

Reviews / Comptes rendus

Academic Leadership and Governance of Higher Education: A Guide for Trustees, Leaders, and Aspiring Leaders of Two- and Four-Year Institutions

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This book is almost an encyclopedia of higher education, covering history, theories, challenges, and advice in managing higher education. It offers guidance to the academic leadership—including presidents, trustees, deans, chairs, and heads of departments—on how to effectively carry out their respective responsibilities. It explains the governing structure and functions of the institution and reaffirms the academic leadership and board of trustees as the centre for decision making. Academic leadership refers primarily to the president, while governance refers to the board of trustees, which helps the academy fulfill the institution's mission. The book covers five critical parts.

Part One issues the clarion call for the university to stay relevant amidst changes in the environment. The authors unabashedly approach the university like a business corporation, stressing the need for an effective strategic management process—including planning, assessing, and budgeting—which is echoed through the rest of the text. Academic institutions ought to conduct regular self-assessments to enhance their strengths, exploit opportunities, and overcome their weaknesses in order better to manage threats. For instance, they need to set goals and formulate strategies (Perrow, 1970) to improve technological support for teaching and learning (Scott & Davis, 2007), build formal and informal networks of communication with stakeholders, and attract, develop, and retain talent (Barnard, 1938; Simon, 1945/1997).

Part Two urges universities to collaborate with external constituents to stay relevant and effective, much like a public relations strategy to build goodwill with stakeholders. Instead of fighting or ignoring the policies of federal and provincial governments, universities ought to engage with them for funding and directions that help to develop graduates with employable skillsets (Sparks & Waits, 2011), thus enhancing the nation's global competitiveness (Lane & Johnstone, 2012). The judiciary is a critical stakeholder to build relations with because the laws they set protect the interests of students and instructors, but may not safeguard the interests of the academic leadership. For example, the academic leadership may face challenges with student and faculty unions, as well as issues with academic freedom and academic dismissal.

As laws evolve, academic leaders must keep abreast of legal developments to manage potential crises with students and professors (Hendrickson, 1999). Universities need to overcome the ivory tower stereotype (Jacoby, 2009). For example, professors can provide advice to small businesses and assist them in product research and development (Axelroth & Dubb, 2010), as well as help improve the quality of education from K–12 (Ledoux, Wilhite, & Silver, 2011). Universities can also partner with a variety of community organizations, including foundations championing specialized studies that may be neglected due to a lack of funds (McInay, 1998); accrediting bodies offering audit services that help the university to attain and maintain a set of criteria for quality higher education (Eaton, 2011); and consortia and national organizations that help to identify challenges and the appropriate research responses, ensure access and affordability, enhance educational quality, improve graduation rates, and produce an enlightened citizenry (Hartley, Saltmarsh, & Clayton, 2010).

Part Three examines the role of the Board of Trustees and Academic Presidency as boundary spanners, and how they work towards meeting the institutional mission while responding to changes in the environment. Comprising influential individuals and representatives from public and private organizations, boards of trustees help to articulate the mission, enhance external relations, maintain financial solvency, and conduct self-assessment for strategic planning. Most importantly, they help to ensure outstanding leadership (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 2009). A president's relationship to the board is to advocate for the academy and help the board understand the academy's role. Part Three also details the responsibilities, development, and retention of the Academic Presidency and highlights creativity, commitment, collaboration, delegation, and courage as the critical qualities to lead the team through to a culture of evidence and enduring change (Ikenberry, 2010).

Part Four outlines how academic leaders can fulfill the mission through the support of the faculty. It describes the roles and responsibilities of the Academic Deans (Chen, 2009), Department Chairs, and Department Heads (Lumpkin, 2004), as well as the Faculty Position. It discusses faculty employment and development issues and how the faculty can be supported to maximize their performance (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Part Four is appreciated for its perspective of shared democratic partnership between the presidency and the faculty, as well as the scope of its defined responsibilities.

Part Five brings the academic mission and its implementation full circle. The authors conclude on a significant note by highlighting two key areas of the mission: student experience (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010) and the deliberate process of planning, assessment, and budgeting required to develop a culture of evidence (Allen & Durant, 2009).

Each chapter chronicles the development of the chapter topic and discusses it with sufficient depth and related examples. There are perhaps four areas that need clarification. First, much of the discussion is related to public universities, while the needs of private and independent universities receive little attention. Second, further clarification on the roles and responsibilities of the dean, chair, and departmental head could enhance the book as the must-have faculty reference guide. Third, while the chapter on the Academic Presidency is particularly interesting with examples of success and failure, an appendix section that provides the biographies of great academic presidents, outlining their challenges, decisions, strategies, and resulting performances would help leaders and potential leaders to better understand the role and respond positively to crises and changes in the environment. Finally, a clearer distinction of the roles and challenges between the two- and four-year institutions may help respective leaders plan, assess, and budget more effectively.

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