

# Engage and Persuade

## An Approach to Academic Leadership

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# 1. Introduction

This book is written primarily for those who are assuming new leadership positions in colleges and universities: presidents, provosts, deans, department heads. It may also be of interest to those who currently occupy those positions and feel the need to try new approaches to improve their effectiveness. Leadership in the academy poses some special challenges that are not so obvious in organizations that operate in more traditional contractual settings. In the academy faculty and, to some extent, administrative staff are depended upon to participate well beyond their contractual obligations. Faculty may be asked to serve on committees, participate in the intellectual life of the organization, attend various functions, take on students for independent study, write letters of recommendation, and so on. Some of these activities, over and above what is contractually specified, are expected of administrative staff as well. For the most part, individuals may turn down these assignments without fear of repercussion. Personnel policies and institutional culture in the academy armor most employees most of the time against compelled acquiescence to direct orders in these matters. To accomplish much of this work, new leaders must develop a skill set that goes well beyond issuing directives and expecting compliance.

The leadership skill set that I will articulate here begins with two central ideas: engagement and persuasion. Engagement lays the foundation that makes persuasion possible. Even the best ideas will go nowhere if those who must ultimately make them work are not paying attention. If a leader wants to avoid being ignored, it is first necessary to gain the attention of those in the organization who must help make them a reality. Gaining attention requires engagement. Once engaged, the process of persuasion can begin.

Most of what I know about engaged and persuasive leadership I have learned from experience – both positive and negative. Successful efforts are gratifying, but making mistakes, acknowledging them to myself and thinking through how to be better the next time often provides more profound lessons. I have been guided

by extensive reading in the leadership literature, candid discussions with colleagues and mentors, and cautionary tales that fill the pages of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Education*. I have learned to recognize mistakes I hope to never make.

The road to good leadership is not well paved. There are library shelves full of general advice, theories *de jour*, and personal reflection, but context is important – as are the personalities and characters of those with whom one works. Leadership concepts and principles abound, but in the end they need to be put into practice. Every organization has its own dynamic, and while general principles are important starting points, applying them in context is the long part of the learning curve. Becoming a leader requires practice, and practice implies repeated effort with the aim of improvement.

My own practice has occurred over the course of 45 years in higher education. I have worked in universities my entire adult life. In truth, I never left school. After graduating from high school in 1962 I completed my undergraduate education as a Philosophy major at the University of Minnesota in 1966 and went directly to graduate school in philosophy at Harvard University. In 1970, with one year to go until I completed my PhD, I took a full-time teaching position at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. The year after I was tenured, 1979, I became the Interim Department Chair. I have been an academic administrator ever since. Although I am no longer an administrator, having “retired” from part-time teaching to consulting and designing new learning materials, I continue to work with university administrators as a consultant and coach.

In short, I have had three and a half decades of practice at becoming a leader in the university environment. Over the course of my career, I have held the positions of program director, department chair, associate dean, associate provost, dean, provost, chancellor, and interim president. I have worked in five universities – all of them regional campuses in public university systems. I have learned mostly from experience and self-reflection, although I did participate in a summer program for aspiring academic leaders (the Harvard University

Management Development Program) and in the American Association for State Colleges and Universities New President's Academy.

While learning from experience is a starting point for becoming an effective leader, having a bad experience is no guarantee that things will go better the next time around. Self-examination, assessment by others and a strong conceptual framework for understanding what happened are all essential ingredients of improvement. But good leadership is little more than an idea until it is tested in practice.

By way of illustration, here and throughout this book, I will use simplified *scenarios* drawn from my experience but reconfigured and tailored to the discussion at hand. The scenarios will not identify specific campuses or administrators. In some cases, details will be changed to keep issues in sharp focus. All of them, however, are grounded in actual situations and the core elements are explained as best as I can remember.

The point I wish to make with these initial scenarios is that situations that were crudely handled on first encounter could and would be handled more effectively with a better understanding of good leadership. These sketches of *how* my performance improved will serve as a starting point for a more extended reflection on *why* it improved – a reflection that constitutes the remainder of this book.

First consider one of the more painful situations a leader confronts: firing a direct report. Until I became a dean, I never had to fire anyone. At the department level, non-renewals were generally committee decisions, and I was fortunate to have staff that performed well. As an “associate” dean and provost, I did not have direct reports. In my deanship, however, I had a director of continuing education programs that consistently ran poorly attended programs at a financial loss.

Continuing education was intended to be a source of supplemental income for the school. The director viewed these programs as a community service and rarely produced more income than expenses. The director resisted exploration of new programs or discontinuance of programs with low attendance, but a handful

of loyal followers. Academic department heads did not have confidence in the director and would not make the effort to develop new curriculum for continuing education.

It was clear to me that the director needed to be replaced with someone who was more open to understanding the changing market for continuing education, more creative about programming, more trusted by the academic departments, and more committed to bringing revenue to the school. Nevertheless, as someone who had never previously fired an employee, I had a great deal of anxiety about how to do it.

The director believed he was doing a good job. He was busy and offered a substantial number of programs. He was unconcerned about the financial losses, insisting that his programs provided an important community service. He believed that the academic department heads were antagonistic and uncooperative. He was dismissive of my concerns.

It was not easy for me to put someone out of a job. I understand that for many people unemployment creates fear and potential hardship. The stigma of being fired can also lead to shame and a loss of self-confidence. To overcome these concerns, I permitted myself to be angry at the director. I treated his inability to perform as a failing on his part and his unwillingness to address my concerns as stubbornness. In short, I framed the situation as a clash of personalities and a contest of wills.

As might be expected, the meeting in which I discharged the director was filled with tension and hostility – on both sides. It ended with the director announcing that he would quit rather than be fired.

Looking back at this experience, I understand that I handled it poorly. I have since learned to handle these situations more skillfully. To do so, I discovered that I need to keep my emotions in check. My becoming angry with the person who is to be fired does not help either of us move on.

My approach now is to do a better job of laying the groundwork for a separation conversation by being very explicit, in writing, about goals and expectations of

improvement. These should be set out well before the conversation turns to removal of the employee. Looking back, this approach seems obvious, but I am continuously amazed at how reluctant supervisors are to document their employees' shortcomings until they are contemplating separation.

A meeting focused on goals and expectations can begin with a question: How have you addressed these concerns? I have learned that it is better to start this conversation by listening rather than speaking. I have also learned to frame the conversation in terms of what the organization needs rather than to personalize it in the language of my needs. This helps me keep my negative impulses at bay.

Experience has taught me that these conversations need to include discussion or description of a path to the future – or at least next steps. The person who is to be removed should hear more than rejection. There are many ways to accomplish this. If the organization has a position more suited to the individual's abilities, one can offer the opportunity. This has worked successfully for me in several situations. The individuals I removed in those cases were relieved to be relocated into a job they could manage. Each of them understood at some level that they were "over their heads." When this is not possible, it is wise to help the person define a plan to secure a new position elsewhere. It may even be possible to offer to be a reference for the right kind of position. This addresses the fear that you might be an obstacle to the person's future employment. At the very least, I have learned that the conversation in which the employee is removed should include an offer to permit resignation. My approach now is to give the person a day to decide which of us should make the separation announcement.

One of the most important lessons I have learned when I fire an employee is that what is at stake is not simply whether I am a humane boss. It is about whether I am following established procedure, have documented a record to support my actions, and am acting on behalf of the institution (or not). Others in the organization are very aware of how the separation process takes place, and my early practice tended to create feelings of insecurity among others in the organization. There is always a price to pay for firing an employee. That price is

often worth paying, but it is also important to remember that other employees need to have their sense of security reestablished.

In subsequent similar situations, I have learned to take anger out of the equation. Rather, I focus on the employee's capacity to accomplish the expected work. This requires empathetic discussions with the employee about what needs to be done and what is preventing him or her from doing it. It takes time and sympathetic discussion to help the employee recognize the reality of the mismatch between their skills and abilities and the job requirements. It also requires helping the person visualize a path from where they are to where they might find more satisfactory employment. Eliminating some of the unknowns can take enough of the emotion out of the conversation to make it constructive.

I don't think I would have been able to adopt my current approach without having the unsatisfactory experience of that first poorly executed firing. I am not saying that advice and guidance would have made no difference but having the experience of an unsatisfactory personal interaction motivated me to try a more structured, humane, path for the benefit of the person being terminated and the institution.

A second area of university business that requires well-developed leadership skills is the ability to work with campus governance groups. The dominant model of administrative interaction with faculty, and sometimes with staff and students is generally called "shared governance." Shared governance does not always mean the same thing in different college and university contexts, but it generally refers to the role of constituted governance groups representing faculty, staff, and students in making recommendations to administrators on institutional matters. In some cases, shared governance also means that in specified matters (curriculum, for example) the faculty has decision-making authority.

One of the most important matters of campus governance that is of substantial importance to administrators and faculty alike is the development of the annual operating budget. Faculty governance groups often have a budget committee that is charged with reviewing the annual institutional budget and making recommendations on funding priorities. Administrators generally understand the

requirement of consultation, but often fear that the faculty will promote its interests without due consideration of other institutional needs.

**Scenario:**

*Early in my career I was very conscious of the limits of documented authority of campus governance groups and careful to not set precedents that would permit them to act beyond that authority. In other words, I adopted a very formal relationship with governance groups, seeking their recommendations while reminding them of the limits of their authority. My memoranda communicating my decisions often opened with citation of the constitutional statement of the governance role in budgetary decisions.*

*As a result, my approach to shared governance tended to engender suspicion that I was going through the motions of consultation rather than taking faculty advice seriously. Some faculty members saw my communication by memorandum as self-protection – documenting consultation in the event of a conflict. This approach also led others to believe that I had made up my mind prior to consultation and was not really open to other perspectives.*

I have learned that it is important to take the time to assure governance groups that you listen carefully and understand their concerns. I now very consciously listen before I speak. When I do speak, my first remarks are designed to demonstrate that I have heard what is being said. Initially I might say something like: “Here is what I heard; do I understand you correctly?”

Once I have established that I understand the governance group’s position, I develop my concerns (if I have any) through questions rather than declarative statements. I might say: “In light of your position, how would you address this issue?” I try not to say: “The problem with your position is....” Questions are engaging; challenges can shut down dialogue.

I work very hard to keep discussions with governance groups from becoming a debate. Persuasion is not a wrestling match. Rather than answer points where I might disagree, I will ask the group if anyone else would like to comment. I have learned to extinguish my inclination to turn governance discussions into the



point/counterpoint format. Opening the conversation often reveals that there are divergent views among governance group members, and that permits the administrator to explore a range of responses.

A deeper lesson I learned about how to approach shared governance discussions is that establishing trust and creating an environment for genuine dialogue requires a good deal of pre-work. When possible, I try to engage governance groups in lower-stakes issues before we approach the hot buttons. In this manner we establish familiar ways of relating to one another that can guide our discussions of more volatile issues.

I have also found that regular meetings of administrators and governance leadership that are focused on general concerns rather than specific issues can create a context for constructive discussion. At one university I created a council of representatives from all governance constituencies (faculty, staff, and students) along with senior level administrators to discuss matters of concern to any group. The council had no formal standing; it was not a governance group or a substitute for governance. Rather, it was a discussion forum and an excellent barometer for issues that were on the horizon. The council provided a non-confrontational, low stake, forum for discussion of issues before they erupted into contests of conflicting positions.

Applying these lessons to the faculty budget committee, I learned that trust was best established by providing all requested financial information fully and rapidly. Moreover, faculty members of that committee required guidance in learning to understand and interpret the information they received. My inexperienced self would leave them to their own devices. My wiser, more experienced, self then assigned the vice chancellor for administration to sit with the committee when it requested his presence. His mantra was: "I want to make my problems your problems." He was both transparent and patient in explaining the consequences of our various financial options. I believe this was critical in helping this governance group become less adversarial when difficult resource decisions were necessary.

## Scenario:

*This scenario of learning to lead has to do with the allocation of new resources. In good budget years and in periods of enrollment growth, some new dollars were available to the university or to my administrative unit for allocation. Early on I learned to avoid the most rudimentary error of allocating resources to each operational area in proportion to its size and existing budget. This practice is equivalent to driving by looking into the rear-view mirror. It may keep you on the road, but it does little to anticipate and address future circumstances. Its main virtue is that it drives operating officers to solve their own problems, albeit with predictable, but often inadequate, budget increases.*

*A less status-quo oriented approach to new resource allocation is the budget hearing process. I did use this method early in my career as an administrator, but it never seemed very satisfying as a leadership tool. In this process, each operating officer prepared a budget request for some or all the available new funds. These requests were generally extensively documented and were sometimes unrealistically excessive in relation to the total funds available. The proposers often ask “high” as a strategy to attain the actual funds needed for their purposes. The operating officers, their staff, and those in their units generally invested a great deal of time and effort in the preparation of these requests.*

*The hearings themselves could be quite formal – structured around presentation and cross-examination. When the operating officers were also the audience, the questions tend toward probing for excesses with an underlying tone of skepticism. Each participant has a “turn in the barrel” and an opportunity to question colleagues’ requests. Typically, as CEO, I would leave the hearing experience, reflect on it, and issue a decision – allocating the available resources where I was persuaded they were most needed.*

I came to see that there were many problems with this method of allocating new resources and have learned to handle it differently. In later years I made decisions collectively with my chief operating officers. Each would come to the table knowledgeable about the needs in their operating areas. Each would also prepare one-page statements about their highest priority needs. I expected that these

statements would be developed after consultation with the units that reported to them.

The statements of need were expected to address the benefits to the campus either in terms of important infrastructure improvements, maintenance of core operations or contribution to strategic initiatives. The statements included a cost estimate but did not include any detailed budget information.

We collected and distributed budget request statements in advance to the group that would make recommendations to the CEO. This might be a group of the chief operating officers, the President's Council, a senior leadership team, or whatever group the CEO regularly used to advise decision-making. This group then discussed all the requests before deciding on any of them. For each request, the officer bringing it to the table would begin the discussion, but this was truly a discussion rather than a presentation. Everyone was expected to comment, and the most helpful comments related the request to the collective, strategic goals of the campus.

After thorough discussion, we worked back from the amount of available funds to support the requests that would be most beneficial to the campus. Our goal was to find a distribution that we could agree on collectively. Divergent views were resolved by the CEO. The greatest value of this process was that it helped the operating officers understand how allocations in other areas benefitted the campus generally and, often, their own area specifically. It was not unusual for the chief financial officer to argue for retention programs in the academic area to improve tuition collections. Another important consequence of this process was that all the chief operating officers understood their colleagues' financial needs. This tended to dampen the feelings that other areas were better funded than one's own.

The common thread in these three learning curves is my progressive understanding that good leadership requires more than the exercise of the right to make decisions for the organization. It requires the exercise of that right, to the extent that it is possible, through persuasion rather than fiat. Persuasion, in turn, requires that those involved be engaged enough to pay attention to the

discussion. The leader cannot lose sight of the fact that, in the end, the leader is accountable for making final decisions. Nevertheless, the processes a leader uses to make those decisions make a difference. Processes that are grounded in persuasion tend to support and improve organizational health.

In the following chapters I hope to explain why I believe that to be true and how leaders can develop the tools of persuasion to operate effectively and efficiently without resorting to methods of command and control. Leading an organization to constructive solutions to potentially contentious issues is most likely to be successful when the leaders practice is guided by a solid conceptual understanding of how specific decisions in specific contexts engage the organization effectively. This is a matter of integrating a general approach to leadership with well-developed processes for making decisions.

That said, engaged leadership that operates primarily through persuasion is not an easy path. I have tried to stay on it by being both an optimist and a skeptic simultaneously. I am an optimist in the sense that when persuasion fails, I am always willing to try it again. I am a skeptic in the sense that I do not believe people have been persuaded until I see the evidence. An engaged leader takes the high road but watches for pitfalls along the way.

In adopting a commitment to lead through persuasion as the primary tool of organizational compliance, one does not have to believe that humans are innately good or that everyone has the best interests of the university at heart. We all live with some mix of self-interest and altruism, and it is not especially productive for a leader to try to work out how that mix is operating in the people he or she is leading. If I am trying to persuade someone to contribute to an activity, I do not really care whether he or she agrees out of self-interest, noble desires, or some mix of motives. The optimist in me assumes that the person will be moved by my persuasive words and deeds. If that turns out not to be true, the optimist in me will enthusiastically try again – if not with that person, then with someone else.

The skepticism in me is determined to not be blinded by the optimist in me. The skeptical stance is to hope for the best but prepare for the possibility that it will not be realized. The skeptic in me keeps me from being disappointed when my

optimistic hopes do not pan out. I am prepared to fail and try again. To be clear, a skeptic is not a cynic. Just as I do not need to believe that people are inherently good, I do not come to believe that they are inherently self-centered or evil or weak – or inherently anything. My skeptical stance is not grounded in a conception of human nature at all. It is grounded in a need for evidence. Every attempt at persuasion is an experiment waiting for the results to come in.

Engaging people in an organization through persuasion is not always successful. People will not always agree. Consensus is rare, and unanimity is rarer still. An engaging leader will, from time to time, need to resort to enforcing a contractual obligation or perhaps simply giving an order or making a threat. These occasions are failures of persuasion, but not failures of leadership. All leaders have responsibilities and accountabilities that must prevail in the end. Persuasive leaders understand that on these occasions, repair work is in order. The optimistic leader will return to the persuasive toolbox as soon as possible.

Even though engaging people is difficult work requiring more time and patience than the leader might think reasonable, and even though it may not always end in good feelings or success, it seems to me that it is nevertheless very worthwhile as an approach to leadership. For the organization, it is the surest path to the engagement of others – even where the road is rough. For the leader, it is the surest path to being personally engaged over the long run. Engaged leadership is, at its best, engaging. It challenges one's creativity, one's powers of intellect, one's insight into the workings of the organization and one's patience. It sustains interest in being a leader – at least it did that for me. I don't think I could have enjoyed my work any other way.

# Concepts

## 2. Leading for Engagement

Unlike most organizations in the corporate or not-for-profit worlds, colleges, and universities, for the most part, operate in accordance with conventions of shared governance. In other words, employees expect to be consulted on numerous issues related to policy, budget, and conditions of employment. This consultation is generally formally structured through written documents (a constitution or charter) and formally adopted by the legal governing entity (a board of trustees). While there are examples of shared governance in the corporate and not-for-profit worlds, this organizational arrangement is the norm in higher education.

In its most precise sense, shared governance means that faculty, (and sometimes staff and students) through established governance bodies, share decision-making responsibilities with administrators, most often (in the case of faculty) in matters relating to admission standards, academic policies, calendar, and academic programs and curriculum. These responsibilities range from making recommendations to, in some cases, making final decisions on specified matters. Shared governance also typically means responsibility on the part of administrators to consult with governance groups on a wide variety of matters related to the operation of the college or university, especially personnel and financial decisions that are, ultimately, within the authority of administrators to make. Additionally, shared governance covers the practice of including faculty, staff and students on a wide variety of committees, including parking policy, student discipline, complaint and grievance hearings, employee recognition, awarding of honorary degrees, strategic planning, preparation for accreditation review, and so on. Indeed, most major aspects of college and university operation involve review and recommendation from employee staffed committees. The impact of this is that colleges and universities are environments that are not conducive to “command and control” concepts of leadership.

Under these circumstances, university administrators who aspire to lead their universities to institutional excellence must find ways to accomplish their goals that respect processes of shared governance, that include the time and patience to consult and engage in discussion, and that convey respect for the formal representatives of their various employee groups. Leaders in shared governance organizations must find ways to lead their personnel that do not rely on compulsion or mere lip service to contractual obligations. Much of the work and creative thinking that administrators need from faculty, staff and students that is important for the healthy growth and development of the college or university occurs in the context of shared governance and committees. A college or university where employees worked strictly within the limits of their contractual obligations would be poorer for it.

The challenge is this:

- The services for which faculty and staff are contracted are limited to their core responsibilities performed at a standard of adequacy (once tenure has been granted for faculty and once staff have enjoyed contract renewals).
- However, there is a great deal of additional work that we ask of most faculty and staff members over and above their contractual obligations.
- Moreover, it is precisely that additional work that is critical to the quality of the university.

For example:

- Each faculty member is required to teach a specified number of courses, but he or she is not required to offer individual directed study or to involve undergraduate students in their research.

- Faculty members are invited to participate in governance committee work (curriculum committees, promotion committees, assessment committees), but they are not required to do so.
- Faculty members are expected to engage in a minimal level of scholarship and research to remain current in their fields, but (once tenured) they are not required to attend scholarly meetings, participate in professional organizations, or be prolific publishers.
- Faculty members are invited to share their expertise with community organizations, to act as consultants, and to seek external funding, but they are not required to do so.
- Staff members are not required to serve on planning committees, although their voices are crucial.
- Recognition events are generally supported by staff over and above their office responsibilities.
- Community fund-raising campaigns rely on volunteer faculty and staff to represent the organization.

In other words, although faculty and staff members are contracted employees, their contributions that constitute the “margin of excellence” for their universities are not contractually stipulated and, hence, are essentially *voluntarily* given.

To be clear, I am not saying that faculty and staff are *literally* volunteers. Each is a paid employee, and a portion of his or her compensation is given for quality of work. On most American campuses, excellent individual employees receive marginally greater compensation than the merely competent. Rather, I am saying that to encourage optimum performance and productivity from faculty and staff, it is useful to think of them as, to some extent, *volunteers*. The shared governance form of organizational structure builds in a dimension of volunteerism.

The challenge for university administrators is, therefore: “how does one lead volunteers to contribute high quality work?”



The key insights that frame my approach to this challenge are derived from the work of Amit Etzioni, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations*.

Etzioni took a very broad look at the full range of organizations and constructed a typology based on the kind of power that was used to elicit **organizational compliance**. Etzioni identified 3 kinds of power: *coercive*, *financial (remunerative)* and *persuasive (normative)*.

- Coercive power uses the application of threats, pain, and deprivation to elicit conformity.
- Financial power is grounded in rewards: salary, bonuses, benefits, and so on.
- Persuasive power is based on symbolic rewards such as prestige, esteem, association with admired values and the like to obtain compliance.

Etzioni next identified 3 kinds of **organizational involvement**: *disaffected (alienative)*, *conditional (calculative)*, and *enthusiastic (moral)*. Involvement is, broadly speaking, the emotions and the disposition to participate that each individual member of an organization has in his or her relationship to that organization. These categories are, of course, broad generalizations rather than nuanced descriptions of individuals' actual feelings.

- Disaffected involvement is negative and hostile toward the organization.
- Conditional involvement is fundamentally a neutral attachment, holding to the extent that participation in the organization is compensated and is in the individual's personal interest.
- Enthusiastic involvement is positive and committed, often loyal and emotional.

To complete the typology, Etzioni sets out to demonstrate the link between compliance and involvement:

	Coercive	Financial	Persuasive
Disaffected	X		
Conditional		X	
Enthusiastic		**	X

The point to be made here is that **persuasive compliance is most likely to produce enthusiastic involvement**. Etzioni means this to be a description of a tendency or a broad generalization. Individuals within an organization of a distinctive compliance type will differ in their feelings about the organization and their involvement in it. At the personal level, there is more to understand about organizational involvement than the organization's compliance type.

Nevertheless, knowing that compliance and involvement are broadly correlated, we can express the leadership challenge as follows: **can an organization built on conditional compliance generate enthusiastic involvement?**

If we think about the American University in Etzioni's terms, we could say that although universities, in the first instance, are financial organizations (in their compliance type), their *quality differentiators* depend on the activities of faculty and staff that fall within the realm of persuasive compliance. The good news about this is that persuasion is most likely to produce positive, engaged, committed employees.

The puzzle is: how does an administrator lead an organization of professionals who are not compensated for some of the work that is of critical importance to

institutional quality? In other words, how do you lead an organization of people who think of themselves (in relation to some of their activities) as volunteers?

To answer the question about leading volunteers, it is important to recognize that there are three critical components of volunteerism:

- First, volunteers have freely chosen to participate in an activity and may choose to not participate at any time without negative consequences.
- Second, volunteers have chosen to participate in an organization because the values, activities and potential contributions of the organization are congruent with the values and desires of the volunteer.
- Third, the volunteer realizes that she can accomplish more of what she values within the organizational association than she can on her own.

Faculty and staff need the university to be successful in their own terms.

In short, faculty and staff (for the most part) *have a disposition* to do the things that go beyond their contracted obligations, and they can do them more effectively through their association with the college or university that employs them.

How can university leaders use this understanding to meet their own responsibilities to improve university quality? First, the leader must acknowledge to the faculty or staff member that, with respect to some requests, the employee is free to say “no” without adverse consequences. The question of coercion must be taken out of play.

I would also say that the question of reciprocity or exchange should also be taken out of play (if and when that is possible). Reciprocity is a perfectly legitimate method of seeking compliance, particularly with employees who are, in fact, under contract. Within Etzioni’s typography, reciprocity can be used without negative consequences for employee involvement. By treating the employee as a volunteer, however, the leader is seeking a level of involvement beyond neutral. If the faculty or staff member freely chooses to participate on a committee or in an

organizational activity (without conditions), organizational engagement and the work product have a better chance of being the best the employee can produce.

Second, the university leader must find occasions to remind faculty members that the university shares their values. In the press of business, work becomes a routine, and its higher purpose is often forgotten. We think of ourselves as going to the office, or writing a report, or teaching a class and fail to remember that we are contributing to human knowledge or to the education of future generations.

Most people who go to work in colleges or universities see our institutions as having a higher purpose and see themselves as contributing to that purpose. It is their sense of personal fulfillment that attracts them to work in these environments. We often forget this when we are thinking about how to lead the organization.

Third, to realize their values in a big way, people need to be part of an organization that is of a scale that can make a difference. It is very difficult to imagine a successful career as an independent scholar in our historical time. This may have been possible in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries for a select few, but it is almost completely unknown today. A contemporary independent scholar would have neither the resource support nor the credibility to pursue an intellectual career.

Much the same could be said of teaching. Outside the context of a university, making a career as a teacher would be extraordinarily difficult. Independent tutoring and coaching are, perhaps, possible...but such opportunities are also very limited. When we consider other positions, IT professional, admission counselor, student union manager, librarian, and so on, the point is even clearer. These professions require that one be part of an academic enterprise; they are not independent jobs.

The upshot of these observations is that while much of the work of a college or university may be voluntary, employees also, for the most part, are motivated to do it – and to do it within the university's organizational structure. The work of

the administrator is to harness and direct that motivation to align the employee's desires with the institution's purposes.

There are a few specific things that university administrators can do to lead organizational improvement without commanding it. Any leader who desires to generate more employee engagement will need to develop the skills and tools of persuasion. In an academic setting, there is little choice. Broadly speaking, effective use of the techniques of persuasion requires knowing and using organizational processes, developing relationships with people and being able to develop and use information that promotes dialogue. Persuasion also requires a willingness to be open about problems the organization may face, to share information about them, and to seek help in finding solutions.

Process, influence, and metrics (to be discussed in detail later) are three major tools of persuasion that university administrators can use to produce both compliance and engagement in an organization that is fundamentally grounded in contractual relationships but lives on volunteerism.

Because college and university employees are literally not volunteers and because the processes of shared governance generally work slowly, there are great temptations to set persuasion aside for techniques associated with bargaining or command. These may appear to be more efficient in the short run, but, as I have suggested, that efficiency comes at a high cost and may even be subverted in the end. My hope is that I can make this point persuasively during my narrative.

Although persuasive leadership is my strong preference, it would be misleading of me to say that it is appropriate in every situation. There are some individuals who will not be engaged or persuaded and some groups that dig in their heels and resist following their leaders. There are employees in every organization who are disaffected or who have lost interest in the organization's values. There are individuals who took a job without thinking much about whether their values matched those of the organization. In these cases, it would be futile to ground leadership efforts in the search for values the individual or group and the college or university hold in common. Where the conditions of volunteerism do not exist and where persuasion is not possible, reminding employees of their contractual

obligations remains a necessary “fall back” position. In extreme cases, even coercion may be required. Good leaders do not ignore these possibilities or fear using the techniques of contract or coercion when necessary. They do, however, understand the destructive implications resorting to such techniques may have for organizational compliance more generally.

There are times, in other words, when these persuasive measures will not be effective and when it will be necessary to fall back on reciprocity or, in extreme cases, coercion. Effective administrators view these times a “set-backs” to the extent that they lead to the disengagement of employees. What follows must be a period of rebuilding trust and engagement.

While the virtues of leading through persuasion are attractive, there are reasons why it is not easily adopted. One of the greatest challenges for leaders who wish to engage their organizations on this footing is the concern for efficiency. Highly inclusive processes tend to take time and the need for decisions is often urgent. Maintaining inclusive processes that keep to deadlines requires a great deal of effort and organization on the part of the leader. For a busy administrator it is often tempting to cut to the conclusion. It is my conviction that, whenever possible, it is far better to improve the process than to work around it.

Universities are filled with talented and creative people and our greatest successes come from keeping them engaged and involved.

Given the arduousness of the engagement and persuasion path, issuing directives and orders may appear to be a better route to getting things done. Apart from any disaffection it may cause, as a process this path has its own problems. Every order is, in the words of William Ker Muir, Jr., an extortionate transaction. What he means by this is that giving orders amounts to taking a “hostage” and holding it for “ransom.” The *hostage* will be whatever the employee values that the leader has the power to threaten: a good evaluation, monetary rewards, a good teaching assignment, a convenient course schedule, approval of a grant application and the like.

The *ransom* is compliance with the order or directive. Extortionate transactions have the form: “Do what I ask, or you will suffer x.” For Muir, a successful

extortionate transaction invites a rational calculation by the employee that the ransom is worth less than the hostage. One protects what is threatened by complying with the order or directive. In an ideal organization, all the players make rational assessments and comply to preserve whatever has the greatest value to them. If the leader gages the relative weights of hostage and ransom appropriately, he or she can expect compliance, even if it is disgruntled. Unfortunately, extortionate transactions are not always such rational calculations. Most people do not enjoy being extorted, and even the powerless find ways of resisting.

For the powerless, that is people without their own toolbox of credible threats, Muir identifies four categories of possible non-compliant responses: dispossession, detachment, face, and irrationality.

Dispossession involves ridding oneself of things that can be taken hostage – making oneself “fireproof.” In an academic setting, this could mean not accepting any perquisites or coveted assignments that could be taken away, never applying for a sabbatical, never requesting the opportunity to teach specialty courses, and so on. A tenured faculty member who asks nothing from the university and stays out of trouble cannot be extorted.

Detachment involves renouncing the desire for many of the benefits of being a faculty member. Detachment is a state of mind; it is developing the disposition to not care about one’s course assignments, course schedule, salary increases, good evaluations and the like. In other words, by not desiring the things that could be held hostage, the faculty member cannot be threatened with their loss.

Face, or saving face, is the response that dismisses the rational calculation of an extortion and pays the price for resistance, no matter how unbalanced the calculation, to preserve dignity. Faculty members may save face by never complaining about ill treatment, unfairness, or onerous assignments. Staff members may shrug off unpleasant assignments, unscheduled work hours, a shabby work environment, and so on. By never complaining, the employee remains dignified in the face of what then becomes the pettiness of the leader.

Finally, Muir cites irrationality as a fourth response to extortion. The irrational person does not comprehend the threat as a threat. The leader's message does not get through to the employee. The employee, consequently, does not calculate that the hostage is worth more than the ransom. The irrational response is to make no calculation at all – to fail to understand the threat.

In each of these cases, not only does the leader fail to gain compliance, but the leader also leaves the organization the worse for having tried and failed. The time and effort that must go into restoring a failed attempt at ordering compliance, might be better spent in engagement and persuasion. These approaches, too, may fail, but the leader has not foreclosed so many options in the next attempt to produce a desirable result. The strategy of engagement and persuasion tends to leave open doors to future efforts that attempts at coercion tend to close.

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# Direction

## 3. Developing a Vision

Purposeful action should be guided by a vision. Vision sets a direction and helps determine which actions move an organization along that path and which actions make a lesser contribution to the vision and, by implication, may have a lower priority.

Virtually all universities have vision statements. A vision statement is a description of the characteristics a university wishes to have and be known for by a defined future time: close enough to create motivational urgency, but far enough in the future to make attainment realistic. Vision statements are at their best when they paint a picture of a preferred future, how a university wishes to know itself and be known by others. Vision statements that are “timeless” tend to be ornaments and in losing their function, lose their meaning.

Here are four initial questions to answer to begin to develop an institutional vision statement or to confirm an existing one:

- ▶ What are our areas of greatest strength and promise?
- ▶ What currently makes this university truly distinctive in relation to peers and competitors?
- ▶ What are the major forces, trends, or issues – in higher education, in our state, our system, and our region that will affect the future of this university?
- ▶ What are our greatest opportunities to enhance quality; to carve out a place for ourselves that will demonstrate our distinction and serve our constituents?

Answering these questions will likely surface a set of qualities or characteristics that can be forged into a vision statement.

Having a vision statement will take a university part of the way toward having a vision, but there is more work to be done. Whether vision statements express a

vision or not depends on whether such statements play an active role in the work of the university. A vision is more than a statement; it is a guidepost for action - a shared, aspirational expression that articulates a commitment to what a university can become in some definable future. Vision statements can, and do, express an organization's vision when that vision is actively in use to guide the organization's work. However, too often vision statements are forgotten or ignored. Some have a timeless ring that extoll an organization's self-image but are rarely invoked. Visions, rather, are meant to set a direction and a point of arrival.

Presidents can hitch their plans and agendas to an existing vision statement, but if that statement does not express something that is actively in the process of realization, this may prove to hinder the development of a more viable vision. Building a work agenda on the foundation of an existing vision statement tends to give that statement presumptive status. If the vision statement is taken as a given, the agenda becomes a means to contribute to its realization. This may be perfectly reasonable – even desirable - but it leaves questions: Is the vision statement entrenched in the university's culture? Who is committed to the vision statement? Who is ignoring it? Is the president expected to accomplish something major that is not in that statement? Does the vision statement provide sufficient direction for future action?

Finding answers to these questions will take time. Visionary leaders understand that a vision cannot be pronounced to a university and cannot be the leaders alone. Effective leaders do not announce their vision; they work to develop a vision that is shared and valued throughout the organization. This is important because a vision statement becomes the foundation for future action. Developing a "living" vision is important work; it is, in fact, a core responsibility of leadership. It will, however, require a level of effort that suggests it is best not rushed.

A vision, as I understand it, is *a statement of aspiration that is broadly accepted as setting a direction for development over a delimited period*. As such, a vision has a few essential characteristics. It must be *mission aligned, worthwhile, inspirational, and attainable*. As a statement of aspiration, a vision is not a description of the status quo. In other words, to accomplish a vision, things will need to change. If

the university's leadership, faculty, staff, students, and constituents believe that the university is already accomplishing its vision, they are not looking very far into the future. In such cases, it would be better to say that the university's realized vision has been subsumed into its mission. Such a university would be an organization that can simply continue to do what it does to be what it is. I don't think there are many such organizations in this world. No matter how well-oiled the university machine, the world around it is ever-changing; those changes will inevitably challenge even the most timeless of visions.

The development described in a university vision must be in alignment with the university's mission. The mission is a statement of what the university is or does – and what it does essentially. A vision may articulate that the university aspires to do one or more of the things identified in the mission at a higher level or it may aspire to add to, or subtract from, the mission. In any event, a university's mission and vision must be in alignment. For example, a university that has a traditional “teaching, research, service” mission that wishes to become known for its work in economic development must either adjust its mission or restrict its vision. The alignment is important because the mission is an anchor for the vision. The mission of a university is the starting point for agreement about the kind of work that does, and should, go on in the university's name. Discussion of new activities, or really any change in work practices, must ultimately be linked to the institutional mission if the university's constituents are to be persuaded to take on that work. Leaders who wish to be persuasive require a starting point from which to make their case, and that starting point is most naturally the university's mission.

A vision must be worthwhile; that is, it must express a goal that is valued by the university's constituents. Ultimately, a vision will guide the allocation of effort, time, and resources. If the university's constituencies are expected to exert the energy to focus their effort, time, and resources toward achieving this envisioned end, they must believe that it is more valuable to be doing this than to direct those energies elsewhere. If the vision does not describe something that those in the organization believe is worth doing, they will ignore it. This is especially important for leaders who wish to engage and persuade. It is very difficult to

persuade people to allocate their time to something that they believe to be less worthwhile than their current activity. A classic example of this is the difficulty that university leaders had in persuading faculty to devote time to the assessment of student learning – beyond giving grades at the conclusion of a course. Many faculty argued that they already assessed students through grading and that devoting more time to assessment was less worthwhile than using that time to prepare their courses or to engage in their chosen area of scholarship.

Demonstrating that assessment of student learning is, indeed, worthwhile has been a long struggle. It has gained traction as faculty and others have begun to see the value of being able to demonstrate their successes to accreditors, funders, and potential students.

A vision must be inspiring. This is a step beyond “worthwhile.” There are many worthwhile things that any number of people have no interest in doing. To become the foremost American university for the study of Islandic poetry in translation within a decade might be both mission-aligned and worthwhile, but if it will not inspire the university to rally around it, it will be a poor vision. What does inspire faculty enough to motivate them to invest time, thought and energy into making the changes described in a vision? There is, obviously, no one answer to this question. Effective university leaders will explore their faculty’s thinking about what gives meaning to their work. For some, it is discovering brilliant young minds; for others it is helping those struggling against great odds to become college graduates; for yet others it is their identity as a scholar or their desire to be part of a community of scholars. These are all ingredients in a university’s culture (rather than strict alternatives) that will differ in different universities. A vision for a university must tap into a significant element of what gives meaning to that university’s faculty if it is to inspire them to engage in the hard work of bringing a vision to fruition. For many faculty and staff in public, regional universities, extending the reach of higher education to those demographics that have historically not participated is personally inspirational. It can be the reason some of them chose to work at that type of campus. A vision that addresses that inspiration in that context will help leaders rally support for changes that are likely to improve the attendance of those groups.

A vision must also be attainable within a defined time horizon. If a vision is to play a role in the work of driving change, those enlisted to accomplish it must feel that it is possible to do so. Energy will dissipate in pursuit of an unattainable vision. If a vision cannot be reached, it is likely to become another timeless statement of values. People may profess belief in it, but if they have no hope of reaching it, they are unlikely to try. This is not to say that attainment should be a sure thing. A vision may require some stretching, and those who are trying to realize it may fall short. However, without the possibility of success, the vision statement is likely to become a hollow mantra or engender cynicism. Many university leaders have articulated a vision statement that all undergraduates will have an international experience. This vision is attainable in universities that primarily enroll full time students with sufficient resources to support international travel and living. It would be far less likely to be attainable at universities that primarily serve part-time, adult, self-supporting students.

In addition to the vision being attainable, the path to achieving a vision must be regarded as a live possibility. The strategy to attain it must be regarded as within the power of those charged to make it happen. In the words of John P. Kotter: “What is crucial about vision is not its originality but how well it serves the interests of important constituencies...*and how easily it can be translated into a realistic competitive strategy.*” (Emphasis added)

With this understanding of developing a vision, a university leader has an approach to begin to institute changes through processes that rely on persuasion.

**Scenario:**

*A regional campus of a state university hires a president who has an interest in experiential learning. The campus offers an array of arts and sciences majors and a variety of professional programs: business, education, nursing, and technology. Several of the arts and sciences programs also have professionally oriented major tracks: professional writing, broadcasting, criminal justice, and environmental science, for example. There is however, no systematic, university-wide approach to*

*internships, clinicals, practica or work/study. Each academic department is free to include such courses or non-credit experiences in its curriculum – or not.*

*The president believes that a more systemic approach to combining academic study with practical experience would be an element of distinction for the university and a great benefit to students. A campus-wide experiential learning requirement is the vision of the president – but not currently the vision of the campus. There is nothing in the existing campus vision statement that references experiential learning. Neither is there any sentiment on campus to go beyond departmental discretion in this area. How might the president lead the campus to a vision of a university-wide experiential learning requirement?*

Under these circumstances the president articulating a vision statement is not, on its own, likely to bring about such a requirement. The university, particularly the academic departments and faculty governance, must come to a shared vision of experiential learning as a defining feature of the university's curriculum. To accomplish this, a wise president begins with an idea rather than a vision statement.

The President first raises the idea with the provost that every student would graduate with some form of experiential learning. Without the provost's enthusiastic support, the idea will not likely get off the ground. The provost, in this scenario, brings together deans and governance leaders to work as a study group. Their task is to research experiential learning, discuss its appropriateness for this campus (given its mission) and to determine whether to endorse consideration of a possible university-wide experiential learning requirement. The president charges the group and asks them to produce a vision statement to guide their work.

In our scenario, the provost's group adopts a vision statement for a university-wide experiential learning requirement. At this stage there is great diversity in thinking about the scope of the requirement, its critical features, and its implementation. Since the president is looking for commitment in principle to a vision of what experiential learning might be for the university, this broad statement is sufficient as a beginning step. In fact, it would be a liability if this

group were too committed to the details of such a requirement. If campus constituents are to be engaged partners, they must not be treated as if their role is only to endorse what others have already settled. The vision is meant to inspire; being given a “take it or leave it” picture of the future would be a cold shower on inspiration.

The next step in developing this vision is to bring the vision statement proposed by the provost’s committee to faculty governance and to secure a governance commitment to work out a specific plan. The president, provost and committee must help generate enthusiasm for the vision and urge faculty governance to commit to working on the details of how that vision might be put into practice. The role of administrative leadership in this scenario is to support governance leadership to stay on track – it is not to weigh in on the details at this stage of development. Indeed, it is critical that governance leaders believe that it is their responsibility to work out the requirement; they must believe that they are not a “rubber stamp” for a proposal that comes from the provost’s committee. If they believed that they were being called upon to ratify an existing administrative proposal, it is highly unlikely that they would “own” the vision.

*In this scenario, to help the faculty governance committee that is responsible for exploring an experiential learning requirement, the president and provost refer them to the National Society for Experiential Education and underwrite travel expenses for committee members to attending a society conference. From the President’s perspective, any proposal that meets the Society’s conception of experiential learning would be worthwhile. The President’s hope is that the faculty who are to undertake consideration of this requirement move from asking whether it is a good idea for the campus to asking what form of requirement would be best for the campus. Once the governance committee has committed to finding the right experiential learning requirement for the campus, the provost’s committee’s vision statement has become a vision.*

The vision statement, “every graduate of the university will have had an experiential learning experience,” then becomes a guide for institutional change. It is, first, consistent with the teaching and learning mission of the university. It

has been determined to be worthwhile by the provost's committee and the faculty governance committee – worthwhile enough to invest time and resources into trying to work out the details. The possibility is, in this case, inspiring because the faculty mostly regards their work as preparing graduates for their lives as productive citizens and values that role. Learning experiences that bridge the classroom and the world of work are already important components of that element of campus culture. Finally, the vision is attainable, although perhaps with difficulty. Many campus programs already have a component of practice, and the campus is located in an area where there is an abundance of opportunities for additional experiences that apply learning in a work environment. Were this campus in a more rural setting, it is less likely that this vision would be attainable. For experiential learning to be a reality, there must be more opportunities for students to have an authentic work experience related to their fields of study than there are students in need of fulfilling the requirement.

There are, of course, significant issues to be resolved for every academic department. Departments that already have a work experience component may be asked to adjust them to meet the new requirement. Departments that do not have such components will need help in determining how their implementation would work. In either case, the effort to make the changes must be sufficiently worthwhile in the view of the departments that they are willing to make an investment in change.

It is important to recognize that this is as far as leadership needs to go establish a vision for the university. Establishing a vision of experiential learning is not the same as establishing an experiential learning requirement. That work remains to be done. It may or may not be successful. But the fact that it has not yet been done does not undermine the existence or importance of the vision. The remaining work becomes a part of the leadership agenda.

Even with the adoption of a university vision that is embraced and accepted as a guide to action, the actual work of taking action is no foregone conclusion. From the perspective of formal process, a university would have an approved mission that anchors the vision that sets direction for future action. The vision provides a



goal to be pursued through strategies, as expressed in a strategic plan. The strategic plan presumably identifies a series of operational goals and strategic actions that may be taken to realize the vision. This order of things is quite rational on paper, but in practice these components do not always fall into such a neat temporal order. Vision statements may be fossilized, but goal setting continues. Strategic plans may be out of date, but operational goals are set and achieved. The formal relationship among these planning elements makes sense as a structured pyramid, but the press of business may subvert the order. The orderly relationship is desirable, but not essential, for leading change and organizational improvement. What is more important is the vitality of the vision and its effectiveness as a guide to action.



Mission is, perhaps, the most stable element of the quintet – mission, vision, strategy, operational goals, and action. Mission changes are not undertaken lightly and, generally, are the province of boards. Since the other elements of change build on mission, there is often an understandable reluctance to engage in mission revision, in the absence of a compelling reason to undertake it. Change is particularly difficult if everything is in play at once. Even so, there are times when

the development of a vision that does not squarely fit the mission is so powerful that it is worth revising the mission to accommodate it. In other words, the order of “mission first” “vision next” need not always hold true.

Similarly, it is possible to undertake a strategic planning process when a university is living with a vision statement that is not actively a vision. Answering the strategic question, (What is our preferred position in relation to our peers and competitors?), may at times stimulate the development of a more appropriate vision than is expressed in the university’s formal vision statement. By the same token, an action agenda is best guided by a worthwhile vision, but in its absence, it is important to do something. Unguided activity is better than no activity at all. An agenda that is not guided by a vision may be inefficient or even somewhat counter-productive in the long run, but few universities can afford to wait for the inspiration of a well-crafted vision to undertake work that clearly needs to be done. In short, there is an ideal order of planning and execution in an organization that is committed to engaging its constituents, but there will be times when a little disorder is manageable and failing to act is not an option. Leaders can circle back to pick up loose ends.

Having a vision and using a vision statement that expresses it are key tools for persuasive leadership. A compelling vision can be a point of common understanding among a university’s constituents. It gives leadership a starting point for developing persuasive reasons to bring the vision to fruition. Agreement on ends is the first big step toward coming to agreement on means. Disagreements over means are relatively low stakes if the ends are held in common. Leaders can comfortably negotiate over the means, or activities, to best realize the ends (as expressed in the vision) as long as the ends are not strongly contested. Leading from vision is a powerful way for initiating organizational change. The leadership challenge is to keep the vision vibrant and closely tied to action agendas.

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## Direction

### 4. Planning: Strategic and Operational

A strategic plan is a critical tool for the persuasive leader. A strategic plan sets out an organization's priorities and provides a guide for how resources should be allocated. The process should engage as many in the organization as is possible and practical. It should also be highly interactive and stand as an exercise in persuasive discourse. The most useful strategic plans focus on a small handful of major goals rather than attempting to be all inclusive. Those goals identify the work that is most important for the organization to meet its objectives. Additionally, if the strategic plan has been developed and approved through an inclusive and transparent process, its priorities have credibility within the university. Although everyone cannot be expected to agree with its outcomes, if the process is perceived to have been open and fair, most will accept the legitimacy of decisions made in accordance with the plan. A robust planning process generates a strategic plan that can be a point of reference for selecting some activities rather than others for the expenditure of time, effort, and resources. A well developed and well-crafted plan becomes the touchstone for a leader's persuasive efforts.

#### Strategic Position

A strategic plan is best understood in relation to strategic positioning. A plan is grounded in the effort to identify and hold a desired position among one's peers and competitors. In other words, strategic planning is a means to an end, the end being a strategic position that is attained with the fulfillment of a university vision. A strategic position describes how a university intends to be situated in relation to others in some relevant comparison group or groups. In other words, it

is a *relational* concept. Arriving at that position requires having and executing a strategy that locates the university in relation to an enumerated comparison group of similarly situated universities. Knowing the position one's university is seeking, as expressed in a vision, is a first order of business in the planning process. The next order of business is constructing a comparison group. If the vision is attained, where will that place the university in relation to its peers and competitors? For most universities, a good place to begin this task is to identify where students who have been admitted in the past enroll if they do not enroll at that university. There are, of course, other natural comparison groups. For campuses in a state system or athletic conference, the other system or conference members are useful comparisons. The federal government IPEDS reporting system selects comparison groups for each campus based on similar characteristics and demographics. Ranking systems such as that of *US News and World Report* also provides comparison groups for colleges and universities by type and region. Some of these comparison sets will be more useful than others, depending on the way your university frames its campus' position.

Once a university has identified peers and competitors, it is useful to construct a chart that compares the university with a selected comparison group on key elements of the respective profiles. These elements are selected as the basis of comparison with peers and competitors. For example:

- Is the university attempting to be among the top quartile of its peers in retaining and graduating students?
- Does it wish to be among the leaders in providing students with internships and experiential learning?
- Does the university wish to be known for providing international education and study abroad opportunities?
- Is the university's point of distinction that it offers majors that combine the liberal arts with the professions?
- Does the university wish to be known for a focus on the STEM disciplines?
- Is the campus seeking to be one of the most diverse among its comparison groups?
- Does it wish to be known for accepting and graduating transfer students?

The specific questions that a university must ask and answer are tied to the vision. If the vision is to graduate a high proportion of students, for example, comparison with peers and competitors on graduation rates will be necessary. If the vision is to produce more scientists, comparison of STEM graduates would be more appropriate. Some comparative information will be available through IPEDS, NSEE or other data sets that are collected for a wide variety of universities. Other information will require the university to dig in the data sets of its comparison group. Wherever possible, it is best to use data that is public and easily accessible. Non-standard measures will create difficulties in tracking down comparisons. In this regard, IPEDS will be helpful in establishing comparisons based on institutional size, expenditures and student and faculty diversity.

In whatever way a university defines its strategic position among peers and competitors, the strategic plan should be developed to serve that end. Likewise, the strategic plan, once established, sets the context for annual operating plans. Yearly goals should be linked to the goals in the strategic plan as means to realizing the campus strategic position. Not all operating goals are means to achieving strategic goals, of course, but every strategic goal should be supported by some annual operating goals. Strategic positioning, strategic planning and operational planning must be closely linked and aligned.



A strategic position should be closely linked to a campus vision as well. A vision statement, as noted earlier, is *a statement of aspiration that is broadly accepted as setting a direction for development over a delimited period*. That aspiration may be characterized as moving from a present position in relation to peers and competitors to a more favorable future position. For example, a university might have as a vision moving, within five years, from the top half to the top quartile among its peers in retaining and graduating students of color. To take another example, a university might wish to become the most veteran friendly campus in its geographic region. Vision and strategic position are two ways of talking about the same end.

Without having a clearly defined strategic position in relation to a vision, expressed as a goal, a strategic plan is not strategic. A campus may have a plan to get better at what it does, but if the comparison is only to its current or former self, it will have no sense of where it stands in relation to its comparison set. Should a university feel good about improving its graduation rate by 5%? Not if its peers have improved by an average of 10%. Did a university double the number of students studying abroad? That could be good, but not strategic if its peers and competitors tripled that number. Too many strategic plans track improvement without any reference to how their comparison universities are doing. If the goal is to enroll and graduate more students, for example, it will be critical to know why students who have been admitted are choosing to go elsewhere (elsewhere being to their competitors) and whether its peers and competitors are doing a better job of graduating their students.

Universities rightly focus on students when constructing peer and competitor comparison groups. Educating students is, after all, the most important thing most universities do. It is worth remembering, however, that universities also need to establish strategic positions in other arenas. For example, acquiring

resources beyond tuition and/or state funds is a necessity for most universities. The effort to grow revenue also takes place in the context of peers and competitors who are seeking to raise funds from the same sources. Does a university wish to acquire gift funds from local, regional, or national corporations? Is it seeking competitive grants from state or national government agencies? Is it attempting to sell services to external agencies? The chances are good that others are seeking to grow their revenue from the same sources. If so, that university will need to articulate a strategic position that supports its case for such funds. In some instances, its peers and competitors will not be other universities. A university may be competing against social service agencies or not-for-profit organizations. What is clear is that if achieving its vision requires revenue growth, its strategic growth goals will need to consider this competitive environment.

### The Strategic Plan

The development of a university's strategic plan, whatever its vision, whatever its strategic position and whatever its specific goals, must be an exercise that establishes the credibility of the plan as a guide for program development, student support, infrastructure improvement and resource allocation. A leader who wishes to lead through persuasion will benefit immensely from having a plan that is widely accepted as the expression of the university's priorities. The time put into developing the strategic plan as the university's established path to its future, will pay dividends as a foundation for operational decisions that must be made in subsequent years.

Creating a credible plan begins with the selection of a credible strategic planning committee. How the committee is appointed and who is represented on the committee are initial critical decisions on the path to establishing a document that will support setting priorities and allocating resources in the future.

To be effective, a strategic planning committee should be widely regarded as including a fair representation of campus interest groups. The committee should



have representatives of faculty, students, staff, and administration. All organizational divisions should be represented. The committee should be broadly representative by gender, ethnicity, and rank. Moreover, the committee members should be recognized campus “citizens,” that is, individuals who are respected by others and regarded as fair and judicious. Putting together a committee that meets all these requirements is usually not a simple task. It is easier, by far, to go to the usual suspects and enlist them for this job. That, however, would be solving a short-term problem at the expense of long term credibility of the outcome.

### **Scenario:**

*The president has placed “Strategic Planning Committee” on the agenda for a leadership meeting. At the meeting the president’s leadership team members put forward names for the committee and discuss their suitability for the task. The committee that the president’s team constructs consist of 50% faculty members and 50% staff. The faculty are individuals known to the president and senior leadership; each of the academic divisions is represented. Staff members include the budget director and a director-level member of the enrollment management division. Other staff members are representatives of student services, building services, human resources, and information technology. The head of student government is also on the committee. The committee is evenly balanced with respect to gender. Three of the members are other than Caucasian – a faculty member, the student services representative, and the student. One of the faculty members is non-tenured and one is the head of faculty governance.*

In this scenario, the president has attempted to thoughtfully construct a credible strategic planning committee. The chances are high, however, that the announcement of the committee will be met with skepticism. The leadership team has avoided the most obvious missteps. There is gender balance and some diversity on the committee. Faculty are not outnumbered by administrative staff, and no academic division is unrepresented. Nevertheless, those who wish to challenge the legitimacy of the committee will find reasons.

The most glaring issue is that the president did not consult outside the cabinet circle to develop the membership. A better strategy is to go to governance groups, deans and directors of divisions and ask for several names of possible strategic planning committee members from each. It is important to request multiple (at least three) names from each group – to have choices when balancing the committee with respect to gender, diversity, faculty rank and staff title. There is, of course, some risk that the nominators will identify individuals who are not great campus citizens but having several choices may mitigate that risk. Moreover, individuals with great skills and potential who are unknown to the president's leadership team may surface in the process. Seeking recommendations in this way invests the recommenders in the process and gives the president some options to build an effective committee.

Having only one student on the committee is another issue in this scenario. In my experience, it is difficult to count on a single student to attend all the meetings. Being the lone student may feel isolating and demotivate the student's involvement. Or the student may be drawn to the demands of study and other outside activities and simply not have the time to participate regularly. Having two students on the committee can improve the chances of meaningful student participation and provide the student committee members with peer support.

Expertise from the budget officer and enrollment services is important for the committee, but as committee members they may become unduly authoritative. It is important that the plan not be driven entirely by budget and enrollment issues and that others on the committee do not simply bow to their expertise. No other representatives are coming to the committee in virtue of their expertise in strategic planning or their knowledge of enrollment and financial issues. To keep the committee discussions open and to keep the meeting dynamics on an even footing, my preference is to make these two positions (non-voting) staff to the committee, thereby also making room for staff members from other support areas.

Finally, to help along the committee members' engagement with the work an effective technique is that the president, or convener of the committee,

personally invite each member to participate either by phone or face-to-face meeting. A personal invitation helps convey the importance of the assignment and its institutional priority. Engendering engagement in the committee's work is also promoted if the president attends the first meeting and personally thanks the committee members for participating. The president's participation on the committee, of course, makes an even stronger statement about the importance of the work.

The actual work of a strategic planning committee has been well documented by others. It involves researching the university's current strategic position; developing a vision statement or reviewing the existing one; settling on a limited set of goals that, if realized, will achieve the vision and strategic position; identifying major activities that can accomplish those goals; and creating an assessment plan and process to assure that the work of the plan remains on track.

A wise president will give the strategic planning committee space to accomplish this work but will also keep close contact with the committee to be sure that the work addresses the campus vision and remains on a reasonable timeline. Some presidents chair the strategic planning committee themselves. Clearly, the advantage of this practice is that the president is fully aware of how the plan is developing and can exert his or her influence at every stage of the process. A president with a good relationship with the committee members will be able to guide the process without appearing to be heavy-handed. A president who chairs a strategic planning committee will need to be skilled at persuasion and will also need to be open to being persuaded, in turn.

If relationships on the committee between the president and other members are contentious, the president's involvement will be more problematic. The difficulty is that the committee typically reports out to the president. It would be awkward, to say the least, for a president who chaired the strategic planning committee to produce a plan that he or she is reluctant to accept. Separation from the process permits the president to accept or reject the recommended plan or to negotiate with the committee if there are specific sticking points.

Strategic plans can be derailed if aggressive committee members substitute their own vision of the university's future for the institution's vision statement; if the committee tries to accommodate all of the members' interests and allows the plan's goals to expand beyond 5-6; if the goals become "big tents" to avoid leaving out some good ideas; if the goals become vague and incapable of assessment; and if the planning process is drawn out on too long a time frame. Whether the president is on the committee or receiving the committee's recommended plan, these possibilities must be monitored, and the president's concerns must be expressed as early as possible.

The president should work with the committee to develop a work plan that includes a timeline and (if the president is not on the committee) should establish a method of regular communication about the committee's progress. One way to accomplish the latter is to clarify to strategic planning committee members that they represent constituencies, and for the president to require the appropriate administrators for each constituency to meet regularly with their committee member. Faculty members should meet with deans, staff members should meet with their area directors, students should meet with the chief student affairs officer, and so on. Each of these administrators should be assigned to initiate regular meetings (bi-weekly, for example) to check in about how the process is going. If there are problems or red flags, or if the work is not keeping up with the schedule, the president should be informed.

If the president is committed to very specific goals or activities, these need to be conveyed to the committee early enough that they can be discussed and included in the plan. If they are not in the plan, the president's ability to lead by persuasion will be compromised. Adopting a plan and then focusing on activities outside it will undercut the value of the plan as a persuasive tool. It is also likely to engender skepticism about the value of strategic planning. At the very least, the president will need to explain why a goal or activity that is not in the plan is so important that it warrants becoming a priority.

I have framed the leadership issues relating to strategic planning in terms of the president rather than other leaders within the organization. That is because an

organization can only have one strategic plan – and that plan must be at the highest organizational level. Other leaders inside the organization, vice presidents, deans, directors, and department heads, also have planning responsibilities, but those do not include creating their own strategic plans. Rather, their leadership requires that they develop plans that are in alignment with the umbrella strategic plan.

### Aligning to the Plan

Units within the university will need to develop plans that are strategic in the sense that they support the strategic goals of the larger organization, but not in the sense that they will define their own strategic position in relation to some group of peers and competitors. It is better to think of the plans of divisions as in alignment with the strategic plan rather than as “mini” strategic plans.

The work of alignment requires campus leaders to engage leaders of the divisions in the value of the plan and to work with them to assure that division goals are not in conflict with the organization’s strategic goals. The work of alignment is an exercise in persuasion. For all the reasons that have already been enumerated, leaders of the divisions must be committed to the plan if they are going to help move it forward. Their commitment will involve understanding the benefits of a successful plan to their own units and well as to the whole organization. This will best be accomplished through discussion.

The work of alignment can be time consuming, and it may require negotiation and openness to revision of planned activities. This can be frustrating for leaders. What is clear to those who have lived with the issues for months and thought them through thoroughly, may be less clear to those who have been tangentially involved in the planning but are being charged with implementation. The path of persuasion requires patience, listening skills and building trust. This is hard work, but the work is made somewhat easier if the strategic plan has the weight of a strong and credible process behind it.

## Subordinate Plans

Once a strategic plan is created and adopted, there are three additional plans that are also required: a financial plan, an assessment plan, and a communication plan. The financial plan should be straightforward. Each activity needs a cost estimate. The estimate should include the reallocation of participants' time and any funds previously used for activities that may be superseded by the strategic plan's activities. The remainder of the required resources should be distributed over the life of the plan and budgeted on an annual basis. The budgeting of strategic activities should be incorporated into the organization's regular budget development process. Because these are strategic activities, they should receive priority in that process. If a strategic activity cannot be funded, it should be deferred or replaced.

Reallocation of funds can be challenging. The path of least resistance is to repurpose vacant positions. When this is treated as a routine practice, the sequestered funds have not necessarily been taken from the least strategic places. When funds to be reallocated are swept from accounts with positive balances at the end of a fiscal year, the results, too, may be damaging to some activities of strategic value. A better approach is to reallocate with strategic purpose in mind.

### **Scenario:**

*A leadership team institutes a practice of reallocating 2% from the recurring funds from each division. Each division leader determines where 2% of his or her operating budget can be reduced without undermining the effectiveness of strategic activities. This exercise occurs every year so the division leaders may plan for it. In the budget building process, the collective funds from the 2% exercise are pooled. The division leaders, acting collectively, reallocate those funds across divisional lines to the highest strategic priorities in the coming year. This process assures that it will be possible to make some progress on strategic goals, even in years of tight budgets.*

The lack of progress on strategic goals is sure to undermine the sense that university leadership is serious about its strategic plan. Unless the university's president demonstrates that the plan is guiding resource allocation and action, the divisions are likely to replace the university's strategic direction with their own aims and purposes. Having a financial plan is critical to maintaining momentum toward achieving a vision.

The university, no doubt, has an assessment plan that is required by its accrediting association. Moreover, that plan is comprehensive and, consequently, would include assessment of the activities specified in the strategic plan. Nevertheless, leadership with specific responsibilities to oversee the strategic plan should maintain its own assessment plan. This plan may be a part of the broader institutional assessment, but it is likely that it will be used somewhat differently. Those responsible for the strategic plan need to understand the progress toward the strategic vision on a timeline that could be more frequent than that of the broader institutional assessment. It is also conducting the assessment for the specific, focused purpose of tracking the progress towards the preferred strategic position. The university's leadership needs to know if the strategic initiatives are on the right track in time to adjust, should that be required. The urgency of this need may not be matched by the campus-wide assessment process.

A strategic plan assessment should focus on each of the strategic goals and constitute a progress report on the likelihood of completion of the goal by the end of the strategic plan. The assessment should address the following matters for each goal: Are the activities to meet the goal are on track? Is there is reason to believe that the goal may not be met in the strategic planning period? Is it clear that the goal will not be met in the strategic planning period? Time and effort should be focused on the goals in the middle category. Goals in the third category need to be revisited or revised.

A strategic plan assessment should also identify the leaders who are responsible for each of the goals and sub-goals. Accountability is key to making progress on strategic goals. Somebody needs to have ownership of the successful completion

of a goal. The “owner” of a goal must also have the authority to recruit help across the organization, when necessary, to make progress on the goal.

The strategic assessment must occur regularly and at intervals that are sufficient to recognize problems and address them in a timely way. Annual assessments are too few; weekly assessments, too many. In a strategic plan with goals that are interconnected, trouble in completing one goal may have ramifications for others. Regular review will reduce surprises and increase the likelihood that complications in realizing the goal can be resolved. As difficult as it may be to create a strong strategic plan, implementation of that plan will be no easier. Knowing where to put implementation energy and resources will require a good assessment plan.

The third subordinate plan is a communication plan. Communication plans do not often accompany strategic plans, but they are invaluable for the success of the strategic effort. In addition to those charged to carry out the strategic plan’s activities, others, both within the organization and outside it, can help make the plan successful if they understand its purpose and its goals.

Posting a strategic plan on a website is helpful, but it provides no assurance that the plan will be communicated to those who would benefit from knowing what it contains. The website assures that those who go looking for the plan will have a good chance of finding it, but a website does not specifically target communication of the plan to those who are critical for its success. University leaders need to ask themselves: Who will be responsible for executing this plan and how can we best reach them?

In some sense, of course, everyone who works in the university needs to know what is in the plan to orient their own work toward the university’s priorities. This is especially true for administrators who will be making their own decisions about how to set priorities and allocate resources. Divisions within a university, both academic and support areas, often draft their own sub-plans to align with the university’s plan. Those plans are strategic in the sense that the divisions are aligning their own future path with that of the university, both to support its strategic goals and to develop their own agendas. Engaged guidance from



university leadership for the leaders of divisions begins with clear communication of the plan's contents.

Others in the organization also need to know what is in the plan. First, they may have talents and resources that can contribute to the plan but are unknown to the university leadership. A well communicated plan can surface contributors and allies. Second, the plan communicates priorities for resource allocation. Others in the organization will be better able to regulate their resource expectations if they understand the institution's priorities.

Similarly, constituencies outside the organization will be better able to support the university if they clearly understand where it is going over the plan's lifetime. They may be able to contribute time, talent, and resources if they understand what will be required to realize the vision. In any event, it makes the job of university leadership easier to explain the university's commitments and direction if the plan has been widely communicated.

Effective communication requires a written document that spells out the answers to these two critical questions: Who needs knowledge of the plan to guide their own work? How can they best be reached? Each university will need to answer these questions based on its own organization and stakeholder set. Whatever the answers, it is better to over communicate than to not communicate enough.

Accomplishing a vision requires having a strategic plan and the discipline to use it to make decisions about program development, resource allocation and new initiatives. There will be costs to moving the plan forward, both in terms of financial limitations for less strategic projects and in the allocation of time and effort by many members of the university community. Some will welcome the new efforts and the changes those efforts will require; others will be unhappy with the disruption of routines or work assignments. In short, once the strategic plan is adopted, the push back will begin. A strong leader will anticipate this and meet it head on. Persuading others to stay the course will be easier with a plan that has been created through a highly engaging process and is regarded as a collective commitment.

## Operational Plans

Operational Plans are the annual plans that identify the priority goals to be undertaken in each academic year. Operational plans are guided by the strategic plan, but also address goals in other categories, for example, infrastructure, maintenance, security, salary inequities and externally imposed mandates. Whether or not investments in these areas rise to the level of strategic importance, they must be addressed as part of the ongoing operations of any complex organization.

An operational planning process provides you with the opportunity to learn about organizational needs and issues that might not otherwise be apparent at the highest organizational level. Consequently, operational planning should begin at the most basic organizational levels.

Operational plans for an academic year should integrate strategic and other organizational priorities. An organization has a finite amount of energy, time, and resources to devote to meeting its needs, and these needs must be carefully prioritized.

### **Scenario:**

*At the end of an academic year, the university president calls a meeting of the leadership team, deans, directors, and department chairs to review the goals from the academic year that is just being completed. Attendees are provided in advance with a copy of the goals for that year and a statement on the progress achieved for each goal. They are instructed to discuss the annual achievement with their faculty and staff prior to the meeting and to come to the meeting prepared to discuss goal progress, the value of what was accomplished and potential goals for the following year.*

*The meeting is primarily a listening session for the leadership team. The discussion is facilitated for efficiency, but leadership does not respond to critical comments or engage in explaining (or explaining away) any instances of falling short on*

*completion of a goal. In addition to reviewing the goals from the completed year, the president solicits possible goals for the coming year. Division leaders are expected to keep notes on goals that fall within their divisional responsibilities. The president has a summary of the meeting compiled and distributed to the participants. The object of the meeting is to begin the process of preparing operational goals for the following year.*

The value of this process is that it can surface issues at the front line of university operations. It brings to light the perspectives of those engaged in the day-to-day operations of the university and provides the president with some sense of the progress the university is making on its organizational effectiveness and strategic aspirations. Any indication that president or other members of the leadership team are defensive or dismissive will likely lead those in the organization to stop sharing their assessment of the value and effectiveness of the goals. Leadership team members are then able to use this information as a starting point for developing goals for the following year.

Sorting through the suggestions (both continuing and new) for goals for the following year is, initially, the work of division leaders. Potential goals that survive their first cut are brought to the leadership team for collective review. Their lists should include operational goals that will move forward accomplishing strategic goals as well as the most pressing goals in the other categories (infrastructure, maintenance, security, salary inequities and externally imposed mandates). As important as the strategic goals are to the long-term health of the university, some urgent operational goals may take priority – fixing failing physical plant systems, upgrading critical technologies, addressing illegal salary disparities, and so on. What is important is that university constituents understand that these needs are competing for the same attention and funds.

Operational goals require identified “sponsors” who are responsible for bringing them about. Every operational goal, strategic or otherwise, should have a designated leader who is accountable for seeing to it that it is addressed during the academic year. The president’s job is to track the progress on these goals and to find resources, human and financial, to help move them forward when they are

bogged down. This can be accomplished by developing an annual “agenda” or work plan to guide effort in the following year.

Having a work plan, and a reputation for following it, will be of great value to you. Straying from a publicly known work plan will encourage some in the organization to lobby to move their own favored goals up the priority list. Dealing with these efforts is likely to be a distraction at best and a source of ill will at worst. Clarity that is grounded in a legitimate goal-setting process creates the best chance of accomplishing a university’s stated goals. Taking an organization through change is challenging in the best of circumstances; there is no reason to make it harder than it needs to be.

As president, your most effective tool for getting things done is an operational plan, complete with measurable goals, responsible individuals, and timelines. Like any tool, this one is only valuable if it is used. Share it at every opportunity. Track goal progress in your meetings and disseminate updates at regular intervals. For better or for worse, you will be judged by the effectiveness of your organization at getting things done. Your powers of persuasion are more powerful when they are conducted in the organizational light of day.

## **References**

IPEDS: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, National Center for Education Statistics, [nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov)

NSSE: National Survey of Student Engagement, Indiana University Bloomington, [nsse.indiana.edu](http://nsse.indiana.edu)

# APPLICATION

The discussions that follow are inspired by the work of Tom Kendrick, *Results Without Authority*. Kendrick explores three kinds of tools that can be effectively used with cross-organizational teams assembled for a specific project but reporting through different parts of the organization. He categorizes these tools as:

- Control through Process
- Control through Influence
- Control through Metrics

Much of the business of universities is, in fact, accomplished through cross-organizational teams. Enrollment management, for example, generally brings together people from Admissions, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Marketing, Business and Finance and, Information Technology. Issues of diversity and inclusion are, likewise, best addressed through broad institutional involvement – often bringing together administrators and governance groups. Crisis Management teams are, of necessity, made up of representatives from every corner of the campus. Virtually all governance committees are cross-organizational teams, as are most *ad hoc* committees established to address a specific issue. Working across organizational areas is a hallmark of the way much business is conducted in universities.

Leaders of cross-organizational teams cannot rely on traditional notions of supervision to accomplish their work. Most of a team's participants do not report to the team leader and do not have their primary allegiance to the team. Participants have their own job responsibilities and organizational accountabilities that demand their attention and often must be given priority attention.

In these circumstances, leaders must develop skills and tools that acknowledge the reality of their lack of direct supervisory control over all their team members. These skills and tools will also prove to be quite valuable in more traditional structures where the reporting lines are clear but organizational culture resists the idea of “command and control.” In university settings, these tools are equally valuable within organizational units that report through a single leader.

University culture resists the idea that administrators “control” those who work in the organization. Kendrick’s insights are best adapted to universities as leadership techniques or tools. *Process, Influence and Metrics* are core tools for leaders who wish to work through engagement and persuasion.

# Tools

## 5. Leading through Process

*Leading through process* is probably the most important leadership tool an administrator can use to influence organizational action without coercing it. In my experience, the two most important processes for this purpose are (1) annual operational planning and (2) setting meeting agendas. These two processes focus the internal management of an organization and frame the issues that will have priority.

It is the operational plan that articulates and determines the annual organizational goals (within the framework of mission, vision, and strategy) The operational plan guides coordination of effort across the university. Agenda setting for team meetings is the mechanism that helps assure that the goals within the operational plan are being addressed. It is also a way to keep the highest priority activities in front of the organization.

Designing and implementing the process that creates the operational plan is the primary leadership role under the direction of any leader who is responsible for some aspect of an organization's operations. The process must be effective – that is, it must result in a plan that will carry the organization forward. It must also be *legitimizing*. In other words, organization members (all those who report up through a leader) must feel that they have had the opportunity to contribute to the process (in whatever appropriate ways) so they will recognize the legitimacy of its outcome. Legitimacy is a core condition for engagement; people are unlikely to engage with a process they view as illegitimate.

Process legitimacy is critical for persuasive leadership. In any organization, and especially in colleges and universities, consensus is elusive. Academic culture encourages critical analysis and dissent. In virtually every field of knowledge, progress comes from vigorous debate and disagreement. In the best cases, minority positions are not merely tolerated, they are valued. We should not be

surprised that this culture carries over into the administrative work of the university. Academics do not shed their culture or their values when they work with or become administrators. The challenge is to accept and channel, rather than to suppress or quash, disagreement. The goal of good process design is to acknowledge disagreement without being paralyzed by it. The aim is not to persuade every critic, but to persuade most people in the organization that the critics have been heard and the outcome has been considered and is reasonable. An operational plan that is the product of such a process is the touchstone that permits the leader to allocate resources, avoid distractions and keep others in the organization on task. The operational planning process may also be used to remind people of their commitment to the organization and to engage them in organizational work.

Designing the process to produce an operating plan is not a simple task. An effective planning process should incorporate the following elements:

- A process “map” that lays out the necessary steps.
- A written charge or charter that defines the purpose of the planning process and sets it in the appropriate organizational context.
- A specified work product.
- An authority who will receive the work product.
- A timeline that clearly indicates a completion date.
- If one or more committees are involved in the process –
  - A method for populating the committees
  - A review to assure that constituencies are represented
  - A specification of the status of the committee’s work (decision-making or advisory) and,
- A communication plan to inform the organization of progress and completion of the process.

A wise leader clarifies all these matters *prior* to setting a process in motion. Halting a process to correct deficiencies may undermine the credibility of its eventual outcome or cause a set-back in the completion of its work. Leaders



should anticipate “sticking points” and work to address them before they become issues.

Moreover, the process should be designed so that it cannot be derailed by those who do not wish to move the organization forward. As a practical matter, no one group should be able to stall or veto the planning process. If the process involves consultation, the consulting entities should be given clear timelines for receiving their advice. In seeking advice, it is helpful to specify that after the consultation period ends, silence will be regarded as agreement.

Here is an example of an operational planning process that incorporates these elements. The operational plan, whatever else it does, includes activities that move strategic goals forward. Strategic goals are generally accomplished in steps taken over the course of several years. Those steps should appear in the operational plans of the organization.

**Scenario:**

*Near the end of the year prior to the plan year, vice presidents, deans and department heads review the current year’s operational plan with their faculty and staff in the context of the university’s strategic plan and assess areas of progress and areas of stagnation. They are directed to look particularly at the contributions of, and opportunities for, their own organizational units.*

*Sometime near the end of the planning year, a campus management meeting (a meeting of department heads, administrative directors, deans and vice presidents) is convened by the president and devoted to a review of the current year’s progress and to make recommendations for the next plan year’s operational goals. An operational plan progress report is distributed in advance of the management meeting. At the meeting, participants review the progress at tables mixed to include individuals from different parts of the organization. Each table generates a list of proposed goal priorities for the next plan year. Near the conclusion of the meeting, table representatives report their recommendations. There should be time for general discussion and comparison of priorities at the conclusion of the meeting. Table notes are transcribed and distributed to all participants.*

*The current year’s operational progress report and the table notes become the agenda materials for a president’s leadership team summer planning meeting. The purpose of that meeting is to assess university progress toward its strategic goals and to develop an operational plan for the following year that will sustain the progress.*

*At the leadership planning meeting, following a discussion of strategic and operational progress in the previous year, and drawing on the advice that has worked its way up from individual faculty and staff members through the organization and into the table notes, the president’s leadership team develops an initial set of operational goals for the coming year. Those goals are arrayed in a table that has the following format:*

<b>Five-year Strategic Goal</b>	<b>Assessment – % completed to date</b>	<b>Annual Operating Goal</b>	<b>Assessment – % completed in current year</b>	<b>Pace of Progress (Green, Yellow, Red)</b>
Goal I				
Sub-goal A		Goal 1-A		
Sub-goal B		Goal 1-B		
Goal II				
Sub-goal A		Goal 2-A		
Sub-goal B		Goal 2-B		

*The chart is populated with operational goal statements that are intended to further the strategic goals and that are expressed as specific and measurable activities.*

*The chart is then communicated back to all campus management meeting participants at the first meeting of the planning year with the instruction to share it widely within the organization. It is also posted on the president’s web page. There is, in addition, a mid-year review of progress at another management meeting.*

*The plan is also communicated through additional channels. It is presented to the campus governance groups that represent faculty, staff, and students – however those groups are organized and structured on a campus. Representatives to the*

*governance groups are charged to bring the plan to their constituents for discussion and comment. Any operational issues that might arise through this process are brought back to governance for discussion.*

*The other venues where the annual operating plan should be reviewed are the campus oversight boards. Community advisory groups are given the opportunity to comment on the plan at the beginning of the planning year and to assess the progress at the end. Board advice is also integrated into the planning for the following year's operational plan.*

*All of this is laid out in a communication plan. The purpose of the communication plan is to assure that communication is not haphazard and that all relevant constituencies are informed at each step of the process.*

The key to legitimacy of decisions made through the operational planning process is the consistency with which the plan is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with that process. This requires wide and deep engagement by the organization with the plan. Any member of the community who is interested and motivated can press an idea or concern through his or her department or through governance. Criticisms raised outside the process have a difficult time gaining traction. If an individual critic cannot inspire a department or governance group to take up his or her cause, the dissent is not likely to undermine the legitimacy of the process. Moreover, because there are multiple streams of idea generation and advice, no single source or outlier can easily shape the direction of the operational plan. University community members generally understand that the plan is an integration of multiple proposals from multiple groups. The role of coordinating and balancing these ideas and activities – and crafting them into a plan - falls to the senior leadership of the organization. If the process is open and transparent, the results will be regarded as arrived at through persuasion rather than dictation.

The second critical tool of “leading by process” is setting meeting agendas. Effective agenda setting assures that the most important and the most pressing issues will be thoughtfully addressed. Too many agendas are put together hastily without careful construction and too many agendas are not distributed in

advance of meetings. Productive meetings begin with a well-conceived agenda development process.

Engaged leaders should pay careful attention to meeting agendas, keeping agenda setting in their own hands.

**Scenario:**

*The leader sends out a call to meeting participants in advance of the meeting (up to a week but no less than three days) asking for agenda items. Some items may already be set in the meeting schedule at the beginning of the year so they will be addressed in a timely fashion, but there should always be room for additional items suggested by participants. The leader who sets the agenda also sets the order of the items and, therefore, sets the priorities. Items that are most important or pressing are set at the top of the agenda. Announcements and reports should be saved for the end of the meeting. The early items are the items that are sure to receive full consideration. Items toward the bottom of the agenda tend to be constrained by the pressures of time. Once the agenda is set, the leader distributes it in advance of the meeting, along with supporting materials, if any. To participate effectively, meeting attendees need time to think carefully about the agenda topics. The leader will benefit more from participants' considered views than their snap judgments. There is a loss of engagement when participants come to a meeting without having seen the agenda or without having prepared to discuss the items on it. At best, this slows progress. At worst, it opens opportunities for undermining or stalling activities that remain in contention.*

Agenda setting as leading by process works best when it is open and transparent. All meeting members should have the opportunity to suggest agenda items. A leader needs to know if there are issues that participants feel need more discussion. The offer to entertain agenda items needs to be made far enough in advance to assure participants that it is sincere. Last minute calls for agenda items communicate that the leader is going through the motions, but not genuinely interested in contributions. Alternatively, the message participants receive may be that the leader is too disorganized to produce an agenda. In either case, agendas that are first seen at the beginning of a meeting make that point even

more emphatically. Leaders encourage engaged participation by giving meeting attendees the opportunity to raise issues and think about the meeting in advance. If meetings are important, the effective leader retains the control (by process) of shaping the meeting by setting and communicating the agenda.

Other organizational processes can be designed in similar fashion with similar intent. These might include hiring processes, course and curriculum approval processes, committee appointment processes, and so on. Each of these processes (and others, of course) has its own expected outcome so the process design must consider how to achieve that outcome effectively and with legitimacy. In designing a hiring process, for example, the process should be structured so that constituencies who believe they have an interest in the outcome have a mechanism for providing advice – whether through representation on a search/screen committee or through the opportunity to interview candidates and express their preferences. The process should also be structured so the hiring authority is in a position to make the final decision. Search/screen committees sometimes come to believe that the decision is theirs to make, and this possible confusion of roles is something that should be addressed through process design. Here, too, multiple sources of advice (rather than all advice going through the committee) can help avoid potential conflicts. Hiring processes also need to be designed to accommodate both the need for thorough review of candidates and the need to make timely decisions when candidates may have multiple job offers to consider. These issues should be addressed in the process design rather than being put off until a conflict arises. *Ad hoc* solutions in mid-stream tend to hurt the legitimacy of a process and its outcome. Making a hire under those circumstances places additional burdens on the new employee and the supervisor that can undermine the effectiveness of the organization.

Based on Tom Kendrick's insights in *Results Without Authority*, whenever possible, a leader should use existing processes and organizational structures to address organizational goals. These processes generally have recognized legitimacy and faculty and staff are inclined to accept the results they produce. Leadership that approaches important organizational issues by establishing a new

task force or working group sacrifices the existing organizational legitimacy inherent in established processes. Individuals or groups that are circumvented in the new process are likely to challenge it or reject its outcomes. Although this is sometimes necessary when existing processes have apparent defects or have not proven to be successful in achieving their intended goals, such changes come at a price.

**Scenario:**

*The principles of “leading through process” can be especially helpful in resolving a potential conflict like one that developed between a campus Committee on Art and the Chief Advancement Officer. The issue concerned the commissioning and placement of the portraits of former presidents. The Chief Advancement Officer had responsibility for the project, but the Committee on Art had some very specific ideas about how the project should proceed. These ideas were at odds with the advancement officer’s plans. The Advancement Officer received a memorandum from the committee that provided written advice that was mostly well-received, but that differed from the administrator’s plan in some significant ways. Although the committee was “advisory,” it expected its advice to be followed. When the administrator responded in a way that did not fully follow the committee recommendations, the committee pressed its points through the dean of the College of Arts.*

*Because the committee was advisory, it would have been possible for the administrator to acknowledge its advice and proceed with the original plans. This would have been organizationally permissible, but ultimately undermining of the practice of engaged leadership. To reinforce the importance of the committee and its role in maintaining the quality of art on campus, the advancement officer and the provost met with the committee and the dean. At issue was the location of the portrait gallery. The advancement officer’s preferred location was in the lobby of a campus auditorium. The committee agreed that the portraits should be hung as a group in a public place, but they were concerned that the lobby location would put the portraits at risk of being damaged. The committee had recommended that the administrator find another location.*

*In the meeting, the parties came to agree that either the advancement officer would find another location or would take steps to assure the protection of the portraits. A committee member suggested the possibility of a Plexiglas shield and another committee member (head of facilities) indicated that the campus could handle that solution. The provost was able to end the meeting with the assurance that the Chief Advancement Officer would follow one or the other of those options.*

The meetings to resolve this conflict produced an option (portrait protection) that both the committee and the advancement officer could accept. The option was generated from discussion and the mutual efforts at persuasion. By having the face-to-face meetings and playing out the process, the university was able to preserve the stature of its advisory committee and to find a solution that met the advancement officer's needs for a public portrait gallery. Preserving the process was as important as arriving at a decision. The committee's position remained "advisory", but the additional round of meetings established that the advice carried significant weight. The process was used in a way that strengthened it, as a process, for the future.

There are, of course, processes that are or become dysfunctional. If a leader determines that an established process needs to be changed or replaced, it is important to communicate concerns about it, and the reasons for revising it, well in advance. Having a process for changing processes might be taking things a little too far but communicating the intention to change the process to key individuals and groups in advance of announcing it is a good idea. If there are strong reactions or unconsidered consequences, they can be addressed prior to instituting the change. Because "leading through process" is such an important leadership tool, process design and implementation is worth the time and attention it may take. Making a habit of fixing processes in mid-stream is an indicator that leadership is not paying enough attention to engagement.

## Tools

### 6. Leading through Influence

Leading through influence is a form of persuasion that operates on the level of personal/professional relationships that the leader builds with members of the organization. I am calling these relationships “personal/professional” to emphasize that building these relationships is not a matter of the leader extending his or her social circle; neither are they simply role relationships embedded in the defined function of a leader within an organization. These relationships are characterized by, and focused on, the actual work that the leader does with others in the organization. They rest on the foundation of the leader’s defined organizational authority (making them professional), but they extend beyond it. What makes these relationships personal is that they are built on mutual trust, mutual respect, and a mutual sense of commitment to the good of the organization. In other words, these dimensions of the leader’s character and that of those in the organization the leader seeks to influence provide the framework in which influence is possible. Without trust, respect, and a common sense of what is good for the organization, attempts at influence are not likely to succeed. Under those adverse circumstances, a leader’s authority is inevitably grounded in coercion or contract. To lead through influence, therefore, the leader needs to work at developing trust, respect, and an organizational commitment.

To develop the persuasive tools of influence, engaged leaders will be most effective if they focus this effort on those in the organization who are most important to the leader in carrying out the organization’s mission and plans. Identifying those individuals and their places in the organization is what John W. Moore has termed “developing the base.”

Moore says: “The presidency is best understood as a collective; a network of relationships that are critical to the success of the president. Establishing, nurturing, monitoring, repairing, and strengthening these relationships (i.e., the



“base”) is critical to the success of both the presidency and the president.” (Moore) Moore believes, and I agree, that “a strong political base is a prerequisite to leading effectively...”

According to Moore, a wise leader who desires to engage the organization identifies and seeks out others within it that can help the leader advance the institutional agenda. A leader’s base consists of the people in the organization that are most critical for the leader’s success. They are people, in the first instance, with formal organizational responsibility (whether reporting directly to the leader or not), but the leader’s base should also include opinion leaders (without portfolio) who the leader relies upon to advance the goals of the organization. An effective base consists of people who understand and support the mission, vision, and values of the organization. It is the responsibility of a leader to cultivate these understandings within his or her base.

**Scenario:**

*To develop closer relationships with key campus individuals the president organized a discussion group to foster shared understandings of the future of the college. The president developed a set of readings – excerpts of recent reports on emerging topics of concern in American higher education: the decline in state financing, the increasing use of adjunct faculty, the rise of student mobility, the changing nature of the workforce, approaches to student engagement, and the like. The president also included a data profile of the college. The readings were research-based and avoid the literature of dire warnings.*

*These readings were sent to advisory board members, direct reports, and other officers at the dean and department level along with an invitation to join a conversation to be held in a comfortable campus setting. The conversation was to be on the topic: What should our campus do to foster effective student learning in the foreseeable future? Participants would discuss the topic in small, mixed, groups to encourage people who don’t generally have these conversations with one another to share their ideas. There was no requirement for the groups to produce notes and no special guidance on how to conduct the conversation. The idea was to encourage administrators and board members to speak their minds*

*on the future of the campus. At the end of the evening, the group would gather to share insights.*

The purpose of this conversation was primarily base building. The conversations encouraged those who are most necessary for the president's success to reflect intentionally on the future of the college and test their reflections against those of their colleagues. The object was not uniformity or closure – rather the aim of the conversations was to generate some common understanding of how the college could best serve its students and its region. This was a “no pressure; no product” gathering intended to enrich the personal side of “personal/professional” relationships through which the president would work.

Most interactions among these individuals are over solving specific problems or participating in formal planning processes. This meeting represented a chance to share larger conceptions of the college's preferred future. Extended discussion of their individual conceptions was intended to have the effect of permitting common understandings to emerge and providing deeper insights into the mission, vision, and values framework in which they work. This process is not designed to create agreement on these matters, but rather to help identify common ways of talking about fundamental issues with one another. Shared understandings are the foundation of the effective use of persuasion in conducting the business of the organization.

An effective base generally supports the institution's leaders. The support need not be, indeed should not be, “knee-jerk” or “rubber stamp.” There is plenty of room for disagreement in an effective base. Indeed, disagreement is healthy and critical for serious discussion of issues. To the extent that the disagreement is about means, it is fertile ground for influence. To the extent that it is about fundamental ends (mission, vision, values) however, leaders have more cause for concern. Disagreement about ends has its place in strategic planning processes, but at some point, debate about mission, vision and values must be suspended so that activity can be given direction.

Disagreement about strategy and tactics, disagreement about assignments of responsibility, disagreements about priorities, disagreements about timing, and the like are all healthy disagreements that a leader can and should have with those in his or her base. These are matters that generally can be resolved through discussion and argument if the fundamentals are settled. Disagreements about means are the opportunities for members of an organization to influence one another. Even when they cannot be resolved, decisions with dissent in these cases are generally not “hills to die on” for members of an organization. They do not call into question the fundamentals of an organization’s mission, vision, and values. A wise leader welcomes these kinds of disagreements and the opportunity to engage his or her base in addressing them. They can be tests of the soundness of a leader’s ideas or improve on them with new ideas.

Moore advises that leaders think carefully about who is in their base. The base should not be restricted to part of the organization. Nor should it ignore opinion leaders who have no formal organizational role. A strong base has roots in all parts of the organization, even those that do not report to the leader. It may also include people outside the organization who are relevant to a leader’s responsibilities. A rule of thumb for selecting members of a base is: Who do you want at the table when you cannot be in the room? In a college or university, this would include influential department heads and deans as well as governance leaders and campus committee chairs. It would, of course, also include the leader’s direct reports. Beyond that, it would include respected faculty and staff who are often tapped for committee assignments. These individuals all attend important meetings that do not generally include the president or others in senior leadership positions. Participants in those meetings who understand the university’s strategic goals, financial circumstances, and so on can help bridge divergent ideas and minimize potential conflicts before positions are hardened or ideas are set in stone. Well informed members of the base are not spokespersons for campus leadership, but they are able to help others understand the positions and decision parameters of campus leaders.

Another way to express development of a base is to ask: Who are people in the organization who are open to this kind of relationship, who are themselves respected by others in the organization, who are opinion makers, and who represent the broad constituencies that exist within the organization? Leaders should be on the lookout for individuals who meet these tests and should seek to engage them in the work of the organization, where possible.

Tending the base should be high priority work for an engaged leader. In the first instance, this means taking the time to keep base members informed about issues that the organization is facing, about funding and budget problems that might be on the horizon and about policy changes or directives from above that could have consequences for the organization. Information is a valuable commodity, and leaders strengthen their base by sharing it with others. This can be done in conversation or in meetings, but the more personally and systematically information is communicated, the stronger the relationship between leader and base. Sometimes this can be accomplished informally through conversations before or after scheduled meetings. Despite the press of busy schedules, leaders do well occasionally to arrive early to meetings and linger when they are over. Even very short conversations can head off misunderstandings or settle issues that might otherwise grow more serious. These interactions also tend to “humanize” the parties to one another, making future discussions easier to conduct.

To be influential, a leader must be trusted. In colleges and universities this requires overcoming a cultural divide between faculty and administration. Faculty who have become administrators are sometimes said to “have gone over to the dark side.” Administrators are often accused of waiting until summer to make decisions – when fewer faculty are on campus and when faculty governance does not meet. Many faculty, in casual conversation, will say that administrators do not value academic quality over budget savings. These are clichés, but they are indicators that the basis of the relationship between an administrator and university constituents (particularly faculty and academic department heads) is not the presumption of trust.

Robert C. Solomon and Fernando Flores in their book *Building Trust in Business, Politics, Relationships and Life*, make the point that “trust is created and tends to be reinforced by trusting.” (Solomon and Flores) To be trusted, one must be trustworthy. To be trustworthy, one must (among other things) extend trust to the other. Trust, in other words, is a “reciprocal relationship.” In a college or university context and culture, it is up to the leader to make the first gestures of trust. Trusting members of the base with information is a good place to start. Of course, the information must be accurate. If and when it changes those in the base must be quickly notified. Without truthfulness and honesty, trust suffocates.

Trusting members of the base to make decisions within their scope of authority is another opportunity for leaders to become influential. This requires restraint of tendencies toward micromanagement and a willingness to not second-guess those who have been empowered to make those decisions. There are, of course, times when a leader must step in and deal with the consequences of a poor decision. But to the extent that intervention can be avoided, the trust relationship with a member of the base will be strengthened.

Solomon and Flores go on to observe that trust is “conditional, focused, qualified, and therefore limited.” In other words, trust in one context or on one issue does not necessarily spill over into other areas and issues. Moreover, trust is continuously open for reevaluation. A trusting relationship must be nurtured and regularly reaffirmed. Building trusting relationships is not sporadic work for leaders. They need to take every opportunity to be trusted and make their trustworthiness known. These cautions are, perhaps, best for beginning relationships; trust generally becomes sturdier with time – unless one party or the other commits a “deal breaker.” For the new leader it is best to presume that your trustworthiness is an unknown and will be scrutinized.

Respect is another personal/professional relationship that leaders need to develop if they wish to be influential. Leaders are respected when they are believed to be acting in the best interests of the organization; when they are

attentive to the organization's processes, procedures, and culture; and when they demonstrate that they understand the perspectives of others in the organization that differ from their own. These characteristics should converge and be demonstrated over time for a leader to be respected.

That a leader is expected to act in the best interests of the organization is, perhaps, too obvious to state. Nevertheless, there is room for ambiguity here about when and where the best interests of the organization and the leader's self-interest converge. For example, for college or university presidents, there is no more dangerous situation in which this ambiguity surfaces than in the handling of a campus-owned presidential residence. Maintenance of a presidential residence can have significant organizational benefits, if it is used to engage the campus community, alumni, and the university's constituents in furthering the mission of the institution. It is also a significant benefit to the president personally. University residences are generally elegant and well cared for. If the president is perceived as not sufficiently using the residence for university purposes or for spending too much university money to maintain or improve it, constituents may regard the president as self-aggrandizing. Nothing can erode respect for a president more quickly than a charge that he or she is using university resources for personal gain.

Failure to respect policies, processes and culture is another series of rocks on which a leader's respect can crash. A danger sign here is too frequently creating extra-organizational working groups and task forces where standing committees or governance groups might be used for the same purpose. Members of groups or committees that believe they are being bypassed, are in danger of disengaging with the work of the campus. While there are times when the creation of special bodies is the best way to address a particular task or issue, the reasons for doing so should be publicly presented and defended. The leader should also make an extra effort to appreciate the group that was not assigned an anticipated and desired task. To illustrate: Why establish a Task Force on Civility in response to racially insensitive remarks in the student newspaper if the campus already has a standing Multi-cultural Campus Council? Members of the existing body are likely

to feel disrespected if they are ignored on matters of concern to their group. The presumption (sometimes accurate) is that the campus leaders wish to hand-pick the task force members. If true, or unrebutted, this attribution of motive will undermine respect for the leaders.

Naming members to committees, whether standing committees or *ad hoc* bodies established for a special task, creates opportunities to either reinforce or undermine respect for the leader. A wise leader populates committees by soliciting recommendations from relevant parts of the organization (governance groups, schools, departments, etc...) Recommenders should be asked to supply more names than would be used so the aggregated committee can be balanced in appropriate ways (rank, discipline, gender, ethnicity, etc...). Using this method risks producing a committee that includes members who cannot effectively do its work. It is possible that curmudgeons and highly vocal critics will be included in important assignments. Although it is possible, that possibility is mitigated if the leader has some choice in appointments. At any rate, a dissenter or two on an otherwise strong committee is usually a manageable risk. Moreover, critics often have alternative perspectives that can be most helpful. In any event, it is generally better to have the critics engaged in the process than to have them challenge its legitimacy after the fact. Finally, the upside of this process is that the leader is given high marks for not being manipulative. Asking for, and using, the recommendations of other within the organization provides an opportunity to show respect – and to receive it in return.

The third element for building respect is demonstrating a capacity to listen to, and understand, those in the organization with ideas that differ from the leader's own. Members of an organization can generally see the difference between making a show of listening and demonstrating that the other has been heard. Leaders can demonstrate that they do, in fact, hear what others have to say by articulating the ideas from others that they have considered before expressing their own decisions. It is not necessary, or even advisable, to criticize those ideas if one disagrees with them. It is sufficient to convey that they have been seriously entertained. People in an organization who feel that they have been understood will generally accept an alternative decision.

While it is important for the leader to develop a reputation for listening accurately to anyone in the organization, it is particularly important to have that reputation with those in the leader's base. If members of the base don't see the leader as someone who listens, they are more likely to undermine his or her efforts to be influential than to support them.

Having shared goals is the third requirement for leading through influence. Members of the base should be committed to the organization, its mission, vision, and values. For members in positions of organizational authority this is, in the first instance, a matter of selecting people who share these goals. Presumably, if the organization hires well, this requirement is met. It does happen, however, that critical positions are sometimes filled with people who do not have the goals of the organization at heart. In universities, a dean or a department head may take a job at an institution he or she does not respect to merely to be employed or to leave a bad situation. Such people do not make good candidates for a leader's base.

For the most part, however, people choose to associate themselves with organizations that do work they believe in. It is likely that good candidates for the leader's base are people who have enthusiasm for the organization and are engaged in its work. For those people, there is some satisfaction that comes with mere association with the university. However, the greater satisfaction comes with engagement in the university's activities. For a leader who seeks to lead by influence, that means it is important to help members of the base find ways to contribute.

Leading through influence also requires time – time for members of the base and others in the organization to hear ideas, absorb them, understand their consequences, and see their value. Ideas that are introduced on too short a timeline or pushed for a quick decision have a high probability of being rejected.

There are solid reasons for this. In his book *Thinking: Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman develops the idea that our thought processes are comprised of two



“systems.” Fast thinking (labeled “System 1”) is intuitive, automatic, and with little effort or sense of voluntary control. (Kahneman) System 1 takes in a situation and rushes to judgment. Slow thinking (labeled “System 2”) follows fast thinking (when invoked) and reasons more carefully. Slow thinking takes mental effort, concentration, often involving intentional computations and use of logical operations. System 2, when called upon, steps in and more carefully considers judgments reached through System 1, sometimes overruling them. System 1 tends to operate from your existing store of knowledge, beliefs, and ideas. If these are challenged, that challenge would occur through System 2.

If this is an accurate account of how most people reach conclusions, it is important to give people time for slow thinking. Demanding a judgment or response to an idea “on the spot” is likely to produce a *status quo* reaction. Quick responses tend to shut down opportunities for persuasion. A better approach is to present ideas along with a process and timeline for discussion. Members of the base need time to absorb the ideas and let their more reflective selves weigh the value of new proposals. By implication, leaders need to develop decision processes that make room for discussion, debate, and reflection.

The “influence” relationships (the leader’s base) within an organization must co-exist with the formal governance and decision-making processes without undermining them. The base is in no sense a substitute for the organizational structure. The leader should take care to be sure that it is not perceived as a “shadow organization” or that being part of it is a source of power. Members of the base should not have special access to the leader. Whether the leader has screening mechanism for seeing and talking to people in the organization or permits open access, practices should not distinguish between the bases and everyone else.

The base is not an organizational entity. Conversations with members of the base should be information exchanges supporting, but clearly demarcated from, organizational decision processes. As a rule of thumb: Listen to anyone, but only make decisions through the appropriate channels. Decisions are much more likely

to be accepted in an organization if people of influence understand them and understand why they were made (whether they agree or not). But they are less likely to be accepted if they are perceived to have been made through special conversations with a “favored group.” A wise cultivation of the leader’s base lays the groundwork for effective persuasion more generally.

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# Tools

## 7. Leading through Metrics

Leading through metrics is, perhaps, the most natural and the most difficult tool to use by a leader who is hoping to engage an organization through persuasion. In many organizations, the use of data to shape and direct employee behavior is often part of a culture of coercive or contractual organizational compliance. Employees are likely to regard management through data as punitive, or at least potentially so. The use of data can be associated with embarrassment, fear of punishment, exposure of poor performance, and lack of compassion by leaders. Tom Kendrick makes this point when he says:

“One of the most common factors in failed measurement systems is using the results to punish, criticize, or increase hardship on the people who are responsible for collecting the needed data.”

He goes on to say:

“Metrics expected to encourage behaviors will never work when they are inconsistent with a team member’s culture, traditions or established practices.”

In universities, the culture of *management* through metrics faces additional complications. First, academic organizations live in a culture of decentralized decision-making. Faculties tend to regard the introduction of measurement by administrators as encroachment into their spheres of authority. Second, faculties tend to see themselves and their colleagues as methodologically sophisticated in the use of metrics. The introduction of measurement by campus leaders is often criticized for its lack of rigor or its failure to meet the research standards of the academy. Although assessment projects are generally not intended to be research projects, the faculties who resist them may attempt to hold them to research

standards. Third, the data that is routinely collected and counted is often not the data that is required to understand the issues that need to be addressed. The standard IPEDS graduation rate measure is an excellent example of this. IPEDS tracks first-time, full-time freshmen through graduation. This is not a particularly useful measure when it is used at institutions that have a high proportion of transfer students, or that admit large numbers of part-time students, or that have substantial admissions in the spring semester. In those cases, the graduation rate measure is based on a small percentage of the institution's student body. Fourth, the introduction of new data collection systems and new metrics are sometimes regarded as burdensome additions to already heavy workloads. For example, software designed to capture faculty annual activities can be time consuming to learn, at best, and difficult to use at worst. These systems are often labor saving for those who are charged with collecting the data, but labor intensive for those who are charged with providing it. For all these reasons, the introduction of attempts to lead through metrics are not often greeted with enthusiasm in universities. No doubt this is true in many other organizations as well.

Nevertheless, the use of metrics to move an organization forward is crucial. Organizations need to track progress to make progress. The use of measurement conveys a sense of what is important to the organization, helps members determine how to set their own priorities, and establishes a basis for recognition of valuable work. Accrediting bodies have recognized this and undertaken to integrate assessment into all dimensions of university performance. The institutionalization of assessment in higher education is an ongoing process that has been protracted and sometimes difficult. That, however, is a story for another time. The challenge for leaders who wish to engage through persuasion is figuring out how to build a culture of attention to measurement without creating alienation and undermining organizational effectiveness.

There is a substantial literature on how to decide what to measure and how to write goal statements. Kendrick goes into these matters extensively. These are certainly important topics for those who wish to lead through metrics. A prior question, however, is how one introduces the idea of tracking progress through measurement into an organization in ways that enhance engagement. This is

fundamental to approaching leading through metrics with a persuasive orientation.

Tom Kendrick is right to observe that people who believe they are doing well want validation and people who are not may be willing to find out what they need to do better – if there are no penalties associated with the discovery. In other words, the use of data needs to be “appreciative.”

Leaders who use measurement to direct organizational change must not focus exclusively on what needs to be fixed. They must also focus on what is going well and give it public recognition. Nevertheless, accentuating the positive, while important, is (alas) not sufficient. The reality of most organizations is that there are matters to address that need improvement and cheerleading will not improve all of them. Leaders need to acknowledge this reality (Heifetz) and keep such matters in front of the organization.

An effective approach to the introduction and use of measurement to address organizational issues is to invite a conversation throughout the organization about how data might be used to make an important improvement. Introduction of “leading through metrics” from the top down is exceedingly difficult. Even if one overcomes the expected resistance and designs the use of measurement to minimize “gaming the system,” there remains the matter of undermining organizational engagement.

Any leader who wishes to “lead through metrics” in ways that foster organizational engagement should consider building off a base of a solid organizational recognition program. Recognition programs are the most achievable forums in which activities are measured to make decisions that acknowledge individual performance on institutional priorities in a purely positive context.

Organizations with comprehensive employee recognition programs have a head start on building a culture in which the use of measurement to improve the organization is non-punitive. These programs generally have criteria of excellence for employee performance. The best programs have an element of peer

recognition. Employees (by category) review nominations and select fellow employees for recognition. The value of participation, of course, is that those who make the selection internalize the standards of excellent performance and understand the need for metrics to document whether the nominees have met the standard.

Another important dimension of effective recognition programs is that all employees are (or should be) eligible for recognition in one category or another. For example, if faculty teaching awards are restricted to full-time faculty, it would be wise to institute a part-time teaching award as well. To systematically exclude some employees from the opportunity for recognition is to risk the creation of pockets of cynicism about recognition programs. This cynicism can undermine the good work of building reliance on metrics as a positive value.

Visibility is a third dimension of successful recognition programs. Those selected for recognition should be widely known to have been selected. Ideally, the recognition should outlast the ceremonial occasion of the recognition. Some organizations place portraits of those who are recognized in prominent places. Others maintain recognition walls with the names of the selected. Whenever recognition is given, it is most valuable when it exemplifies the use of measurement to improve the organization through appreciation.

The existence of a viable recognition program is the foundation on which to build a more robust culture of using data to strengthen performance. These programs are, for the most part, non-threatening because the consequences of not being recognized are minimized. As recognition committees are inclined to say: "it was a really hard decision." In other words, many people met the standard, but only one could be chosen. Those who are not nominated or chosen are free to construct their own reasons. This is quite healthy for a system that is intended to be competitive, but not alienating. There are circumstances, however, in which leading through metrics needs to be more directive.

## Scenario:

*To improve campus climate for non-majority (non-Caucasian) students at a predominantly majority campus, leadership wished to determine what was being done on campus in this regard. This was a challenging project because the efforts to make campus diversity a higher priority and to improve the climate for diversity were, on this campus, politically charged issues. There were some loud voices on campus and in the surrounding community that were highly critical of the campus climate and campus culture for people of color at this university. There were others who saw any effort to address these matters as “special treatment” and were highly resistant to addressing them. Some in this camp were convinced that they would be forced to engage in programs that they dismissively labeled as “politically correct.” Campus leadership, however, believed that the campus climate issues were real and were undermining efforts to create a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment for learning. In this scenario the campus needed to find ways to address its climate for non-majority students that would not create diversions by making the climate improvement process or progress measurement the issues.*

One approach in this situation would be to establish a voluntary system of reporting on the topic: *What has your program done in the past month to improve the campus climate for non-majority students?* The system is voluntary in the sense that all programs would be asked to report, but the “ask” would come as a request rather than a demand. Recognition takes the form of a framed certificate suitable for hanging in the program office. The criteria for eligible activities would be quite open ended – but there would need to be a plausible link between the activity and an improved climate in the program or in the university.

No penalties attach to ignoring the request. Rather, from among the reporting programs one is selected each month for public recognition. The program receives a visit from the administrator overseeing the program who is the bearer of a certificate of recognition. Once framed certificates begin to appear in program offices, others are likely to wish to participate.

The answers to the question “What has your program done...?” are not standardized. Programs are given wide latitude to list their efforts. As a research tool or a method for making careful comparisons to evaluate relative effort or effectiveness, this approach leaves much to be desired. There are no criteria provided in advance as to what would count as a program effort and there are no rubrics to categorize and quantify each program effort. In short, this is an extremely weak version of leading through metrics. However, pressure is likely to come from the court of organizational opinion to participate. The first metric leadership recorded would be “number and percentage of participating programs.” The data, such as it is, comes as lists of activities. From the lists, it is possible to make a rough calculation of time and effort. One could also use this information to look for visibility and continuity of effort. Ultimately, the impact of these activities on programs could be examined through the future use of climate surveys to determine which were most noticed and approved by future survey takers. It would be interesting to know whether improving the campus climate for non-majority students influenced the campus climate more generally.

The greatest virtue of this approach is that it stimulates creativity within programs to focus on something that had not been a priority (campus climate for non-majority students). Many programs contain people who do have an interest in improving this climate, and those individuals would likely be encouraged to take the time and make the effort on behalf of their colleagues to participate. Many programs might well put into place practices that are easy to replicate in other programs. Sharing the data of best practices would make this possible.

In this scenario, the data are primarily appreciative. Departments are not asked to report on their shortcomings or their blindness to the problem. They are asked to list their positive activities – great and small. The biggest negative would be to report nothing. Even here, there would be no penalties attached to ignoring the request, other than the possibility that one’s colleagues would regard your program as uncaring.

This approach to the use of measurement to direct change requires great patience. Initially, one must focus on the enthusiasts and recognize their efforts.



When new programs begin to report, they must be recognized and encouraged. In the early stages, the objective of leadership should be to increase participation and encourage engagement. The data that is relevant to that goal is: how many programs are participating?

Inevitably it will be important to get to the question of effectiveness. Here, too, patience is required. Which activities will prove to be effective in *this* context, is an open question. That question needs to be answered through organizational experience, and one of the best ways to build organizational experience is to encourage programs to share their ideas and experiments. The open-ended request to list activities acknowledges that best practice for this university is not yet known. Over time, some practices will prove to be better than others – more effective at creating a welcoming environment for non-majority students. Eventually it will be possible to identify categories of activities that improve campus climate. Creating these categories too early, however, will increase the probability that effective ideas will not have a place to be reported. Rigor at the outset would stunt the project and would limit the possibility of sharing new and good ideas across the organization.

The existence of data, efforts and activities documented and shared, can make a difference in the improvement of campus climate for non-majority students. When identifying what has been done, programs are likely to do more of it. Other programs might also begin to implement the low-hanging fruit. This data informed project could promote change without starting a culture war.

Activities like this tend to run their course. Programs that pay attention to the climate for their students are reinforced in their efforts, and other programs may begin to do a little more. Of course, not all programs made the effort. Moreover, after some time has passed, enthusiastic programs begin to be recognized in subsequent rounds of recognition. When the activity and the creativity level off, it is time to move on to new approaches. With luck, this activity could lay the groundwork for more robust action to develop an institutional culture and climate that is welcoming to all students.

Neither of the examples I have discussed so far represent are likely to generate much “push back” in their use to lead through metrics. In the first case (recognition programs), the data was entirely positive; in the second (activities to support a more welcoming campus climate), only positive data was to be reported, although lack of participation had a negative connotation. The situation is very different when an organization needs to confront negative or critical data and the leader wishes to present that data without undermining organizational engagement.

To better illustrate the use of metrics to lead organizational change consider a scenario about an effort to improve the culture of customer service at a university.

**Scenario:**

*In this scenario campus leadership is aware of more than a few examples of poor treatment and less-than-helpful service in a variety of offices across campus. However, the occasional example and even a widely shared perception of indifference to attentive service would not be sufficient to drive change.*

*In this example, there are several obstacles to overcome. Some of the loudest voices on this issue have pitted attention to customer service against faculty authority in the classroom. The slogan “students are not customers,” while no doubt, true in the classroom setting, effectively ignored the treatment of students in business offices, departmental offices, advising offices, and the like. To even talk about customer service toward students, leaders are well advised to clearly set aside the implication that the discussion would include the classroom. It is too easy to dismiss complaints about poor service as an excuse for poor academic performance. Students who express concern about ill-treatment risk being regarded as underperforming complainers. Third, there often is no data. Leadership in this situation had no idea whether the complaints were the tip of an iceberg or indicators of an occasional lapse of civility. However, it was clear to campus leaders that taking on this issue would require knowing much more than the anecdotes suggested.*

Improving customer service is best framed as a campus quality improvement project. To get started, it is useful to commission an external consultant to conduct a mystery shopping exercise. Relying on the consultant's expertise, one can develop a series of criteria for best practice customer service – both in person and over the phone. The next step is to deploy mystery shoppers posing as students who were considering transferring to the university to visit or call a variety of offices. In this scenario 26 offices across campus in all administrative divisions to be shopped.

Here is the situation that the shoppers adopted: As a mystery shopper you are a student considering either enrolling or transferring to our campus. You are trying to figure out where to start. You are just in the office or on the phone to gather information and speak with key people. Encounters are to be rated on 20 items, including: Greets immediately, makes eye contact, gives clear directions, uses courteous words, gave clear information and explanations, spent enough time with me, and answered all questions. Ratings were: "yes," "no" or "not applicable."

Campus community members were notified that there would be "secret shoppers" on campus during a two-week window. They would, however, not know when they would be "shopped." In addition to the shopping, a sample of actual students were surveyed on their perceptions of the service they received at the university. Managers were also questioned about their perceptions of the quality of customer service in their departments.

This process produced extensive data, and the results were not flattering to the campus. Employees who were approached by the shoppers, for example, did not ask how they could help (90%), did not actively listen (70%), took part in other conversations while the shopper was waiting (70%), did not make eye contact (40%), did not help people who looked confused 30%/70% na), and did not show patience (30%/60% na). The data provided an overwhelming indicator that customer service was not being practiced on this campus.

The leadership challenge here is to introduce this data in a way that will start a conversation to take the university down a path of organizational change – and to

do so without causing campus staff to disengage. This can be undertaken and communicated in a pamphlet to all faculty and staff. The pamphlet is titled: *“What Others See that We Don’t.”* The pamphlet included information about the shopping methodology, the areas shopped, a summary of key points, the data from the face-to-face and telephone shopping, and summaries of the student surveys and management conversations.

The pamphlet opened with a letter from the president. Such a letter is critical in setting the tone for subsequent conversations. It needs to be non-punitive and to invite the campus to look more honestly at its customer service behavior. A negative tone at the outset would create serious opportunities for disengagement.

The letter could read as follows:

*Dear Campus Community,*

*I must confess that when I received this report on customer service at (our campus), it left me a little down. We all have bad days, and we all must deal with difficult people from time to time. But even making allowances for that, we have a lot of room for improvement.*

*Once we get past the disappointment, the shock, the skepticism about the process, and the certainty that they are talking about someone else, the question remains: Where do we go from here?*

*Honestly, we need your help. If (our campus) is perceived as uncaring in its daily transactions, we will have a difficult time retaining and educating our students. We know students are not customers in the classroom, but they are customers to our support areas; and we are customers to one another. I think we all want to provide students and colleagues with a supportive campus environment. But how can we best accomplish that?*

*I hope you will take time to read and reflect on this customer service survey. Ask yourself: What can (our campus) do to improve our perception as a caring organization that supports its academic mission?*

*Because we like to think of ourselves as a continuous improvement organization, campus leadership believes that these issues are best addressed as a collective effort. You are invited to send your ideas about how our campus can improve its customer service approach to the following email address: (address). If you would prefer, you can drop suggestions in a suggestion box specially designated for this project. It is located (location). These suggestions need not be signed. We will respect your confidentiality.*

*These ideas will be collected and turned over to a “project team” that will craft a proposal for improving these results. Any member of the campus community is eligible to be part of the team. If you care to join in, make that known in your email or suggestion.*

*Once the project team is assembled, it will hold a town hall meeting to share its initial ideas about how we can improve the perception of customer service on (our campus).*

*Sincerely,*

*President*

I have produced this letter in full to make several points related to keeping the use of data and metrics within the bounds of a persuasive (rather than a coercive) process.

Notice first, that the letter acknowledges the problem without casting blame. The criticism is expressed in institutional rather than individual terms. We collectively have room for improvement and we as a campus have responsibility to fix the problem.

Next, the letter is invitational. The aim of the letter is to engage the campus in addressing our poor performance in this dimension of service. Taking a harsh tone would most likely discourage participation. Rather, those who are concerned are invited to self-identify and participate in devising a solution. If there are people who feel strongly about this issue, they should be involved. They may become

“influencers” when we are ready to implement what the committee proposes. Moreover, by making this an open process, the leadership will have spread ownership of the outcome. The culture of service is unlikely to be improved by orders from the top if there is no support within the organization.

Third, the letter is careful not to interpret the data. In this secret shopper study the methodology is not beyond criticism, particularly if this was presented as a research project. To assert its conclusions is to own its methods. By inviting others to respond to the data and say what it means, leadership side-stepped a debate on methodology and invited interpretation and discussion. The invitation to interpret is also an invitation to engage in a persuasive dialogue. Furthermore, it is not the precision of the data, but the general picture it paints that the campus must address.

Fourth, if possible, responsibility for addressing the problem should be placed in an existing campus process. This signals that service to students is an ongoing matter and not a “one off” issue.

To assure that the data and metrics continued to drive the change process, campus leaders should plan a second mystery shopping activity to evaluate progress in the development of customer service. The second campus-wide mystery shopping might occur a year after the first.

In this scenario, service improvement was directed by a project team that the campus established after the first mystery shopping. The team undertook a review of best practices in relation to what came to be called “service standards.” These standards were discussed and ultimately shaped into a set of standards for the campus. Once the standards were ratified, the HR Office undertook a training program on the standards throughout the campus. It took several semesters to train all front-line staff across campus.

After the training was completed, the consulting group returned to conduct another mystery shopping, using the same criteria that were used originally. The campus was told that a second “shopping” would occur but was not told when it would take place.

The comparative results were quite gratifying. Although the campus was not perfect in its implementation of the criteria, improvement was dramatic. Some of the improved items include: “Greet within 5 seconds” went from 20% to 92% meeting expectations; “asks how they can help” went from 10% to 88%; “demonstrates patience” went from 70% to 96%; “speaks clearly and slowly” went from 20% to 100%. The only persistently low score went to “Introduce Self.” Campus staff members apparently did not think that the personal introduction is necessary. These results were circulated to the entire university community. In the same memo, seven staff members were cited for their extraordinary service. The data report doubled as a recognition mechanism.

One of the lessons learned after the second round of data collection was that some supervisors were less enthusiastic than others about implementing the standards. The task of working with those supervisors was assigned to the administrator who oversaw the division in which the supervisor worked. These sessions were primarily “problem solving” – administrators were encouraged to negotiate where there were circumstances that prevented an office from following the standards to the letter. The negotiations were over details rather than over whether customer service standards would be followed. Here, too, the approach was persuasive rather than directive. If the standards were to have staying power, the supervisors needed to adopt them, and not merely enforce them.

It is unlikely that a campus would undertake to improve its standards of service without data that documented the extent of the problem and without a metric that establishes a goal. After the first mystery shopping, the university could no longer see poor customer service as an aberration. Moreover, the university was unlikely to have undertaken systematic improvement of service to students without evidence that the problem was widespread.

It would, no doubt, have been substantially easier to dictate service standards than to have them constructed by committee. That, however, would not have helped the cause of engagement. The project took a long time, but it was owned by the university, and it resulted in an improvement in service that was

documented. The job of campus leaders became keeping the data in front of the committee and the campus, supporting the training program, and making the effort to keep the project moving forward and on track.

Instituting service standards is, of course, not a one-time effort. Habit and culture are at play in the way students have been treated. Habit and culture are not changed in a single, focused effort. In this regard, training would need to be ongoing. More mystery shopping would need to take place, and administrators would need to make meeting the service standards a part of the annual review of supervisors. This work would require “constant, gentle pressure.”

“Constant gentle pressure” is a management principle of Danny Meyer, a well-known New York restaurateur and author of *Setting the Table*. Meyer makes the point that in his business, service must be of high quality and consistent. Customers who are spending a great deal of money on a meal expect it to taste wonderful, to be impressively presented, and to be served flawlessly. Lapses can lose return customers and, worse, can create the negative word-of-mouth that discourages new ones.

Meyer insists on holding his employees to his high standard through constant, gentle pressure. The pressure is constant in that *every* lapse in service that is recognized is corrected. The pressure is gentle in that the correction is positive – presented as instruction rather than criticism. Establishing this principle requires an organizational culture that is educational in spirit. The good news about this for universities is that they already accept the value of learning. The use of data for improvement needs to be implemented in this context.

Data and metrics are important tools of leaders because they invite analysis and discussion. Disagreements are constructive when they focus on the interpretation of the data rather than who has the authority to impose a decision. Discussions of data put those in the conversation on a more equal intellectual footing. The issue is: “what does the data tell us?” rather than “what am I telling you to do?” Leaders who spend time developing data relevant to their responsibilities put themselves in a position to be truly persuasive.



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## 8. Concluding Thoughts

Adopting the engage and persuade approach to leadership requires an artful combination of plans and inspiration. Plans provide clear roadmaps for the future: they are critical for transparency and provide the foundation of organizational alignment. A widely held sense of what the university values and intends to accomplish is necessary for those who do the work to realize those accomplishment together. Nevertheless, if planning, and the execution of those plans, is too inflexible, innovation suffocates. Circumstances change and plans can become obsolete. Universities are filled with creative people who have new ideas – many of which could be more effective in helping it respond to new challenges and achieve its goals. If plans are too settled, opportunities for persuasion have come to an end. The tension between plans and inspiration is perhaps more acute in universities than in many other organizational environments. This can be traced back to the very nature of the university.

Universities, more than most organizations, are committed to both tradition and innovation. Tradition is preserved through careful planning; innovation is introduced through inspired thinking. Universities are charged with preserving the old and discovering the new. They are repositories of human knowledge, charged with preserving that knowledge and passing it along to the next generation of learners. They are also centers of discovery, charged with pushing the boundaries of human knowledge and making it available for the good of humanity. Tradition and innovation, however, tend to pull in opposite directions. These conflicts surface, for example, in debates over the university's core curriculum. Typically, these debates raise the question: What is the appropriate stance toward works from the canon of Western thought and works from other parts of the world, or from emerging disciplines such as Gender Studies?

These conflicting impulses also surface in academic hiring decisions. Does an Art Department need a faculty member with expertise in Computer-generated visual images rather than a replacement for the retiring professor in 19th and 20th Century German Expressionism? They surface, too, in public relations offices. Should the university hire a writer for a monthly print newsletter or an expert in

social media communication? Because there is never enough resource to do everything well, university leaders are often disrupting the uneasy truce between preserving what is and creating what is yet to be.

To uphold tradition is to preserve the past. Our grandest academic tradition, commencement, contains elements that hark back to medieval times – the mace, the garb, the colors, the music, the symbols, the language of degree conferral and so on. The commencement performance is rule-governed and respectful of the past. Traditionalists are not happy when undergraduates decorate and personalize their caps and gowns. Unplanned variations are flaws in the performance from the traditionalist's sense of an ideal form. Innovators, by contrast, tend to enjoy breaking with the past. They might encourage graduates at commencement to decorate their garb. More radically, they might give up the pomp and circumstance altogether and opt for a contemporary celebration of graduate, family, and community.

With respect to the learning process, innovators might challenge the traditional sixteen-week semester as an inviolable and ideal period of study. Innovative course scheduling could include courses that started anytime and run for various lengths of time, depending on the course content. For the innovator, the changing environment will shape changes in the framework in which course content is presented and studied. To illustrate we need look no further than the widespread shift to remote learning in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The leadership problem is that both tradition and innovation are important in higher education. Students should be held to standards that do not simply bend with the wind. Faculty are expected to understand and be able to employ the methodologies of their disciplines. Nevertheless, new ideas and new disciplines are sometimes required to make sense of a world that is changing radically. With room to experiment, both faculty and students are capable of creations beyond the capacity of the leader to contemplate. As a university leader, you will be expected to hold fast when it is important to hold fast, to change when it is important to change, and to be wise enough to know which is called for in any given situation. There is no formula for this. What you may rely on is a process of

engagement and persuasion. In contentious situations, talk with others before you act. The wisdom of the leader often consists in establishing processes that make room for discussion and debate. Process creation is a work of creating plans and following them. Processes that encourage rigorous debate and are open to a variety of outcomes are designed to make room for innovation. To the extent that you commit to leading through engagement and persuasion, you will need to make room for some innovation inside the planning context. In the contemporary world of higher education, planning and innovating are not a strict duality. They co-exist in ways that are sometimes discomfoting.

Planning and accountability are central to the contemporary academic enterprise. University leaders are expected to develop plans and are held accountable for implementing them successfully. Faculty are measured against standards of tenure and promotion, staff members typically have annual goals, and students must pass their courses with letter grades to accumulate credits toward graduation. Some institutions are partially funded based on reaching measurable outcomes (performance funding).

Nevertheless, the greatest satisfactions for leaders are often unplanned. Institutional perseverance through natural disasters; community support in response to racist incidents on campus; faculty stepping in to accommodate the loss of a colleague in mid-semester; student leaders and campus police working out grievances together. But to say these occurrences are unplanned is not to say that they happen out of the blue or without preparation. Good leaders create an environment that makes such recognition moments possible. Good leaders create an environment that encourages people in the organization to use their creativity in the service of organizational plans and goals. This requires a culture that supports innovation and the trust of persons in the organization that their experiments and deviations from tradition are valued. Your leadership can thrive if you learn to manage both dimensions of this duality.

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