

University Decision Making

During an Era of Rapid Change

The Traditional Decisions

Academic Decisions

- ...Students (e.g., admissions)
- ...Faculty (e.g., hiring and promotion)
- ...Teaching (e.g., curriculum, degrees)



The Faculty

Administrative Decisions

- ...Finance (e.g., resources, expenditures)
- ...Facilities (e.g., hiring and promotion)
- ...Fund raising (e.g., gifts, grants)



The Administration

Public Accountability Decisions

- ...Governments (federal, state, local)
- ...Legal (compliance, litigation)
- ...Public (e.g., press)
- ...Selecting the president ...



The Governing Board

Another way to look at decisions

Public accountability
Stewardship



Governing Board

The Faculty



Academic matters
(teaching and learning,
scholarship and
research)

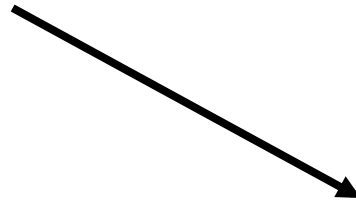
The Administration



Resource acquisition and
management
Infrastructure
External relations
Service (health care, tech transfer,
economic development,
entertainment, market competition)

But what about ...

Strategic Planning?



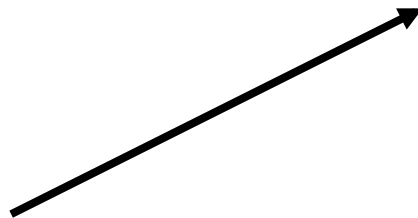
The Faculty?

Crisis Management?



??? The Administration?

**Institutional
Transformation?**



The Governing Board?

The Players

Internal Stakeholders

...students

...faculty

...staff

...governing board

External Stakeholders

...federal government

...state government

...local communities

...the public

...the press

The tensions arising from the incompatibility of the values, needs, and expectations of our many stakeholders.

The Decision Process

The traditions:

- **Institutional Autonomy**
 - » Academic freedom
 - » Tenure
 - » Constitutional (or statutory) autonomy
- **Shared Governance**
 - » Governing boards
 - » Faculty
 - » Administration

Process Characteristics

- **Federal Government**

- » Funding to individuals (grants, financial aid)
- » Influential policies and politics (land-grant acts, G.I. Bill, R&D, health care, etc.)

- **State Government**

- » Funding to institutions (state appropriations)
- » Great diversity in policies (and politics!)

Governing Boards

- In theory,
 - » Fiduciary and legal accountability
 - » Focus on policy
 - » Select president
- In practice,
 - » Frequently become involved in management
 - » Highly political (at least in public universities)
 - » Sometimes viewed as “governors” rather than “trustees”

Faculty Governance

- At level of academic units (departments, schools)
 - » Executive authority
 - » Key academic decisions (promotion and tenure)
 - » Strong faculty participation
- At level of university (faculty senate)
 - » Advisory only
 - » A “debating society”
 - » Weak faculty participation
- Selection of administration from ranks of faculty
 - » E.g., president, provost, deans, chairs, directors,...

The Administration

- The need: The size, complexity, impact, and accountability of the contemporary university requires competent management.
- University administrations are comprised of:
 - » Faculty as “amateur” administrators
 - » Professional staff
- A myth: “University administrations are bloated and excessive...”
- (In reality, most universities have very lean management compared to corporations or government.)

Some Challenges

- **The complexity of the university**
- **Bureaucracy**
- **The pace of change**
- **The resistance to change**
- **The academic culture**
- **Mission creep**

The Particular Challenges Faced by Public Universities

Public universities must function in intensely political environments, e.g., state regulations, politically determined governing boards, sunshine laws (and an intrusive press).

Politics is **reactive** rather than **strategic** in nature and tends to protect the status quo.

A serious issue: Will public universities be able to respond and adapt to the changes in our society?

Some other issues ...

- Planning and decision making during a period of rapid (or even discontinuous) change
- University transformation (e.g., “reinventing the university”)
- The university as a “public corporation”

The university as a “public corporation”

The size, complexity, impact, and accountability of the contemporary university may require an overhaul of our governance traditions, e.g.,

Governing boards that are selected based upon expertise and experience and held accountable for the interests of all stakeholders of the university.

Leadership authority commensurate with responsibility (and sufficient to allow risk taking).

A recognition that the **academic decision process** (e.g., consultation, consensus building, and bribery) may occasionally need to be set aside in favor of rapid, decisive action ...

A warning

“There is no more delicate matter to take in hand, nor more dangerous to conduct, nor more doubtful of success, than to step up as a leader in the introduction of change.

For he who innovates will have for his enemies all those who are well off under the existing order of things, and only lukewarm support in those who might be better off under the new.”

Niccolo Machiavelli