the evenings and on weekends. Donor and alumni activities occur during holidays and at the same time as your children's events. Travel is a must.

You soon discover that your calendar is no longer under your control. It's a 24-7, 365-day commitment. Being willing to accept such obligations and then balancing the busy dean's schedule with all of life's events is essential to surviving and thriving in the job.

Finally, moving through the dean's job brings a rollercoaster of highs and lows. You go from enjoying a heartfelt welcome to finding out about the hidden agendas and left-over scores to be settled. You spend hours hiring energetic faculty and staff members only to discover that, even with spending most of your days with people, your job can leave you with feelings of isolation and loneliness. Fortunately, deans have many opportunities to network with their fellow deans both within and outside of the campus. Both of us stayed on as deans so long, in part, because of the vast network of supportive people we met doing like work.

**How do you know when you are effective as a dean?** If you examine all the duties and responsibilities of the position—compounded by the fact that deans must lead and serve in a shared-governance environment that ranges from idealistic to unrealistic—you will find a near impossible and thankless task from which any sane and reasonable person might justifiably run. So, without doubt, the effective dean must have confidence and a strong sense of purpose to keep getting up in the morning and going to work in hopes of making a difference.

Confidence, vision, and strength of purpose are hallmarks of effective leadership. But even the most charismatic leader will never achieve significant and sustainable outcomes unless others are

willing to join in. We regularly gauged our effectiveness by the degree to which others were willing to work with us on difficult and often competing tasks.

Effective deaning, like good teaching, is improved through assessment. Providing opportunities for people to give you an anonymous, constructive criticism (usually in the form of an annual review) is a good, even if at times painful way to see how you're doing and make course corrections. Effective deans have the personal strength to accept the criticism as well as the praise and see how both inform decisions and directions.

**How do you know when it is time to move out?** That's more challenging than you might think. There is no bell that tolls or clap of thunder that announces the moment. Sometimes there is a little voice in the back of your head that tells you that your thirst is graciously quenched and it is time to pass the cup to the next generation of energetic and enthusiastic leaders. Sometimes it is your loudest faculty critics who are always generous with advice and criticism but stingy with support or assistance. Sometimes it is blunt trauma like when your doctor, concerned about your stress levels, asks, "Would you rather be dean or live?"

The decision is different and difficult for each of us. It would be so much simpler if we had one person, like the innocent child in the story about the emperor's new clothes, who would yell out, "It is time to move on." Minus that critical friend, there are a few subtle but telltale signs.

One of the best pieces of career advice that one of us ever received came over a plate of burritos with the writer Ray Bradbury. He said, "I never felt what I did was 'work' and never needed a vacation." He said he promised himself, while still a young man, that if he couldn't leap from bed in the morning excited to get going three out of the five week days, he would find something else to do. When your enthusiasm for academic problems and bureaucratic puzzles wanes, that is a good first gauge that it may be time to step down.

Often times the energy and enthusiasm necessary for the job is sustained by strategic benchmarks. The completion of a multiyear strategic plan, the success of a new student program, or the end of a capital campaign are all generally defined

by three- to seven-year cycles. As those benchmarks are achieved, take the time to gauge your interest in leading the next new multiyear project. Sometimes there is one more round left within us and sometimes there's not.

In other cases, your reasons for quitting may be far more tactical. Personnel problems, fiscal woes, productivity targets, and donor and alumni relations can trigger significant stress. On one hand the pressure amps up our energy to face the challenges of the job and on the other it wears on our health, wellness, and productivity. Occasionally, problems that seemed short-term and minor can escalate and wise deans will know they have accomplished all they can in the position.

Predictability is another meaningful gauge of your readiness to stay or leave. We both found that our role as dean was largely predictable after five years. Patterns became regular and we were able to anticipate and head off many problems. Paradoxically, while that adds much comfort to the job, it also adds an element of mundaneness. When the job started to feel more mundane than comfortable, we found ourselves far more interested in mentoring other future deans in academe than attending routine meetings on our respective campuses. We both preferred to focus on broad challenges affecting the academy at large rather than forwarding reports that appeared redundant and meaningless. Whether the predictability of your deanship is a source of comfort or distress, it serves as another signpost to guide your career decisions.

Higher education needs strong and sustainable leadership. We hope that our ramblings have piqued your curiosity to consider the greatest job in the academy—the deanship.

Of the academic dean's lifecycle it can rightfully be said, "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done," and when the time comes to return to the faculty ranks, "it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known."

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*Originally published on March 3, 2014*

# Fund Raising for Deans

## How to match donors' passions with your college's needs

By DAVID D. PERLMUTTER

**A**N ACQUAINTANCE who was a department chair at a small liberal-arts college described one of the nightmare-come-to-life scenarios of every academic administrator faced with fund raising. He had met an alum with “a very high capacity”—the development term for wealth available to give—who was ready to make a major gift. The catch was that the donor embraced “fringe phenomena” (let’s call them leprechauns here to protect his privacy). His ambition was to finance an endowed chair in leprechaun studies—not as in folklore but as in scientific fact.

To their credit, my friend, his faculty, the college foundation, and the upper administration stood tall and politely turned down the proposed gift.

The anecdote, although unusual, typifies a common apprehension of academics who are thinking about becoming administrators and thus entering the world of fund raising: the danger of selling out, of being pushed around by outsiders whose money drives the department and its constituencies to places they don’t want to go.

So if you are a department chair, director of a center, or dean of a college, what should you do if you find that what the donor wants is not what you need?

Remember your mission. We recently hired a new development officer for our College of Media & Communication here at Texas Tech. In interviewing the candidates, I emphasized that we are not in the business of making money. We are a

nonprofit dedicated to: (a) the discovery, creation, and dissemination of ideas and knowledge; and (b) the preparation of students for successful careers and thoughtful citizenship. But to achieve those ends at the highest level possible, we need to raise a lot of money from private sources.

That is a distinction with a difference. One way to keep on track as an academic involved in fund raising is to remember that loyalty should be to the mission, not the money. The latter is a tool to achieve the former.

That said, it’s not always easy to stay mission-focused. As a December 2013 article in *The Chronicle* on department chairs highlighted, an average day on the job may consist of reviewing schedules, preparing assessment plans, dealing with personnel issues, filling out forms, recruiting, answering email, fielding complaints ... and trying to find money to support the program.

The big picture—the department’s intellectual and pedagogical goals and priorities—may get lost in the hourly minutiae. Nevertheless, when a windfall dangles before your eyes, you need to make a hard-headed calculation of whether it can work and if it really will help.

Know what you want—in detail. One of the great benefits of thinking about development is that it prompts careful consideration of the department’s future by you and your faculty: What are your exact goals and needs? How much money would help you achieve them?

If you think that can be done in a single after-

noon meeting, just try it. Most people who become professors are passionate about, and inwardly directed to, their own area of expertise in research and teaching. That's as it should be to maximally benefit students and scholarship. But when it comes to picking out, say, the department's five top-priority areas for outside funding, having 25 professors all advocating for their passions as the obvious focus may lead to gridlock or, worse, dissipation—as in, “OK, we are agreed: We have 25 maximum priorities!”

Still, the conversation is vital. Every department should set realistic goals and needs, and then choose which ones are the actual priorities. If you hope to get private money for your “tops” list you must:

- Create justifications for the goals and needs that you can easily explain to lay outsiders.
- Attach a price tag to the goal or need. What amount of money is required to make it happen, and to make it last?

The exercise may well be painful, but the result will help you stay on mission.

Accept that some of your department's priorities will be more attractive than others to donors. When I interviewed for the deanship I now hold, I was asked, “What are your priorities?” My answer was that I thought there were organic priorities that made sense for the college already, one of which was increasing research, teaching, and community service in Hispanic media. The college already had an about-to-be-named Hispanic Media Center that did great work and even edited an influential journal. Our city itself has a large and growing Hispanic/Latino population.

And Hispanic media in general—from news to digital gaming to advertising—is booming in jobs, venues, and research. In short, with continuing outside help, the college can become a leader, perhaps the leader, in this area. It was a slam dunk for the faculty to agree that it should be a priority. And it was one (the center did get a naming gift) that was attractive to donors.

Finding a project that makes sense to a department's internal and external constituencies is not usually so simple. Take, for instance, a common challenge in donor relations. The kind of gift most alumni tend to think about first, since it most obviously connects with their own experience and “helps students,” is scholarships for undergraduates. Yet when I participated in a meeting of department chairs at the University of Iowa a few years ago, and we were asked to name our two top fund-raising goals, all of us listed “Ph.D. student support” and “faculty-research support.” None of us were opposed to enhancing undergraduate scholarships, but in tight budget times we were most concerned with the survival of our doctoral programs and the retention of

productive faculty members.

Be willing to shift gears. Don't be hypnotized by your agenda. Keeping your priority list handy does not mean you should ignore out-of-the-box opportunities.

When I started as an administrator, at the University of Iowa, two foundation officers—who were both graduates of our journalism program—came to me with an idea from a donor. He was not a graduate of our program, but he was trying to find a home for a certain concept: Nonprofits desperately needed more professional help in raising money, so why not create a training program for undergraduates interested in becoming development officers?

At the time, I was just venturing into fund raising myself. I certainly knew that we had no such program or any variation of it within our university. And it was an intriguing idea, because the basic skill sets to work in development included effective communication skills we were already teaching: data analysis, listening, reading, writing, and speaking. I also liked that our journalism program could make this new offshoot a standout, something that few other programs offered.

Fast forward three years: With major gifts from the original donor and others, a lot of help from professionals, and hard work by faculty, the program became a success.

Recast and redirect, gently and thoughtfully. Consider the “undergraduate scholarships” default mode of most donors versus the other needs and priorities of your department. While I have never attempted to talk donors out of helping undergraduates through scholarships, I have tried to persuade some of them that:

- Our national reputation is often tied to the prestige and accomplishments of doctoral students and research faculty.
- While helping young people go to college is admirable, you also want top faculty members and graduate assistants teaching them.
- Undergraduates can gain increased applied skills and cognitive development by getting experience with research. And again, the best professors and graduate students are necessary for that outcome.

The point is: A donor's passion is achievable via many vehicles.

Leave doors open. Sometimes a donor's idea will not work at a particular time but will be worth retrieving if circumstances change. A dean in the sciences at a major research university told of a retired faculty member who loved his home department, had done well in life because of personal thriftiness and several lucrative patents, and wanted to create an endowed chair in his subfield. The catch: The area of research he had in mind—his

own—was not one that was a focus of the department anymore. Creating a chair in that subfield would, the dean and the faculty worried, be of only short-term benefit.

Wisely the dean (and the department chair) did not just say “No, thanks” and walk away. He continued the conversation with both the donor and the department. Finally, some years later, a group of faculty members made the case that the college needed to invest in a new and exciting area of research. The dean explored the topic, and they all agreed that the new area was, plausibly, a pathway of research derived from the old specialty of the retired professor.

What happened next was truly win-win: The emeritus benefactor recognized the relationship between his passion and the revised idea. He gave;

everybody was happy.

If you are an academic administrator involved in fund raising, you are your department’s face, voice, and character to the wider world, and the interlocutor, especially between faculty and donors. In dealing with donors whose ideas don’t match your department’s, don’t give up easily or force a fit. Just as with good teaching and research, a little creativity and playing with alternative scenarios can help fund raising move forward.

*David D. Perlmutter is a professor and dean of the College of Media & Communication at Texas Tech University. He writes the Career Confidential advice column for The Chronicle. His book on promotion and tenure was published by Harvard University Press in 2010.*

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# 5 Pathways to Becoming a Dean

Serving as department chair or associate dean helps prepare professors for deanships

## Eli Jones Leads His Alma Mater's Business School



TEXAS A&M U.

Eli Jones

Eli Jones had not intended to leave the University of Arkansas after just three years as business dean. But he still had the Aggie spirit, he says, so when he got a call from his alma mater, Texas A&M University, he couldn't say no.

Mr. Jones, who became dean of Texas A&M's Mays Business School in July, credits many professors there for "planting that seed" that led him to pursue a doctorate. He earned a Ph.D. in marketing at Texas A&M in 1997, af-

ter having earned a bachelor's degree at the university in 1982 and an M.B.A. four years later.

Early in his career, he worked in sales management for companies like Nabisco and Quaker Oats. Now he brings perspectives in business theory and practice to his academic and administrative work as an "accidental dean," he says.

"Universities saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. To be invited back by professors who taught me is a huge blessing."

In his two previous business deanships, at Arkansas and Louisiana State University, Mr. Jones led successful fund-raising campaigns and developed international partnerships. He has grand plans for Texas A&M as well. He spends "17 hours a day" thinking about how to move the school forward, he says, and will hold a strategic-planning meeting this week with administrators and selected faculty and staff members at the Mays school.

Mr. Jones, who is African-American, is also concerned about creating greater diversity in the field of business education. Soon after he earned his doctorate, he became a member of the then-fledgling PhD Project, whose goals include diversifying business-school faculties. He saw the project's Marketing Doctoral Student Association grow from 20 members in 1997, the year it was founded, to 200.

In the past two decades, the percentage of business professors who are African-American, Hispanic, or Native American

grew from 1 percent to 4 percent, for a total of about 1,300. Deans from underrepresented minority groups are also scarce, in part because it takes years for a faculty member to rise to an administrative level, says Bernard J. Milano, president of the PhD Project and the KPMG Foundation, the project's lead supporter.

There are 43 deans from underrepresented minority groups leading business schools in the United States, Mr. Milano says. Seventeen of those deans are at historically black colleges. That's why work by deans like Mr. Jones is so important, Mr. Milano says. He remembers getting a phone call from the University of Arkansas when a search committee was interviewing Mr. Jones. "I told them he's too good to be true," Mr. Milano says. "Everywhere he's been, he's made a huge difference."

Now Mr. Jones works to support graduate students and faculty members in the PhD Project. He says he wants hiring to reflect "our country and our world." When he talks to students considering a graduate degree, he can provide a reason to feel encouraged: "I tell them this career has been good to me."

— KATE STOLTZFUS

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## Matthew Waller Figures Out How to Navigate the University Bureaucracy



BETH HALL

Matthew A. Waller

The new dean of the business school at the University of Arkansas is believed to be one of the first leaders of a major business school drawn from the ranks of the supply-chain-management discipline.

A short trip north of the Fayetteville, Ark., campus, on Interstate 49, goes a long way toward explaining the choice. Within 25 miles are the headquarters of Tyson Foods, among the largest meat processors in the world; J.B. Hunt Transport Services, one of the

largest trucking companies in North America; and Walmart, the largest retailer in the country. The university's Sam M. Walton College of Business is named for the retail chain's founder.

"For many companies around here, supply-chain management is one of the critical success factors of their businesses," says Matthew A. Waller, who became dean in May.

The region provides a fertile laboratory for Mr. Waller, whose research has focused on retail supply-chain management — how retailers decide which items to stock, how much to stock, and how to get the items to their customers. He was so drawn to the region 22 years ago that he gave up a tenure-track position at Western Michigan University for a one-year appointment as a visiting professor at Arkansas.

Mr. Waller cites two reasons for the emergence of the discipline: deregulation of the trucking industry, in 1980, which gave companies more transportation options, and the technology boom of the 1990s, which made it easier to store and analyze large data sets.

The field's growing importance among the region's top companies — employers of many business-school graduates — led the college to establish a supply-chain-management department in 2011, with Mr. Waller as its first chair.

When the dean position opened, in 2015, he was initially reluctant to apply, concerned about his fund-raising ability and about the impact on his family. He first agreed to only a one-year appointment as interim dean, but soon realized that he liked the position after all.

Now Mr. Waller hopes to increase faculty pay and expand the Fleischer Scholars Program, which brings high-school students from underserved parts of Arkansas to the campus for summer training.

He also hopes to bring greater efficiency to what some might consider a challenge more daunting than even a global supply chain: the university bureaucracy.

On the advice of a colleague, Mr. Waller set up short meetings last year with about 70 administrators across the campus. He kept detailed notes and included in his notebook a photo of each person he met with.

"Within a university, decisions are made in a very networked kind of way," he says. "By having that network, it allows me to really get things done more quickly." — BEN WIEDER

*Originally published on July 17, 2016*

## Richard Arum, Who Found Colleges 'Adrift,' Becomes an Education Dean

As he prepares to become dean of the School of Education at the University of California at Irvine, Richard Arum is far more optimistic about the promise of higher education than might be expected from his and Josipa Roksa's 2011 book, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, and its 2014 sequel, *Aspiring Adults Adrift: Tentative Transitions*

*of College Graduates.*

The former, in particular, blew the mortarboard off academe with national survey results that showed that a large percentage of students study, read, write, and learn very little in college. By establishing that sorry reality with data, both books had more impact than had decades of jeremiads against American higher education.

His own findings do not make him despondent. "I have such



COURTESY OF RICHARD ARUM

Richard Arum

high hopes for what education can deliver to young people," says Mr. Arum, who is chair of sociology at New York University, and a professor of sociology and education. He expects to assume the deanship at Irvine on June 30.

One great strength of American higher education, he says, "is that it's open to criticism and willing to confront problems" particularly through "rigorous evaluation and assessment where you take an honest

look at what's going on, to be able to move forward."

Since he started out teaching and being a technology consultant for six years in public schools in Oakland, Calif., Mr. Arum has worked in many education-school teaching and research roles. Some of his future Irvine colleagues encouraged him to apply for the deanship, he says.

His goal at Irvine, he says, will be to help shape "a 21st-century education school" in a stronghold of "the education sciences" that already boasts high citation counts and external financial support per faculty member.

"I am optimistic," he says. "And my move to UC Irvine is a sign of my optimism."

The most deflated he sounds, during an interview, is when he recounts that some faculty members around the country wrote to him to ask — in regard to *Academically Adrift's* revelation that students reported that few courses asked them to write even 20-page papers — the question that they often get from students: "Are those pages single-spaced, or double-spaced?" — PETER MONAGHAN

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## Jenna Carpenter Wants to Create a Less Traditional Engineering School

As founding dean of the School of Engineering at Campbell University, Jenna P. Carpenter has the challenge of building a new program from the ground up.

To do that, she is relying on what she learned during 26



CAMPBELL U.

Jenna B. Carpenter

years on the faculty of the College of Engineering and Science at Louisiana Tech University, where she was associate dean for undergraduate studies and director of the Office for Women in Science and Engineering before she joined Campbell, in July. The curriculum she is trying to create at Campbell combines strong foundational courses with project-intensive work. That format was inspired by Louisiana Tech's first-year program, Living

With the Lab.

Campbell's new program will be the seventh undergraduate engineering school in North Carolina, but only the second at a private university in the state.

Students at Campbell had long requested an engineering major, says Ms. Carpenter, and interest in the subject was greater than the number of spots at other schools in the eastern and central regions of the state. The new major will start off with two concentrations: mechanical engineering, with a focus on 3-D printing, and chemical/pharmaceutical engineering.

"A lot of engineering schools have gotten where they really specialize those degrees, but if you get students to focus too narrowly too early, it limits their job opportunities down the road," says Ms. Carpenter. "Every kid needs circuits, every kid needs thermo. Nanotechnology, for example, didn't exist when I was an undergrad, but I can understand it because I had the basic courses."

Now Ms. Carpenter is working on developing partnerships with companies in the state's Research Triangle Park and overseeing the renovation of a building to temporarily house the school. "Traditional classrooms with desks won't work," she says, and the university is instead creating spaces that have tables and chairs that can be reconfigured alongside white boards and lab stations.

Campbell expects to have about 50 students in its first engineering class this fall. The students who have been offered places so far would put the class at or above the national average for race and gender diversity, she says.

"We want to turn away from the traditional 'trains, planes, automobiles' perception to focus on the aspects of engineering that might attract more women," she says. For example, the recruitment posters, instead of emphasizing math and science, depict engineering as a creative field that uses design and problem-solving skills.

— ANGELA CHEN

*Originally published on March 20, 2016*

## Gillian Lester Asks More of a Successful Law School

At a time when legal education is in turmoil, Columbia Law School is in an enviable position, with students still clamoring to be admitted to the top-tier program whose graduates overwhelmingly land full-time jobs.

The law school's new dean, Gillian Lester, doesn't plan to allow the school to simply rest on its reputation.

"We feel very privileged that we still have many more people applying to Columbia Law School than we can admit," says Ms. Lester, a scholar of employment law. "That said, we do want to train students in a way that emphasizes being the best possible professional for the needs of a challenging profession."

Ms. Lester came to Columbia in January from the University of California at Berkeley, where she was acting dean of the law school. Information gathered from months of conversations

with Columbia alumni, faculty members, students and administrators — some of which took place during trips to New York before she formally took office — helped her shape her priorities as dean.

Among those priorities, she says, are tweaking the curriculum to help students see themselves as "global actors" and as entrepreneurs who can intentionally craft a career that, over time, spans the private and public sectors. Ms.

Lester also wants to forge

stronger ties between alumni and current students and maintain "people's pride about this community."

Students at Columbia Law School are already talented, "so the question is what do we do to make them the best version of themselves," Ms. Lester says. "I talk to our students about taking full advantage of their three years here, to not just ask what the law is, but what the law ought to be."

Administrators, students and faculty are excited about what's next, she says.

"I see people wanting to roll up their sleeves and get to work."

— AUDREY WILLIAMS JUNE

*Originally published on April 13, 2015*



PETER FRIED, COLUMBIA LAW

Gillian Lester

