

SPRINGBOARDS TO REFLECTION: HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS SHARE EXPERIENCES

VOLUME I

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Abstract

The purpose of this compilation is to provide a learning experience by encouraging the audience to reflect on the real life experiences of successful administrators in Higher Education. This work can be used a supplement for courses in education, educational leadership, public administration, and management. Instructors can use the participants' experiences for classroom discussions and case studies.

Keywords: Leadership, Higher Education, Case Studies

1. Introduction

Presidents, chancellors, provosts, deans, and department chairpersons serving in our colleges and universities contributed to this work by providing personal anecdotes related to their experiences in higher education. Some participants shared humorous stories. Others shared stories of a somewhat serious nature. The audience consists of undergraduate and graduate university and college students studying Professional Higher Education Administration, Higher Education Leadership, Student Affairs Administration, Student Activities, Student Development, Student Services and a myriad of managers and administrators in other fields.

2. Suggested Methods for Instruction

Many stories, that is, springboards relate to more than one topic. One reflection prompt is presented after each of the 21 springboards. Reflection prompts are action statements that act as catalysts for classroom discussions and or for case analyses. Tiles with asterisks were written by the participants. Other titles were extrapolated from the springboards.

3. Case Studies

Springboard 1

Mary

Mr. Ken Bedini, Vice President for Student Affairs, Eastern Connecticut State University In the Role of Vice President for Student Affairs I encounter many students and in many ways. Here is one scenario for your consideration.

“Mary” is an environmental earth science major with a GPA above a 3.6 and has achieved a great reputation academically on our campus and with faculty in that department. In spring 2009 she was diagnosed with cancer and had to leave school with about a month left in the semester to undergo surgery, followed by chemo and radiation. Most students would have just dropped the courses, but Mary insisted on finishing, so the Division of Student Affairs worked with the student’s professors either to finalize a grade or grant an incomplete.

Mary struggled with the surgery and treatment but stayed the course and finished the incompletes with great success. She was poised to return to school for fall 2009, but encountered more cancer and more surgery over the summer and missed the fall semester. An out-of-state student paying additional tuition, Mary also was unable to work during this time. In the beginning of the spring 2010 semester, Mary walked into the office of the VP of student affairs and handed him a card to thank him for helping her navigate the challenges she had faced. Because his entire contact with Mary had been via e-mail, he had never met Mary before and therefore did not recognize her. Mary took the time to thank the VP for the little he felt he had done, but the truth is he thanked her for allowing him the privilege.

“You see, a lot of my job is dealing with students who do not necessarily deserve nor appreciate the opportunity of the education and experiences we provide and many of them who will live to be 100 simply waste it. Mary may not live to be 100, but for every day here she will serve as a reminder of how special an education really is.”

Reflection Prompt: This account is inspiring regarding determination. Please describe how you felt after reading this springboard.

Springboard 2 A Moment that Still Lingers in my Heart

Todd Parnell, MBA, President, Drury University, Springfield, MO Barely a month after I assumed the interim leadership position, I received a call from the director of our MBA program. She shared a tragic story. A middle-aged student, who had gone back to school after retiring from an office job to set an example for her children, was due to receive her MBA degree at Drury’s August commencement. She had been diagnosed with a particularly aggressive form of cancer in April, had completed her course work, but would not last that long. She was in the hospital, drifting in and out of coma, and would likely not survive another week. “Could we hold a personal commencement ceremony for her as soon as possible?” the MBA Director asked. What I found was that at Drury we could do most anything within the realm of compassion.

The next afternoon a cadre of faculty, students, and administration marched down the halls of St. John’s Hospital in Springfield, MO, in full regalia, and squeezed into her hospital room where family was gathered. Our Academic Dean called this special commencement to order, noting it was unlike any in Drury’s 135 year history. He placed a cap on her head and gown over her shrunken body. I presented her with diploma and hood, and all present applauded her inspiring accomplishment loudly, tears all around. Her smile lit the entire room, in a moment that still lingers in my heart. I received a call less than an hour after leaving her room with the news that she had passed away. She was buried in cap and gown. A scholarship has been established in her name for adult learners.

Reflection Prompt: This springboard is inspiring regarding motivation for several reasons. Please identify the ones that you experienced.

Springboard 3 Humor is Key to Effective Teamwork

Gail E. Carberry, Ed.D., President, Quinsigamond Community College, Worcester, MA Perhaps the most humorous stories emerge as the use of technology has evolved in the ways that administrative communication occurs, both internally and externally. A slip of the finger is not always corrected by "spell check" and neglecting to include an "L" in the word public was indeed an embarrassing moment with a somewhat humorous outcome. Our reliance on technology once translated into a paragraph that spoke about our students' "career objections" rather than their "career objectives." Another spell check faux pas expressed concern about "derelict faculty" across the street from the campus; when, indeed, the discussion was supposed to be an expression of concern about a "derelict facility." As such errors sometimes escape beyond the office walls, some on campus can see the humor and others are inclined to use their red pens to correct the errors and slip them under the office door in the dead of night. Humor is key to effective teamwork. As I began my tenure as a college president I have encouraged my executive team to begin our staff meetings by rotating an assignment for each member to take a stab at delivering a humorous "ice breaker." I have found that many folks in higher education take themselves way too seriously. I am serious about the work, but I try not to take myself seriously.

Reflection Prompt: Explain how you might use "humorous ice breakers" in your career. Provide an example or two.

Springboard 4 Humor Helped

William G. Cale, Jr., President, University of North Alabama
When it came time for my campus interview for the position I now hold, flights were rain delayed and my wife and I arrived without luggage around midnight. A stop at Wal-Mart got us toiletries but there was no escaping the fact that clothing for the interview would be what we had worn for travel the previous day. Word of our situation quickly spread and just before my open forum before the campus community, a faculty member about my size produced shirts and ties from which I could select something to match the sport coat I had worn. More fully clothed than before, I thanked my benefactor, made my presentation, and was taking questions.

In answer to one, I spoke of problems that sometimes arise "from left field" and added emphasis by pointing with my right arm. Quickly realizing this miscalculation, I looked at my right arm and then at the sizable crowd and said "Well, you should try doing this with almost no sleep while wearing someone else's clothes." I got a big laugh and later on, the job!

Reflection Prompt: This president thought quickly and used humor after making a mistake. Share a situation where you did the same and describe the response.

Springboard 5 University Administration and the Weather Based on a True Story*

Dr. Michael Pernal, Executive Vice President, Eastern Connecticut State University

Everyone knows that university presidents make important, even critical decisions. These decisions involve complicated budgetary matters, deployment of personnel, and establishment, modification, and even elimination of academic and administrative programs. Of course, everyone also knows that the above list should also include, for those presidents who have both indoor and outdoor facilities, making the call at commencement whether to hold the event indoors or out. While it is not a critical decision in terms of the health of the university overall, it is important to note that thousands of potential critics will converge on the campus for the better part of a weekend. The president had better get it right. While Presidents with whom I am most familiar have had to wrestle with the commencement call, most have been able to avoid the decision process pertaining to the closing, delaying, or early dismissal of school usually during winter weather. These decisions are usually left to an administrative vice-president, director of facilities, or, in many cases, committees of officers who confer with one another before making the choice. In my role as a human resources administrator, I have been involved in a number of these "calls" over the years. The focus of this account will be a single incident that occurred in the Winter of 1990. I distinctly remember the incident, because it occurred a day after Georgetown University's men's basketball team had just been named the #1 team in the country. I was fortunate enough to have two tickets to a game that day between GU and the University of Connecticut – a sellout for weeks in the Hartford Civic Center made much more important by the fact that Uconn was taking on #1.

The day of the big game dawned cloudy and threatening. A winter storm was predicted, and I went to work with the full knowledge that a decision on an early closing would be part of the day's agenda. Now, it seems that every campus has a self appointed employee who willingly takes on the mantle of informing human resources (then known ingloriously as The Personnel Office) of weather developments as they occur. Many colleges have a number of such employees. It was not enough that Eastern Connecticut State University's Director of Facilities routinely used the Bradley Airport Weather Service and our campus police used some super-secret service to track the weather round the clock. At Eastern in the early 1990's, we had Three-time Tina. Now, Tina was an office worker who otherwise was a very competent employee. She got along with everyone and got excellent service ratings. It was just that on, "weather days," she had only one agenda, and that ensuring that the administration made the right call at the right time. This is an account of the events of the day in question, sort of. As it turned out that day, I returned from a meeting around 10:00 in the morning and asked my administrative assistant, who we shall call Pat, if anything was happening and, in particular if the "first call" had yet been made.

"Not yet," said Pat, "but it is still early."

About 10:15, Pat buzzed me and let me know that Tina was on the line.

"Good morning, Tina, how are you today?"

"It's snowing at Western."

"It always snows in Danbury, but I'll relay the message. I am sure that the storm is being tracked. It might be slow moving and not hit until tonight."

With that said, I busied myself with other priorities until around noon. I knew it was getting close to time for the second call, which always occurred with the arrival of the first snowflake.

"Have you looked out the window yet?"

Now my office at the time was in the basement of venerable Shafer Hall, and I had a very small rectangular window about eight feet from the floor. Although it was already winter, my window still had clinging to it, bits of grass from the final mowing of the fall. In short, I could not see a thing.

"I assume it has started already. I will call the others. If need be we will use the telephone tree to reach everyone."

“It’s really starting to come down, and you are playing with our safety. I just want you to know that Western closed at 11:00 and Southern is closing at noon.”

That was call #2. I thanked Tina for the information and, during the next hour or so, I talked off and on with members of the committee regarding the weather conditions, what Bradley and the police service were saying, what we learned from our sister institutions, and what a good closing time would be. We should have saved ourselves the trouble. Tina had already figured it all out. About 1:00, I returned to the office and asked if there were any messages.

“Just two from Tina.”

“Oh no, I’ve gone over the limit; that’s No.s 4 and 5.”

“No. They only count when you make direct contact.”

I went back to my office and made call #3 to Tina. I did not tell her that we had already decided on a 2:00 closing. I knew she would be playing her trump card, but I wasn’t going to give her the satisfaction.

“It’s unsafe out there already. If I get in an accident on the way home, it’s all your fault.”

“Well nobody is requiring you to work if you feel unsafe. You know that you can leave anytime and use personal leave or vacation.”

It wasn’t necessary for me to say this, since I knew that Tina was an expert on vacation, personal leave, and compensatory time. But I couldn’t resist. So, I added,

“We’ll have a decision in less than 15 minutes, I’m sure. ”

Based on our consultation process, the administrative vice-president announced a 2:00 closing at 1:15. I knew Tina would have her coat on by 1:59 at the latest. By 2:30 the storm was raging and, as I looked out at the empty parking lot (not from my window but from the building door), I knew in my heart that Tina was right. It was getting pretty slippery, and the latest weather forecast indicated that the storm would intensify and rage through the night. At about 3:45, I left for home (a 4 mile drive) and while enroute, I made up my mind that the tickets to the Uconn game would help kindle the fireplace. We would watch the game in our warm TV room with hot chocolate and popcorn. After all, I had to be concerned about my 12 year old son, the other ticket holder. I got home about 4:15 and, to my surprise as I walked into the house, there sat David in his warmest winter jacket, snow shoes, a Uconn baseball cap covered by a Uconn wool cap, and gloves. He looked like the first 12 year old to reach the North Pole and greeted me with a single question.

“We’re still going to game, aren’t we Dad?”

Now, I regard myself as a reasonably intelligent person, but how do you argue with a 12 year who knows as well as anyone that you don’t get to play #1 anytime you want. My wife chimed in that we could take “The Tank,” which was my daughter’s 1979 Volvo 240 with 120,000 miles on it which we purchased for her to navigate the way to school on days such as this. My wife also reminded me that we had time to eat at Wendy’s in the civic center which probably clinched the deal. It was about 45 minutes to Hartford from my home in South Windham, and we navigated the distance in about twice the time. Most all of the way, I kept reminding myself that only an idiot would drive this distance in such weather. Bolstered by a howling wind, the snow was horizontal always blowing directly into my windshield. However, “The Tank” was up to the task, and we arrived safely, parking in the sanctuary of a garage adjacent to the civic center. If we fast forward to halftime, my memory tells me Uconn was down six or so, and David wanted a soda and hot dog. I dutifully got in line at the concession stand. I was probably 20th in line, and I resolved to wait, worrying all the while that the second half might start without me. After a few minutes, a woman who had made her way to the counter, walked in my direction toward the seats with popcorn and a beer in hand. It was none other than Three-time Tina.

Needless to say, she was totally speechless, and even managed to spill a bit of her beer when she caught my gaze. I was somewhat speechless as well but managed to greet her with this comment.

“Well, I guess it’s just a matter of what your priorities are.”

Oh yes, Uconn went on to beat #1 Georgetown. When David and I left the civic center garage, the wind and snow had stopped, the stars were out, and people were dancing in the snow covered street. And Tina? She ultimately retired from Eastern after rendering very competent service to the university.

She did, however, relinquish her role as weather tracker. Unless she just passed me over to make her calls to another administrator.

Reflection Prompt: Many decisions were made in this case. Identify one decision you thought was interesting and explain why you made that decision.

Springboard 6 **Mantras**

Shani D. Carter, Ph.D., Chairperson, Management & Marketing, Rhode Island College

As department chair, I have two mantras: Let Go and Look Up. These mantras reinforce each other. Let Go reminds me to turn my attention away from circumstances that are outside my control, and to refrain from spending time trying to change those circumstances or trying to obtain data to convince others to change those circumstances. This mantra is used primarily within my relationship with the administration. Letting Go means I am using self-discipline to refrain from spending time or energy thinking about on these issues. For example, if I demonstrate via data that I need more faculty and support staff, and if the request is denied, then I "let go" of the issue. I reason that every hour I spend on such an issue is one less hour I have for other duties. One can always change a department strategy, retrench, or cancel classes if resources are not forthcoming. To Let Go is to place one's eyes and mind elsewhere.

Look Up reminds me to focus on larger, strategic issues and to focus on relations of my department with other departments and with the administration. This mantra is used primarily within my relationship with my department members. Looking Up means I am not "looking down over the shoulders" of my department members or micromanaging them. If department members want to manage a project, such as the internship program or the honors program, I let them, and I refrain from interfering with their processes. My most common saying to them is:

"Great, if you want to do it, let me know if you need anything and let me know when you are finished."

All of the department members have doctorates, so I have to assume they know what they are doing, and more important, I have to assume they want to be treated as such. To Look Up is to show trust in the department members. The department is stronger and more vibrant if everyone contributes and if everyone's knowledge, skills, and abilities are used to the fullest. Looking Up also means if the department members tell me they need help or resources in order to complete a project, I "look up" and attempt to find the resources, rather than "look down" and tell the department members to do something different than what they had planned to do.

Overall, the mantras Look Up and Let Go remind me that it is my role to serve the department, not to rule the department. Members of the department state their goals and the resources they need to accomplish the goals. My role is to get out of their way and to find the resources to allow them to flourish. If resources from outside the department are not forthcoming, then I spend my time trying to help the department flourish in other ways.

Reflection Prompt: Describe a mantra that you might use in a similar fashion.

Springboard 7 **I thought I had Seen Everything**

Philip L. Dubois, Chancellor, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

I've been involved in University administration for thirty years, including fourteen as a president or chancellor. This story falls into the "I thought I had seen everything" category. During the week of graduation ceremonies at UNC Charlotte in 2008, a student showed up at the Chancellor's Office and said she needed to meet with me right away. Our office assistant asked all of the right questions and determined that the student wanted my permission to participate in the commencement and to walk across the stage to have her name announced with all of the other graduating seniors. "Well," asked our assistant, "have you completed all of your degree requirements?" The student then explained: "Actually, I'm not really a student at UNC Charlotte, but I need to walk across that stage!" She then explained that, two years before, she had told her parents she was transferring from the local community college to the University and this was the month and year that they expected her to be graduating. They were flying in from out of state on that upcoming Saturday to celebrate the receipt of her bachelor's degree! I can only imagine what she was doing with the non-resident tuition money they were probably sending over that two years to support her attendance. We advised her to "come clean" with her parents and suggested that asking the Chancellor to help perpetuate a fraud was probably not a good idea. And so it goes.

Reflection Prompt: Explain an ethical situation you have observed and describe how it was resolved.

Springboard 8 When Working With Students From Other Cultures

Dr. Shelly Gimenez, Dean, Eastern Connecticut State University

This week has been an interesting one. We have 45 Jamaican students on campus that bring with them experiences from their culture not only individually but as a group. When you have a group working together toward a common goal, as in this case, a bachelor's degree, we as professionals concentrate on what curriculum needs to be delivered to meet requirements toward completing the degree. We work with the students individually taking into consideration what they have already taken and what they need to take. We look toward the diploma and graduation as a labor of love knowing that we are going to change lives with the completion of their degree. However, what we don't normally take into consideration, is the vast cultural change they are going through while studying in a foreign land doing their on-campus residency. We don't realize that for many this is a list of firsts; first plane ride, first elevator ride, first escalator ride, first ride on American highways, first time in a residence hall, first time rooming with others that are not related to them, first time on a university campus, first time eating American food, first time going to an American supermarket....so many firsts. There are not only cultural firsts but emotional firsts. As an administrator working with these wonderful students I too have had firsts and am learning that when in a foreign land the whole person has to be taken into consideration and not just academic completion of a degree.

Reflection Prompt: Describe how you would attempt to make individuals from different cultures feel comfortable in a new environment.

Springboard 9 Lessons Learned*

Marilyn Brock, Ed.D., President, Coastline Community College, Fountain Valley, CA Several years ago I had the opportunity to assist a college in the purchasing of used electric beds for their Nursing program from a hospital that was going out of business in the local community. The beds were purchased for a fraction of the cost of new ones and were delivered to the campus as requested. Several issues immediately surfaced. The Nursing program classrooms were on the second floor of the building. The beds did not come apart easily and would not go in the elevator. Maintenance would not carry the beds up the stairs because they were too heavy. The only solution was to rent a crane and have the beds placed on the second floor balcony to go into the classroom. With the cost of the crane and the labor involved the savings from buying used beds disappeared and we could have purchased new ones for the same or less cost. Moral of the story; Sometimes a bargain is not a bargain but costs more than it would have otherwise.

Reflection Prompt: Describe a personal situation that you experienced that relates to this springboard. Explain what you did in that situation.

Springboard 10 The Presidents

P. von Arx, S.J., President, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT

I was asked to speak to a group of students in the campus center. A binder at the lectern had been prepared with the introduction by the president of the student association, my own speech, and the concluding remarks of the student president. The student president was a very nice if somewhat nervous young man. As he stepped up to the lectern and opened the binder, he mistakenly turned to my speech and proceeded to give it with a good deal of zeal and good spirit. After he had finished, I walked up to the lectern, thanked him for giving my speech, proceeded to read his introduction of me and his concluding remarks. I then wished everyone well and the students went off to other things. My one disappointment was hearing so many people say to the student president what a wonderful speech he had given and wouldn't he make an excellent president of Fairfield University.

Reflection Prompt: Share an experience where you or someone you know communicated spontaneously in a similar situation.

Springboard 11 The Magic Button

P. von Arx, S.J., President, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT

Within weeks of arriving at the University I was asked to speak to a group of major benefactors in our University auditorium.

The Kelley Theater, where I was speaking, is a very impressive room which seats some 600 people and contains a large stage with giant curtains which rise and fall at the touch of a button. I was standing alone at the lectern telling these benefactors why they should be so happy to contribute money to Fairfield University when backstage someone – accidentally I presume – touched the magic button and down came the great curtain. Just before it passed before me I had the time to thank the benefactors for allowing me to be their president for all of three weeks but obviously I was no longer needed at Fairfield University and that it was time to move on to my next assignment. Just as the curtain descended in front of my face, someone pushed the magic button, the curtain rose and, to the sound of tremendous applause, I returned to my prepared speech.

Reflection Prompt: Share an experience or two where you observed humor used as an effective tool.

Springboard 12 Excellent Advice

Robert A. Scott, President, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY

One of my mentors, a highly successful university president for whom every vice president became the CEO of a significant organization, used to say to me, "Secure your footing before you extend your reach." This is great advice and I pass it on.

Reflection Prompt: Describe one or two situations where this advice might be applied.

Springboard 13 The Real Purpose

Seth Saunders, President, South University – Virginia Beach

One day while sitting in my office when one of our more vocal students stopped by to talk. This student was a good overall student but also made it very clear when he was on campus. He had no problem expressing his opinion. I have a lot of respect for him and so I would listen to him with a purpose as he had a good feeling for what was happening with the student body.

At our university we care how our students are dressed because we want them to feel and look professional. We were starting to see students show up in sweats and pajama bottoms. So we had our faculty and dean express the importance of appearance in each class they taught. Well, it seems that started to create some rumblings so the above mentioned student wanted to talk with the President to find out what the reasons were for this dress code. So he knocked on my door and I told him to come on in. I asked him what was on his mind. Here is how the dialogue went: Student: You are the president, why can't students wear comfortable clothes to class? Why is there a dress code? You know some of the students are pretty upset right?

Me: I appreciate you bringing this up. We have never said you could not be comfortable; we just want you to look more professional. Let me explain to you our thought process. You are paying good tuition to come here right?

Student: Yes, so we should be able to wear what we want.

Me: I hear you. However, I have a question for you, do you represent our university?

Student: Yes.

Me: When?

Student: Well, I guess all the time.

Me: Right and how are you representing our university? Are you representing us in a way that is professional?

Student: I guess that depends.

Me: Exactly. I would also ask you this question, if a potential employer came on campus, would you be ready for an interview?

Student: Not if I was not dressed appropriately.

Me: What do you mean?

Student: I can remember once when I had an interview and I was the only one that showed up in a tie and suit.

Me: Who got the job?

Student: I did.

Me: So our purpose is to provide even more value than what your tuition pays for. We want you to graduate as a professional, not just to become a professional. You're an appearance says a lot about you. Does that make sense?

Student: That is awesome. Why didn't you guys explain that upfront? I am going to tell all the students how cool that is. It makes so much sense.

Me: Listen, we want to set high standards because we want you to benefit from your education for the rest of your life.

Student: I appreciate you taking the time to explain this to me. It really shows how much this university cares about each student. That is why I selected to attend here. Thank you.

After that meeting we added to our orientation presentation a better explanation of why we have a dress code. It has seemed to help as we have had fewer problems. It is interesting that often times we fear telling people/students important information fearing they may not like what they hear or they may reject what is being told to them. The truth is, people can accept honesty. They can also accept when others are looking out for their well being. This concept goes the same in business. Your values and standards need to be in place. You need to hold strong to them as people like when people are firm in their convictions. It does not mean you do not listen to others and their opinions but it means you find ways to make things work in the best way possible.

Reflection Prompt: Portray a situation where you observed values and standards that you did not think were appropriate. Explain what you did in that situation

Springboard 14 One Minute on Leadership*

Alan R. Davis, PhD, President, Empire State College, Saratoga Springs, NY

I once was chairing a committee to hire a new dean in a technical area at a previous institution (no names mentioned so as to protect the innocent etc.). We had a candidate who met all the criteria and we were excited to have him travel a long way for an interview with us. He had been born in China, with a lot of experience there, in Australia, Canada and the US. He had all kinds of experience in academe and in industry, and he seemed perfect for the job. The department he was to lead was rife with personality clashes and petty politics, and I was most worried that this quiet, accomplished man would be able to handle the mess. I was very honest in describing to him the dreadful soap opera that he would have to manage, and asked him to comment. "Well" he said "in such situations, you just have to have a bigger heart than everyone else." It was, in that context, a perfect answer, and I have remembered it ever since. Leadership of any sort requires us, in many ways, to simply be "big enough" to deal with issues. I developed this into my one minute on leadership. (I now know how much more there is to leadership, but sometimes we only have a minute.)

To be an effective leader, you need three attributes: a big head, a big heart and big feet. You need a big head in 2 senses: you have to be pretty smart to handle multiple inputs of data and opinion and, rather than be overwhelmed, to be able to process and to make sense of them. In the other sense, you need to be a bit "big-headed", and have confidence in your own abilities, and not be self-doubting all the time. A big heart is needed to accept the emotional chaos that we all face regularly; to not be dragged down by it and become personally involved ourselves, but to calmly look for a way forward that respects people's feelings, and allows everyone to move on with dignity. Big feet are needed, so when you leave, people will say: "those will be big shoes to fill". In other words, you are willing to take risks and try new things, and so make a significant difference as a result of your work.

Reflection Prompt: Describe a situation you were either involved in or observed that required having a big head.

Springboard 15 A Very Difficult Situation for a New Leader

James W. Hottois, President, Palo Verde College, Blythe, CA

As I was about to take become a college president a very wise and successful administrator reminded me that "new presidents are always antidotes to their predecessors." I have always kept that in mind. However, I have also learned since then that the longer a president serves the more that president's leadership style comes to define the culture of the institution he or she is leading. That creates a very difficult situation for a new leader. While I do not have data to support the following, my observation has been that the first president to follow a long-serving president more likely than not will have a short tenure in the job.

The exception is the new president who is chosen as an internal candidate and has been socialized into the existing institutional culture.

Reflection Prompt: Describe what you would do in a similar situation.

Springboard 16 First Administrative Position

James W. Hottois, President, Palo Verde College, Blythe, CA

When I was about to take my first administrative position I met with the dean of the small college that I was leaving. I told him that I was accepting an administrative position elsewhere because I "wanted to try out administration." In his very folksy way, that dean gave me two pieces of advice which I have always carried with me. He said:

"You will find that you will never want to leave administration because of the adrenalin rush that goes along with the job."

I actually tested that advice once when I thought I had served enough time in administrative purgatory and wanted to go back to the classroom and my discipline. Very quickly I found that I really did miss that adrenalin rush and was lucky to be able to go back to administration.

b. "You will find that the increment isn't worth the excrement." I think he was right about that too. We read about incredible administrative salaries in higher education—salaries that are out of line with the salaries of those who do all of the other things that make a college or university work. If you believe B.F. Skinner's Waldon Two in which he hypothesizes that the worst jobs should have the best pay, then the real world is mirroring Skinner's Utopia. However, I suspect that reality really is different. My experience has been that the real reward of college or university leadership is in the results. The reward is in seeing students graduate from a program you have shepherded from idea to reality. The reward is in seeing that new building your fought to have funded being built. The reward is in seeing your college or university move ahead.

Reflection Prompt: Describe one or two situations where you found that mentoring was helpful to you.

Springboard 17 An Innovative Leadership Program

Dr. Walter B. Bernstein, Ed.D., Vice President, Western Connecticut State University

The administration of programs and departments in Student Affairs (sometimes called Student Life) is a complex and varied challenge. It is an area of the University that offers students co-curricular learning opportunities that can, and often does, transform their lives in profound ways. At WCSU it was the Hancock Student Leadership Program (HSLP) which I helped to create in 2007 that reminded me again just how transformative some of these programs can be for students. The HSLP program, a joint project by both Academic and Student Affairs, was designed to identify top students on campus with a keen interest in learning about leadership. On-line applications and a rigorous interview were required as part of the selection process. Students were expected to complete four days of leadership training (during intersession), complete a one year, on-campus leadership project and submit an array of portfolio material. They were also expected to work closely with a faculty/staff mentor during the program but particularly as the leadership projects were developed and implemented. No academic credit is granted to students for program participation.

Students decide to come into the program based on a high level of motivation to learn more about leadership and, more specifically, to learn more about their potential as future leaders. What we have discovered thus far with this program is that students find it hard to get organized, to stay on task, to persist in their vision, to delegate work to others and to accept the hard reality that sometimes the best laid plans simply do not work. Yet, in this discovery the students have a unique opportunity to learn all of this while gaining the confidence so critical to masterful leadership. A number of students have remarked that they never "saw themselves as leaders" until this program began to introduce them to the concept. More than a few said the program gave them the confidence they lacked to tackle leadership issues. For those students that persisted in the program (which lasts a full year), almost all matured in ways that were simply not predictable. Some decided on careers in higher education, several ended up serving on the CSU Board of Trustees, while others developed projects on campus that have become "institutionalized" even after they graduated.

A good number of these students were immediately employed by large companies and not a few continued on to graduate programs, including law and medical school. The single theme that has emerged for students after completion of the program is confidence, a more complete and honest self-awareness of their own strengths and abilities. They begin to entertain the notion that they can be leaders, that they can create a vision and persuade others to follow, that with “failure” often comes the greatest opportunity to learn. The full joy of working in the Student Affairs arena is to observe not only the intellectual growth of students, but the unique way in which they find their own voice and their own strengths during their academic journey at the University. It is this integration of academic and developmental programming that offers students the greatest potential to learn by applying their knowledge to real-world issues.

Reflection Prompt: Share how you would present a similar program that promised results for future endeavors and not for immediate rewards.

Springboard 18

Good Advice

Todd Milano, President, Central Pennsylvania College, Summerdale, PA

My message is but two words.
"Keep Smiling"

Reflection Prompt: This springboard is brief and to the point. Please provide an example of where it might be helpful.

Springboard 19

Almost Perfect

Dan Angel, President, Golden Gate University, San Francisco, CA

One year while I was President of Austin Community College, we had all worked hard developing our annual budget to be presented to our Board of Trustees. As it went to be printed, our business VP had assured us that "there was not a bad number" in the thick 400 page document. As he unveiled the just off the press volume, the large print on the cover read,: BUGT. (NOT Budget)!

Reflection Prompt; This springboard suggests that even with careful proofreading some mistakes can occur. Explain how this issue might be addressed.

Springboard 20

Listen

Robert A. Scott, President, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY

Over the years, I have often followed moments of "crisis" with a discussion of, "What can we learn from this?" It is important to look at every incident as a learning opportunity. I have learned valuable lessons from these periods of debriefing with senior officers and faculty colleagues. Another lesson I have learned is to listen to suggested solutions or answers to discern whether or not the person with the proposal has clearly understood the question or the problem. In these cases I will say, borrowing from James Baldwin, "That's an answer, what's the question?"

Reflection Prompt: Describe several ways this springboard might help you develop better listening skills.

Springboard 21

Not That Old!

Jack Hawkins, Jr., Ph.D., Chancellor, Troy University, Troy, AL

During a recent introduction to students a young admissions counselor said: "I am thrilled to introduce our long time Chancellor, Dr. Jack Hawkins, who has been here since 1889! My reaction: “While I may look like I have been here since 1889 it has only been since 1989!”

Reflection Prompt: Explain what you would say to the young admissions counselor after the event.