



# Supporting FACULTY

LEADING FACULTY WITH PURPOSE AND VISION

## INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

### Auditing Diversity: Academic Leadership’s Instrumental Role

Edna B. Chun and Alvin Evans

In an era of rapid demographic change in the U.S. population coupled with declining demand for higher education, many colleges and universities are grappling with the urgent need to attract and retain diverse student, faculty, and staff populations and provide an inclusive learning, living, and working environment on campus. Such an environment is necessary to build intentional and integrated programs that enable students to realize the educational benefits of diversity and prepare graduates for careers in a global, interconnected society. In the past, the tendency has been to implement sporadic or fragmented approaches to diversity and inclusion that have not yielded the anticipated outcomes. Even the creation of diversity strategic plans is not a guarantee of demonstrable change.

Without a comprehensive assessment of diversity and inclusion programs, campuses may not be able to identify areas of strength and weaknesses across the decentralized landscape of divisions, schools, and departments. Yet, at the same time,

academic leaders are faced with diminishing resources, declining enrollments, severe budgetary cutbacks, limited ability to further raise tuition, and challenges to maintaining endowments. Most institutions do not have the budgetary largesse to invest in costly audit processes involving outside consultants, such as the \$1.1 million diversity audit undertaken at the University of Missouri (UM) system. While UM was embroiled in student protests regarding race relations in 2015 at its flagship campus in Columbia, it was also dealing with falling enrollment as well as losses in tuition and state funding that had led to layoffs and staff reductions. Not surprisingly, the audit’s cost was a source of concern.

A viable, cost-effective alternative to contracting with outside consultants for diversity assessment is to undertake a campus-based diversity audit. The campus-based audit circumvents the need for external design and ensures alignment with

*Even the creation of diversity strategic plans is not a guarantee of demonstrable change.*

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## PROMOTION AND TENURE

# The Role of Academic Leaders as Instructional Supervisors

Alan Sebel

When presenting at conferences, I often start by saying I have been in a classroom for 65 years. Of course, that includes my own time as a student starting at age five. Although I have not been a “student” in the formal sense for many years, I continue to learn from the teachers and leaders I work with as well as from experiences and practices.

One of the lessons I’ve learned is that while we can hope that all faculty we work with have the intrinsic motivation to never stop improving, sometimes they have to be guided, mentored, or supervised if we expect real results. This is particularly true when leading change in either professional job performance or institutional change. Establishing expectations without ongoing oversight often results in a failure to change.

I came to higher education after working in the New York City Public Schools as deputy assistant superintendent. That experience taught me that there is a place and a purpose for active supervision of the instructional practice of teachers to ensure that there is effective and purposeful interaction between the student, instructor, and material and that meaningful learning is happening.

This is also true in higher education and yet I have noticed a distinct lack of active supervision of college faculty’s instructional performance and their ability as pedagogues. Instead, deans and chairpersons rely heavily on student course evaluations, and sometimes peer review, as a means of assessing the competency of faculty as teachers.

*Expertise in a field does not automatically transfer to effective teaching. Therefore, there is a role for the leaders of programs and departments to be active instructional supervisors of the faculty.*

I recently served on a search committee to help identify a new dean. During the interviews, I asked the candidates what they thought was the role of chairs and the deans in terms of active supervision and assessment of the teaching practices of faculty. They responded universally that the faculty are expert in their fields and were reticent to say that they thought teaching needed to be supervised. A colleague on the committee later accosted me saying, “I am a PhD. I do not need to be supervised.”

### Five steps to promoting instructional growth

Expertise in a field does not automatically transfer to effective teaching. Therefore, there is a role for the leaders of programs and departments to be active instructional supervisors of the fac-

ulty. This requires visiting classes and monitoring online instructional practices to assess the impact faculty members have on student outcomes, growth, and learning.

To do so, the academic leader must:

- **Establish norms for effective instruction.** Academic leaders should collaborate with faculty to determine what strategies and practices would best serve the students. In K-12 education, there has been a strong movement to use rubrics to effectively evaluate a teacher’s effectiveness. One of the most commonly used instruments is the Danielson Rubric, developed by Charlotte Danielson in 2011 and revised in 2013. The rubric can be revised to meet the needs of higher education teaching as effective pedagogy is the same at all levels. Similarly, Quality Matters provides an [Online Instructor Skills Set \(OISS\)](https://www.qualitymatters.org/qa-resources/rubric-standards/teaching-skills-set) (<https://www.qualitymatters.org/qa-resources/rubric-standards/teaching-skills-set>) developed by QM Board member Jurgen Hilke. These instruments provide a starting place for academic leaders and faculty as they determine what is meaningful to

their school and departments in terms of instructional improvement.

- **Observe instruction as it is happening.** The only way to determine if the instruction being delivered is effective is to watch it as it is happening. Once the academic leader and the faculty have determined guidelines for effective and meaningful instruction, the rubric that is developed should be used for observation of face-to-face teaching. For online classes the academic leader must have access to the course so that they can determine if the agreed upon elements of effective and meaningful online teaching are occurring.
- **Provide formative feedback.** After the classroom observation, the supervisor must engage each faculty member in a conversation to identify strengths and mutually agreed upon areas for improvement, and then outline the support the leader will provide to assist the individual in becoming a more proficient and effective instructor. Just as we want our instructors to provide students with actionable feedback, the academic leader must provide actionable

feedback to the instructor to promote effective teaching.

- **Create support programs.** Support for pedagogical growth can come in a variety of ways. Teaching is primarily an isolated profession. Instructors interact with their students, but rarely see their colleagues teach. Break down the walls. Do you have a few particularly strong teachers who are willing to share their teaching expertise? Create an inter-visitation program where faculty can occasionally sit in on their peers’ classes. Are there faculty members willing to mentor new or inexperienced faculty? Create a mentoring program. Is there a Center for Teaching and Learning at your institution? Request a course or workshop on effective pedagogical practices and encourage faculty to attend.
- **Close the loop.** Revisit classrooms to see if there is noticeable change in instructional practices. Have there been gains in any areas that were noted as in need of improvement? It’s also a good idea to compare student course evaluations pre-and post-intervention to see if the students’ perception of the teaching they are experiencing has improved.

Chairs and deans should be instructional supervisors as well as academic leaders. If this kind of hands-on supervision is a new practice at your institution, there might be some resistance. However, if the faculty is involved in determining effective practices and if supervision is formative and not punitive, the practice can be transformative. After all, don’t we want faculty who are not only experts in their fields but also expert teachers? [▶](#)

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# Burnout Revisited: Six Cultural Factors to Consider

Rebecca Pope-Ruark

In the July 2023 issue of *Supporting Faculty*, I argued that leaders need to understand faculty burnout on multiple levels and be willing to take actions that support the faculty writ large, not just individuals already coping with burnout personally. Doing so means both recognizing and going beyond the basic definitions and looking more deeply into the features of institutions and higher ed itself. We know that the [World Health Organization](#) defined burnout as a syndrome caused by chronic workplace stress that cannot be sufficiently managed and that is characterized by three specific dimensions: “feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion,” “increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job,” and “reduced professional efficacy.”

But the most important thing we must realize about burnout is that it is not an individual problem that affects a workplace: it’s a workplace culture problem that affects individuals. Much of what has been written about burnout in higher ed, some of my own work included, focuses on individual coping strategies and ignores the cultural foundation of the syndrome. In this piece, I’d like to explore some cultural features of the workplace that 40 years of organizational research have shown to foment burnout.

Leading burnout researchers Michael P. Leiter and Christina Maslach, whose Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has been the primary research instrument for measuring occupational burnout since 1981, posited that there are **six primary areas of work-life misalignment** in cultures that foster burnout; these can easily fit with the ways institutions of higher education function:

**1. Workload.** When workload exceeds the opportunity and ability to recover from the ongoing associated stress, people more easily succumb to the first characteristic of burnout: exhaustion. As someone who coaches faculty members on productivity and time and project management and has experienced productivity-driven burnout firsthand, I regularly see the typical workload of an active, productive faculty member exceed what that person can reasonably manage. Many of those faculty come to me with confusion or even shame, wondering why “everyone” around them seems to be managing just fine when they cannot keep up with the grading, grant deadlines, committee deliverables, and mentoring responsibilities that hang over their heads. The chronic stress of this type of workload can easily lead to burnout.

**2. Control.** When multiple external sources make demands on their time and attention, it can be difficult for faculty to feel like they have control over their time and focus. This might confound faculty who see or saw academic work as the ultimate self-driven occupation. Faculty do (seem to) have a great deal of unscheduled time compared to the average corporate worker, but the demands on that time regularly if not always exceed time available, leaving faculty feeling disconnected from their own goals and priorities and driven solely by the pressure to keep up with external demands. When a faculty member feels they have little control over their workload or time, negativism and cynicism can creep in, affecting their view of their work and its importance.

**3. Reward.** Across industries, professional reward can be financial

or social or involve professional recognition or external validation. But in higher ed, the path to reward may strike faculty as more fraught than in nonacademic workplaces. For example, state budgets dictate salaries at public institutions, limiting or precluding raises; granting agencies govern research money awards, never guaranteeing future work opportunities; students control end-of-course evaluation scores, despite the research showing bias against women and minoritized faculty; and colleges and universities may lack transparent standards for tenure and promotion, causing years of worry and questioning. In a recent con-

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versation in a workshop I led, a group of faculty members shared how meaningful small recognitions are as rewards, but when the culture values criticism over connection, those rewards are few and far between. Without some sense of reward, all three characteristics of burnout can manifest.

**4. Community.** Community in higher ed can be a catch-22. On one hand, we are told to love our institutions and find connection through that affiliation. On the other, we are constantly judging or being judged by others, especially colleagues, whether for promotion, publication, grant funding, or even

the success of our courses. It can be difficult to form social bonds when competition is a primary feature of the culture. When faculty feel they cannot relax or trust each other within the institutional or disciplinary culture, it can be easy to fall into cynicism and doubt one’s professional efficacy.

**5. Fairness.** Fairness connects to workload, reward, and community, and when conditions seem consistently unfair, burnout can breed. At public institutions, for example, salaries are public record, clearly showing imbalances across disciplines, ranks, gender, and minoritized status and leading to

discontent. Institutions may treat faculty who bring in massive grants much differently from faculty responsible for the lion’s share of undergraduate teaching, undermining community. Workload unfairness can also be exhausting as the “curse of competence” and imbalance of emotional labor requested of women and minority faculty come into play: people who are willing (or feel obligated) to take more work on and do it well will be asked to do more and more, while those who refuse or do the work poorly are rewarded with less work. These are conditions ripe for the exhaustion and cynicism dimensions of burnout.

**6. Values.** In *Unraveling Faculty Burnout: Pathways to Reckoning and Renewal*, I write about the stated and enacted values of higher ed, ranging from the compelling commitments to lifelong learning and knowledge creation to the devotion to competition, productivity at all costs, and doing more with less. When institutional values and goals do not align with faculty realities, burnout ensues. Value congruence is a primary driver of employee commitment, and when values are out of whack, workload is overwhelming, reward little, and fairness questionable, faculty begin to question not only their roles at the institution but also higher ed in general, as we’ve seen during the Great Resignation.

When you read these misalignments and think about your institution’s culture, where might the most serious misalignments occur? Given what your faculty are telling or showing you, where are areas ripe for real change, and what might steps toward that change look like? When we remember that burnout is a culture problem, not an individual one, exploring these areas for change with your faculty becomes crucial for community and future success. [iii](#)

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AUDITING FROM PAGE 1

campus mission and goals. Although this approach involves a considerable investment of time, it better engages campus stakeholders in a process of self-reflection and action research. The diversity audit can serve as a dynamic vehicle to strengthen the collaboration and participation of campus constituencies and, at the same time, provides the ability to address relevant accreditation criteria.

To address this need, our book, *Conducting an Institutional Diversity Audit in Higher Education: A Practitioner's Guide to Systematic Diversity Transformation* (Stylus, 2019), provides a framework of nine critical dimensions for building strategic diversity capacity. Following an analysis of leading instruments and models for diversity assessment, the book then provides a progressive, modular approach to diversity transformation. The research-based approach is designed to allow campuses to audit, analyze and evaluate each dimension, identify gaps, prioritize needed areas of focus, align progress with accreditation criteria, and create a long-term strategy for diversity change. The audit process can be implemented flexibly in terms of timing and sequence of implementation. Each chapter contains a set of audit questions, self-assessment worksheets, best practices, resources for further study, and links to accreditation criteria.

The dimensions of the audit have direct application to academic leadership and will help leaders identify successful practices as well as areas for further improvement. The audit process itself is designed to generate reflection, discussions, and feedback and will provide opportunities for identification of specific objectives, timelines, and milestones. Among the audit dimensions are:

- The academic, mission-centered case for diversity and inclusion
- Diversity organizational learning and education
- Evaluating the climate, culture, and

- readiness for diversity transformation
- Fostering an inclusive talent proposition through search, recruitment, and hiring processes
- Enhancing retention, total rewards programs, and talent sustainability

Consider, for example, the dimension of talent retention as a key driver of academic success and institutional viability. Surprisingly, the research literature pertaining to higher education talent practices has been limited for the most part to analysis of discrete functions, such as faculty compensation.

The climate and culture of the institution and department as well as how diversity and inclusion are valued and supported through equitable employment practices are leading factors in the retention of diverse employees. As research indicates, the macro-climate of an institution combined with micro-level departmental practices of marginalization and tokenism can lead to turnover of faculty of color. In this regard, a study of 107 non-tenure track faculty members in 25 departments in three institutions found that destructive cultures characterized by non-supportive leadership had a negative effect on faculty performance. By contrast, cultures that support student learning and opportunities for faculty to gain professional knowledge actually strengthened commitment and the willingness to go beyond what is expected (Kezar, 2013).

In addressing factors that impact retention, the five components of the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) merit close attention: direct compensation, work content, affiliation, benefits, and career development (Ledford, 2002). Each component has exit drivers that can cause talented faculty and staff to leave the institution. An adverse working climate, for example, will undermine the affiliation with the college or university and can lead to turnover. Internal inequity in compensation, such as when new hire salaries exceed existing

faculty or staff salaries, can cause dissatisfaction. And without a comprehensive compensation analysis, awarding of merit-based pay increases can have differential impact on the salaries of women and minorities. As a result, academic leaders will benefit from evaluation of each of the factors in the EVP in partnership with human resources and the institution's chief diversity officer.

Despite the considerable financial challenges facing higher education, the systematic and cost-effective process of a campus-based diversity audit will enable academic leaders to partner with faculty and staff stakeholders in undertaking a concrete assessment of diversity progress in order to prioritize future goals. As a forward-looking undertaking, it will build on existing strengths and proactively align with accreditation requirements. The audit process will assist academic leaders in strengthening an inclusive talent strategy through programs and practices that leverage the strengths of diversity in support of student learning outcomes.

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# Coaching Skills for Leaders: Bringing Out the Best in Yourself and Others

By Susan Robison

*Deborah Borman anxiously glanced at her schedule. She was starting one of the scariest tasks of her new department chair duties, a day of annual faculty reviews with no idea how to prepare, other than reading self-evaluations. She had dreaded her own annual reviews because the conversations seemed so stilted, formal, and unhelpful. Now as a chair, she kept thinking that there had to be a better way to help faculty monitor their job performance and achieve their dreams.*

If you are a department chair, program director, dean, or provost, you may also wonder whether you are doing all you can to support and empower your colleagues, staff, and students (Mort Feldmann et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2010). Holding a leadership position in higher education in which you feel responsible for other people is challenging and often done with no training and little support. Academic leaders so often report feeling stressed with “the people skills”—navigating difficult conversations, preventing and healing burnout, and dealing with incivilities and bullying (Boice, 2000; Cipriano, 2011, 2019)—that many joke that academic leadership might not be so bad if it were not for the people.

One way to make the people part of the job less stressful and more effective and rewarding is to use coaching skills to structure conversations that bring out the best in yourself and others. You may already have many of these skills; you just haven't been applying them in systematic and intentional ways. This article, based on my book, *Coaching Skills for Academic Leaders: Bringing Out the Best in Yourself and Others*, offers an easy-to-learn and easy-to-remember template, ASK, that organizes a select subset

of coaching skills (Assessing motivation, Setting an agenda, and Keeping success on track) designed to help you lower anxiety in conversations about performance evaluation and career trajectories.

Here is one of my favorite definitions of coaching: “a collaborative solution-focused, result-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of life experience and goal attainment in the personal and/or professional life of normal, non-clinical clients” (Grant, 2003, p. 254). Awareness has gone from, “Coaching, that's what they do in the athletic department, right?” to “All the other deans have a coach; I need one.” Most academic leaders can learn and apply a few coaching skills to improve conversations.

Increasing your coaching skills will bring out the best in you and those you work with by:

- giving structure for coaching yourself;
- giving structure for coaching faculty which will lower your anxiety about important conversations;
- improving the atmosphere in the academy by empowering leaders to support others to be the best they can;
- creating a coaching culture in which effective interpersonal skills can raise the social-emotional intelligence of group interactions in department or committee meetings (McKee et al., 2008; DiGirolamo & Tkach, 2019; Montuori & Donnelly, 2017);
- reducing and preventing incivility, micro-aggressions, bullying, and competitiveness across organizations and lead faculty to commit to their colleges from a place of collaborative productivity (Bolman & Gallos, 2016; Grant & Cavanagh, 2011; Silsbee, 2010); and

- promoting your own and others' visions that lead to higher performance and job satisfaction and, by extension, the success of the unit and institution (Glaser, 2016; Kouzes & Posner, 2003; Quinlan, 2014).

Coaching faculty toward these outcomes requires a set of conversational skills that allow the coach to be present to the client's needs, challenges, goals, and accomplishments and for the client and coach to co-create a mutually agreed-upon vision that meets the client's needs for positive career development (Buller, 2013; Glaser, 2014). Two such skills used in slightly different ways in each stage of the ASK coaching template are powerful questioning and active listening.

Powerful questions prompt the client to think about aspects of their goals. For example, “What would happen if you knew you could not fail?” Active listening is a skill in which the coach summarizes what the client is telling the coach to the client's satisfaction. For example, “You are telling me that if you knew you could not fail, you would write the grant proposal and send it in.” The dialogue is a self-correcting, iterative process. If the client doesn't like the summary, they can re-express the idea until the coach can satisfactorily summarize it.

Coaching interactions between academic leaders and faculty are often more flexibly arranged than the explicit contracts of executive coaches. The coaching could be initiated by either party and may last for just a single session or over a more extended period. This model can be applied to formal sessions like annual reviews, or informal hallway consulta-

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tions and group meetings. These skills become a powerful method for increasing collegiality.

In the first coaching stage of the ASK template, assessing motivations, the client and the coach discover what goals the client has, why the client wants to make the desired changes, and how to correct ambivalence in defining goals. The assessing skills, drawn from Rolnick and Miller's (2013) motivational interviewing help you and the client determine what motivations the client brings to the conversation and help both of you channel those motivations toward success. These skills are the answer to a frequent question that leaders ask about how to motivate people. Sessions might start with interview questions such as "Why are you here?" or "What do you hope to get out of this meeting?" Even in the annual evaluations that Deborah is facing, she should engage the faculty by asking future-oriented questions, such as "What are you hoping to get out of your scholarship and how can I help you achieve that?" (as opposed to retrospective ones, such as "How did you do on scholarship this year?").

In the second stage, setting an agenda, the client and coach collaborate to define what aspect of the goal or goals they will work on together. Faculty have many goals; it is good to have them download all the goals that they want to work on and then prioritize a few specific ones to focus on. Asking about the goals that are easier or give the biggest return on investment will lead to a useful and realistic agenda for the session.

During the third stage, keeping the success going, the coach and client outline the steps for how to reach the desired goals, how to make lasting changes, and how to deal with obstacles that face anyone who struggles with change. Setting goals is great fun; working on them is not. Having achieved them is the most fun. To help clients achieve their goals,

ask questions about the obstacles they might encounter. Sometimes clients get so enthusiastic about their professional and personal goals that they fail to plan how to implement them. Helping clients see the three-part goal time frame (setting, doing, done) as a continuum of success will prevent the discouragement that results when changes are not instantaneous (Gollwitzer, 1999; Oettingen, 2014).

Accountability is a useful tool for keeping success going. The key accountability question to ask is: "How will we both know that you have completed this goal?" It is important for coaches to help clients keep track of their goals. This could be with a peer accountability partner, the coach, or an accountability group, such as a faculty writing group. The accountability plan needs to be co-created by coach and client, not just dictated by the coach (Silsbee, 2010).

Although applied differently to each of those roles, the skills and structure described above will enlarge and deepen your influence by helping you:

- Create a coaching culture in which faculty and staff support each other through positive emotional contagion in contributing to their own and the institution's productivity, commitment, and well-being (Barsade, 2002; Kounios & Beeman, 2015; Schmidt, 2017).
- Listen to colleagues, students, and staff so that they feel heard.
- Ask powerful questions that challenge the client to define needed changes.
- Offer tools to create vision and achieve goals in areas that vex academics.
- Co-create change plans that make desired change easy, cumulative, and permanent.
- Eliminate the dread of faculty performance reviews.
- Applying the above structure and skills of coaching to the people part of your responsibilities will improve your conversations with colleagues in
- formal performance evaluations and annual reviews (if you must);
- regular supportive coaching sessions;

- collaborative projects, committee work, and group work, such as strategic planning;
- student assignment consultations;
- student advising and career consultations;
- mentor sessions; and
- impromptu hallway conversations when someone asks you for help on a professional issue.

Applying the ASK model will lower your stress by structuring faculty conversations and bring the satisfaction that you and they are building better collaboration toward their visions.

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## The Impact of Leadership Turnover on Junior Faculty

Anthony Schumacher

The tumultuous nature of recent years has impacted all faculty. One challenge that will continue into the future is leadership turnover. The departure of provosts, deans, and department chairs affects the commitment level and satisfaction of junior faculty (specifically non-tenured who have less to lose by leaving). Leadership turnover fatigue is the feeling of exhaustion that occurs when formal leadership positions experience multiple instances of turnover in a short time period—for example, when junior faculty have three different chairs or directors in a five-year span. Institutions that experience leadership turnover may suffer from instability and additional turnover further down the institutional ladder.

## Leadership, power, and vision

Academic leaders work with many different constituents to accomplish shared objectives and goals. Junior faculty are part of the constituency. One of the challenges junior faculty face when following a new leader is the exercise of power. Different leaders wield their power and authority in different ways; they may gain compliance through rewards, with threats of punishment, or by dint of sheer expertise (Elias, 2008). Adapting to how a given leader exercises power takes time, and frequent turnover leads junior faculty to seek constant approval as they struggle to adjust to changing leadership style.

A significant component of leadership is vision, or a "conceptual map for where the organization is headed" (Nort-house, 2013, p. 200). Like the exercise of power, implementing a vision affects faculty. The people on the front lines are most often the ones charged with executing the vision. Leaders may also have

different visions. One leader may have placed emphasis on a particular aspect of the department that their successor ignores. These shifting winds leave junior faculty confused and frustrated.

## Junior faculty and leadership turnover

Frequent leadership changes can easily dishearten and distract junior faculty. Building trust and establishing rapport with a leader takes time. If a leader vacates a position after a brief time, those left behind soon face the realization that they will be starting over with a new leader. Starting over means developing a new relationship and, in some cases, justifying one's position or program. The justification is not born of nefarious reasons but rather provides the new leader with clarity related to programs, schedules, and majors. Alongside justification issues, topics that often arise when working with a new academic area leader include:

- providing a historical perspective over why things exist in their current form (these could be long- or short-term views);
- explaining the intricacies involved among departmental relationships;
- listening to ideas that may have been unsuccessful in the past but are possibilities now;
- exploring research opportunities;
- developing relationships with employers;
- teaching on-ground versus online;
- publishing;
- participating in university service; and
- establishing clear expectations of junior faculty.

When taken at face value, the above issues do not seem like significant challenges. But if leadership turnover is frequent, conversations about them may take place three or four times in a five-year period. The issues and conversations are not personal attacks on junior faculty, but going through the process on a yearly basis can be exhausting. The conflict is not the immediate fault of the new leader, who needs to become aware of department or division issues and become acquainted with faculty. But the reasons do not lessen the impact turnover can have on faculty. Effective change leadership strategies can make the transition process easier.

## Change and organizational commitment

Turnover that leads to change requires flexibility on the part of the new leader and those in their charge. New leaders who follow a measured process for leadership change are more likely to be successful than those who attempt to exert their will without support from faculty. Ken Blanchard (2007) provides recommendations for effectively leading change:

- Expand opportunities for involvement and influence to obtain buy-in.
- Explain the business case for change to make a compelling case.
- Envision the future to create an inspiring vision.
- Experiment to ensure alignment to have one voice and aligned infrastructure.
- Enable and encourage employees to acquire new skills and commitment.

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Kotter (1996) describes a valuable eight-step approach to leading change:

- Establish a sense of urgency.
- Create a guiding coalition.
- Develop a vision and strategy.
- Communicate the change vision.
- Encourage broad-based action.
- Generate short-term wins.
- Consolidate gains and produce more change.
- Anchor new approaches in the culture.

Learning from Blanchard and Kotter can provide new academic leaders with a plan to lead the changes that may be needed. These changes will not be successful without the buy-in of those affected, including junior faculty.

If change initiatives are effectively led and turnover lessens, institutions should benefit from higher levels of organizational commitment. Greenberg (2011) de-

finer organizational commitment as “the extent to which an individual identifies and is involved with his or her organization and/or is unwilling to leave it” (p. 201). Blau (1987) explores commitment from two perspectives: behavioral and attitudinal. Behavioral commitment means an individual is bound by salary or tenure and it has become too costly for them to leave, making them committed to the organization. Attitudinal commitment means the employee identifies with the organization’s goals and values. Junior faculty seeking tenure may be more willing to stay for the short term for behavioral commitment reasons, but attitudinal commitment is what keeps employees for the long term. Effective leadership is built around attitudinal commitment. Colleges and universities that express their values and goals and base each decision on the mission will be more successful at retaining employees and limiting turnover at all levels.

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## BUMS FROM PAGE 12

will enhance their productivity, stimulates commitment to the organization, and educates them to the university’s strategy and how that evolves into their direction and purpose. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, there are four distinct building blocks that define success, on order of level of engagement:

- Compliance (teaching basic legal and policy-related rules and regulations)
- Clarification (understanding duties and expectations)
- Culture (providing a sense of organizational norms, both formal and informal)
- Connection (developing interpersonal relationships and information networks)

We live in a world where communication is defined by the shortness of our message: texts, tweets, and acronyms. But in an era of dwindling resources, institutions need to do everything they can to ensure the success of their employees, and that begins with communicating in a language we can all understand. Conquering higher education’s version of the Tower of Babel is the first step in de-

veloping an onboarding process where employee engagement has the same buzz as the more popular buzzword: student engagement. Over the first year of an employee’s tenure in a proactive onboarding process, they will prepare, orient, integrate, and excel. And when new members of our academic communities accomplish those four things, it creates an environment where everyone can be successful: faculty, staff, and most importantly, students.

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# Throw the BUMs out: Higher Education Acronyms Impede Communication

Richard L. Riccardi, ScD

*Like a light bulb drawn atop a cartoon character's head, the beam that came from the dean of students' office radiated the brilliance of his idea. Survey data had indicated an issue with first-year students connecting with their advisors, and he firmly believed that it was contributing to the declining first-year retention rates. Once students make it to their majors, they are fine, but there are so many unknowns at first.*

*The answer was as clear as if it was powered by General Electric: students must begin advisement the moment they stepped on campus. The university would hire professional advisors to serve the students as they completed their general education requirements. When the students began the major curriculum, they would seamlessly transition to a faculty advisor in that discipline.*

*It seemed perfect, but the dean was concerned about resistance. He decided a catchy name and abbreviation would seal the deal...something unique...something memorable. At the next divisional meeting of student affairs, he loudly and proudly announced his new initiative: Freshmen Under Beginning Advisement and Retention...FUBAR. This abbreviation has another meaning which I will leave for the reader to translate, but it was so unique and so memorable that the story has more lives than Morris the Cat.*

We communicate through a language that is often unique to higher education and distinctive to each institution. While those of us who have worked a lifetime on a college campus are fluent in these terms, they may sound like a foreign language to a first-generation student. For example, we "matriculate" students, pass out something called a

"syllabus," and send them to someone called a "bursar." Acronyms make our jargon even more cryptic and institution specific. Some schools maintain a list of commonly used abbreviations on their websites; for example, the four-page Purdue University list includes PAL (the Wi-Fi network), PUSH (the Student Health center), and SLOOP (the Silver Loop bus line that runs around campus).

Students are not the only group affected by this localized language; as a new employee, I experienced first-hand the challenges of navigating a land where the natives spoke in foreign terms. As dean of the libraries, I am the sole administrative member of the LAPC (Library Academic Policy Committee), which includes the librarians and is the group responsible for setting the curricular procedures of the libraries. At my first meeting, an issue arose, and the committee chair stated, "That's something that the BUMs will have to decide." I maintained an outward appearance of complete understanding, but internally was having a conversation with myself. Who are the BUMs? Why are they called BUMs? My brain shifted from questioning mode to processing mode, cycling through the possible definitions of "bum." Are they collegial vagrants without a home discipline? Are they fanatics, like a ski bum? Do they bum around campus? Are they so financially challenged that they bum money? Or are they simply clumsy, often falling on their...undercarriage? After hearing the acronym a second time, I played the "new card" and asked for a clarification. I was relieved to understand that the librarians are AAUP members like all faculty, and they are called "Bargaining Unit Members" or BUMs for short. The librarian sitting next to

me then quietly verbalized what I was thinking: "It's quite unfortunate."

It is quite unfortunate on many levels, but it is another example of why onboarding is so important. Onboarding, also known as organizational socialization, is defined as "the mechanism through which new employees acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors in order to become effective organizational members and insiders." (Bauer and Erdogan, 2011). According to the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CU-PA-HR), annual turnover for higher education positions was 13 percent, with 22 percent of turnover occurring in the first 45 days of employment. Furthermore, an employee who departs from your institution in their first year will cost three times their annual compensation in lost productivity and expenses related to finding, recruiting, and hiring a replacement. The problem is more significant when focused on faculty positions; a study 15 years ago at Iowa State University revealed that a conservative estimate of the cost of replacing a STEM faculty member is \$383,000 (Gahn and Carlson, 2008).

Onboarding is more involved than an orientation, which tends to be a one-time, checklist activity that includes such things as the obligatory paperwork, explanation of benefits, review of policies and procedures, and perhaps an introduction to the university's mission and vision. Onboarding is a strategic initiative delivered through a framework that supports your new hires' adjustment to the culture of the institution, creates personal and professional relationships that

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