January, 2018

Identifying Faculty for Administrative Careers in Academic Leadership

David Alan Sapp
Robbin Crabtree

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/david_sapp/34/
SNAPSHOTS

DIVERSITY
Promote culture change by going beyond the term 'ally.' Pages 6–7

COMMUNITY COLLEGES
A recent report shows that student success initiatives are on the rise at community colleges. Page 8

LAWSUITS & RULINGS
Review recent court cases and agency rulings related to academic administration. Pages 9–11

LEADERSHIP
Jill Buban, senior director of research and innovation at the Online Learning Consortium, leads innovative initiatives based on research. Page 12

Faculty Development
Identifying faculty for administrative careers in academic leadership

By David Alan Sapp, Ph.D.; and Robbin D. Crabtree, Ph.D.

Universities benefit from a strategic combination of hiring academic leaders externally and promoting from within. Such a combination ensures the consolidation and maintenance of initiatives while also bringing in new ideas and experiences from elsewhere in higher education and, when appropriate, from other industries. Internal academic leaders are often drawn from the faculty, a logical extension of their roles in shared governance and other institutional work. In fact, that was the case for the two of us, who served in roles such as program director, department chair, center director, participants in the faculty senate, and members of task forces charged with imagining, implementing, and/or assessing institutional initiatives. However, not all faculty members who serve in these roles prove to be ideal candidates for promotion to assistant/associate dean or associate/vice provost, or selection into higher-level academic leadership positions typically filled through national searches.

Leadership in place, as defined by Jon Wergin, is "a type of lateral leadership"

Continued on page 4.

The Reflective Leader
Acknowledge and develop leadership skills in students

By Dawn Z. Hodges, Ph.D.

One early morning last fall in the chilly darkness, I headed to a rural campus to celebrate another of our Georgia Occupational Award of Leadership events. The asphalt was black with faded lines, the sky a midnight blue, and the sides of the road dark green with pine trees and scrub brush. When I go that way, I am keenly aware of how difficult it is to see and how likely it is that a deer will dart out in front of me.

Sure enough, as I approached one of the small towns my travels take me through, my stomach flip-flopped as I saw a buck standing on the side of the road.

Continued on page 3.
Continued from page 1

that promotes collaboration and joint exploration of issues, with decisions that are built on solid, evidence-based deliberation." Leadership in place aptly describes faculty members’ roles on committees, as department chairs and program directors, and when leading institutional initiatives. While many faculty never imagine becoming administrators, faculty leadership is vital to university well-being and to the maintenance of our institutions’ academic missions. Leader-in-place roles help faculty become ready for higher-level and more formal academic leadership, though not all faculty members are well-suited to such a shift, and sometimes the best candidates need help discerning this pathway.

This article focuses on the process of identifying faculty for formal leadership development, particularly for roles in deans’ or provosts’ offices, based on the personal and professional characteristics that will most likely align to future success as academic leaders. Strong candidates will have served in a variety of leader-in-place roles, and comprise the subset of faculty who have demonstrated the character for leadership, in addition to competence. While no faculty member possesses all characteristics deemed ideal for a move into higher-level administrative roles, the following list offers some perspectives for deans and provosts who are considering internal appointees and for hiring committees who are considering internal candidates in open searches.

The ideal faculty candidate for an administrative career in academic leadership possesses the following characteristics:

1. **The highest credibility from the perspective of faculty and administration.** A faculty member’s record as a teacher and scholar undergirds her credibility as an administrator. Questions should be asked, such as: Does the person have an appropriate record of professional accomplishments? Has she earned the faculty rank of full professor and followed either an expected or acceptable career trajectory? Has the person earned the respect of her colleagues as a teacher, scholar, and university citizen? Does she focus on the common good, taking principled positions on issues, but also being generous and holistic in her advocacy? The respect of colleagues in student affairs and other university divisions and units is also important and often arises from a consistent demonstration of these characteristics.

2. **Good character, temperament, and personality traits.** Being honest in the work we do and in our relations with others is essential. Is the person above any hint of impropriety? Is he trustworthy with confidential information, and understanding of the importance of boundaries in the workplace? Is he genuinely respectful to colleagues? Is he humble, optimistic, generous, and empathetic? Does he possess a healthy balance of professional and personal ambition? While many leaders in place have had to be strong advocates for faculty, an ideal candidate for administrative leadership has not been adversarial in unproductive ways. Demonstrating genuine care for others in all kinds of situations is a highly desirable characteristic to possess.

3. **Impeccable judgment and decision-making skills.** Candidates for higher-level academic leadership should approach major decisions based on a careful consideration of evidence and multiple perspectives. Does she resist a rush to judgment and demonstrate a willingness to consider all options? Are her decisions and recommendations based on a commitment to students and loyalty to the interests of the institution? Does she resist impulses toward self-interest and favoritism? Does she live the values of our shared vocation and the mission of the college or university? In almost every case, quality judgment arises from a commitment to students and the common good.

4. **Advanced skills to generate intentional, polished communication.** Production of effective audience-centered messages in all forms, often within very short time frames, is the most fundamental work of administrators. Is the person able to communicate effectively — verbally and in writing — to a variety of audiences (e.g., supervisors, faculty, students, trustees, professional staff, donors, peers/co-workers)? Does he listen effectively? Does he have the ability to manage substantive disagreement and de-escalate conflict? Is he able to navigate self-inflicted missteps that occur and, when necessary, apologize with sincerity? In the increasingly high-risk and litigious higher education landscape, effective communication is more important than ever.

5. **Ability to inspire colleagues, teams, and campus entities.** A certain degree of self-sufficiency and the ability to work independently are necessary, in tandem with the skill to hire, supervise, retain, manage, and lead a diverse team of faculty and staff professionals in a coordinated effort to achieve institutional goals. Can she mobilize others’ investments in and work on multiple projects and routines? Is she able to articulate a common way forward, set timelines for the completion of tasks, utilize the skills and knowledge of each contributor, and achieve outcomes within economic realities? Does she show respect for the work of others and earn/maintain their respect? In what is increasingly experienced as
a high-stress environment with rising expectations, the ability to inspire and build others' investment in the work of the institution is increasingly important.

6 Basic (or advanced) literacy in budgets. Advocating for and careful stewardship of resources is always important. Does the person possess skills and/or aptitude in analyzing quantitative data and studying financial budgets, including the prioritization of limited resources? Does he understand the qualitative judgments of competing goals/that are required in effective budget management? As one moves to higher levels of administration, this orientation and skill set become more and more imperative. The negative effects of fiscal prudence in lean times can be tempered through creative and strategic resource allocation, which takes budget acumen and vision in equal measure.

7 Think/act in the big picture and focus deeply on the details. Many people seem to have an orientation toward either the big picture or the details, yet higher education administration requires facility with both. Is the person able to make connections between the institution's mission and the major issues being undertaken by the college or university? Is she able to see both the forest and the trees and to know which attention when? This balance also helps leaders choose battles carefully, to steward the most precious resources we have — time and goodwill — effectively.

8 "Gets stuff done!" A strong work ethic is absolutely essential for all administrative leaders. Is the person efficient and highly productive, and are his contributions valuable? Does he have a record of finishing assigned projects? Are the procedures, structures, and outcomes that are accomplished of the highest quality and also sustainable? Is he available and willing to work 40+ hours per week, 12 months per year — a significant shift from faculty work-life — and be ready to hit “pause” during vacations or personal time to address emergencies on campus? A degree of self-sacrifice is necessary to be effective, including a willingness to work in the trenches unfazed by hierarchy or position. At the same time, there are limits, and it is also important to model a healthy work-life balance.

In consideration of these and other characteristics, it is essential that provosts, deans, and search committees remain consciously aware and prepared to address explicitly the ways that stereotypes based on gender, race, nationality, and other identity factors can lead to cognitive errors and biased assessment of individuals' readiness for leadership. The academic disciplines of faculty may also inform and shape approaches to problems, preferred methods

of analysis, chosen discursive styles, and other aspects of leadership.

Obviously, there is more than one way to demonstrate competence and many styles of effective management. Supervisors who are committed to diversity and inclusivity in institutional leadership structures need to both cultivate and support faculty from a broad spectrum of backgrounds and disciplinary training, and help others who make decisions in the search process perceive the leadership effectiveness of those whose identities have been historically under-represented in academic leadership.

In addition, we must keep in mind that while it is not uncommon at many institutions for faculty members, especially women, to be tapped for a variety of nonleadership administrative roles prior to achieving promotion to full rank, it is often not in their longer-term interests to advance in this way. If a faculty member has strong leadership potential, her or his prospects will be truncated if pulled away from academic work too soon. Not only can this be detrimental to the individual faculty member, but it undermines the quality of our institutional leadership pipelines, as well.

The reality of a higher-level administrative career in academic leadership can be difficult to imagine for many faculty members. Even when this path is made available and actively chosen, the transition can result in a sort of identity crisis. Identifying faculty members whose characteristics are most likely to map to success will support a positive experience, and also increase the likelihood they will serve as role models for administration. Leadership development and mentorship programs on campus and through national consortia help faculty discern their aptitudes and aspirations, and ensure that homegrown leaders can be effective moving across institutional culture and structures to most productively address the challenges facing higher education today.

About the authors

David Alan Sapp is vice provost for academic affairs and professor of educational leadership at Loyola Marymount University. He previously served as associate vice president for academic affairs and professor of English at Fairfield University.

Robbin D. Crabtree is dean of the Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts and professor of women's and gender studies at Loyola Marymount University. She previously served as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and chair of the Department of Communication at Fairfield University.