

■ KRISHNA S. DHIR, Feature Editor, Campbell School of Business, Berry College

At the time of this writing, Charles Moyer was dean emeritus of the Babcock School of Business at Wake Forest University and had not been appointed yet as dean of the College of Business and Public Administration at the University of Louisville. By all indications, his 'staying power' in the dean's office may exceed that in the faculty ranks! In this essay Dean Moyer offers insightful suggestions for effective 'deaning.'

## Lessons Learned from the Dean's Suite

by R. Charles Moyer, Dean, College of Business and Public Administration, The University of Louisville

Academic administration is a tough job. As a faculty member for 25 years before I became a dean, I never believed that I worked for any of the deans that headed up schools in which I taught. Yes, the dean set my salary and had some influence on my teaching schedule, but that was about it. I always stood ready to criticize the decisions made in the dean's office—and I was pretty good at that. I knew that I had a lot more staying power than any of those deans. As proof of that concept, I have worked under 15 different deans at 5 different schools. The dean is not a CEO, although some deans never figure that out. Rather the dean is more like the managing partner of a professional partnership. Decisions are more by consensus than by top-down dictates.

I have a strong belief that most organizations benefit from the vitality of new leadership on a cycle of every six to ten years. In my case, seven years just felt right for me and our School. Hence, I returned to the faculty effective August 1, 2003. After seven years, there have been a number of lessons learned that may be helpful to aspiring academic administrators.

### The Beginning

One late afternoon about seven years ago I was enjoying my status as a tenured, chaired, full professor. As I packed up to return home for the evening, the phone rang. In a moment of weakness, I answered it. It was the provost. He said, "Charlie, would you like to stop at my house for glass of wine on the way home from school." I replied, "Dave, you have never

invited me to your house before, much less for a glass of wine. What happened? Did Gary quit?"

Thus began my tenure as dean at the Babcock School. After three weeks of discussing, considering, and contemplating, I agreed to become the interim dean of the School. The last thing Dave said to me was, "We don't want you to just occupy a caretaker role this year, but it would be inappropriate to head off in a new strategic direction."

As I walked into the dean's office, I found the budget (with a very short deadline) staring me in the face. As a finance professor, I quickly realized the import of the brackets around the bottom line figure on the budget draft that Gary left me. Not only did I inherit the dean's office, I also inherited a \$500,000 budget deficit. It became quickly obvious to me that something other than a short-term budget fix was in order. In today's very difficult budget times, especially at public universities, the budget challenges I faced will look very small indeed.

From the time I arrived at Wake Forest until the day I assumed the dean's role, there was one constant activity at the School. We were always engaged in a strategic planning process, but we never really had a plan. Focus was lacking at the School. We are surrounded by Duke, UNC-Chapel Hill, Vanderbilt, Emory, Virginia, and a host of other fine schools—all, at that time, with superior reputations and rankings. We had not identified what it was that we could sell to great prospective students to make them want to choose us over our neighboring competitors.



### R. Charles Moyer

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versity, where he has occupied the GMAC Insurance Chair of Finance since 1988. He previously taught at Texas Tech University, University of New Mexico, Lehigh University, and University of Houston. He earned his BA in economics from Howard University, and his M.B.A. and Ph.D. in finance and managerial economics from the University of Pittsburgh. Author of two Southwestern books, *Management Economics and Contemporary Financial Management* (both in their ninth edition), he has published over 80 articles in journals such as *Global Finance Journal*, *Managerial Finance*, *Quarterly Journal of Business and Economics*, *Strategic Management Journal*, and *The Financial Review*.

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I immediately commenced a series of retreats, meetings, and brainstorming sessions with our constituents. Our goal was to actually complete a strategic plan that would chart our future for the next three to five years. The faculty, our Board of Visitors, and our Alumni Council adopted and enthusiastically endorsed the new strategic plan in record time, less than three months. The university administration also became engaged because the plan had a bottom line cost of approximately \$1.2 million dollars per year. I was convinced, as I took this plan to the president and the provost, that this was my one-way ticket back to the good life of professorhood. To my surprise, they too became excited and pledged the needed resources. Seven years later, our School enjoys record rankings by each of the major B-school ranking services, dramatically improved class profiles, markedly higher faculty research output, markedly lower faculty teaching loads, substantially more competitive faculty and staff salaries, reaccreditation by the AACSB, and a new accreditation from EQUIS.

## Lessons Learned

Now that I have returned to the faculty and have some time to reflect on the experience of the past seven years, I thought that it might be both useful and fun to put to paper some lessons learned along the way that may be helpful to aspiring deans and other academic administrators, including department chairs. This is not an extended treatise on leadership, administration, or managerial styles. That has been done many times over by folks more qualified and perceptive than I. But I have developed some concepts from the lighter side that you may not find elsewhere and that may be helpful in the organizations you lead.

**Remember the Circus Theory of Management.** Don't mess around with side shows until the main attraction is right. I have learned that deans are showered with an endless stream of "great ideas" and "opportunities." With a strong strategic focus, you can avoid getting distracted from the core business. Every opportunity that you pursue should fit clearly into the framework of the strategic plan of the school. Occasionally, a new opportunity will come along that may stimulate some new strategic thinking and directions, but these op-

portunities come rarely and they do require serious discussion and framing before commitments are made.

**Don't get backed into the Chinese Wall Model of School Management by the faculty.** Many faculty would prefer that a Chinese wall be built around the school. The faculty live inside the wall and the dean lives outside the wall. In this view of school management, the dean is charged by the faculty to carry large money bags around the countryside with a goal of filling them up. Then he/she should return to the wall, throw the money over the wall and say something like, "Spend it wisely." The faculty will yell back over the wall, "We will. Go get more." The dean's job does not stop with fund raising. Resource management is at least as important as resource acquisition. Donors will expect you to be a prudent resource manager, not just a resource collector. The quickest road to failure in fund raising is failure in the management of the funds you already have.

**Swallow the nasty medicine quickly.** If you have a nasty medicine to drink, it is less painful to drink all at once than to sip it and drag out the misery. The same thing goes for faculty and staff members. After counseling, encouraging, supporting, and nurturing a faculty or staff member with no apparent success, it is time to act. Don't look for another place to hide them in the organization. Poor performance in one area generally implies poor performance elsewhere. And the pain will continue. Act decisively, cut bait, and get on with building a great organization.

**Match bags of tricks.** It is easier to counsel out a faculty member who is not likely to get tenure than to wait until year six. Counseling out gives you and the affected faculty member the opportunity to work together to find a more suitable position. Every academic institution has a "bag of tricks" that they value and every faculty member comes equipped with a "bag of personal tricks." The secret to success in academe is finding the institution that highly values your bag of tricks. When put it this way, a faculty member really does not have to consider their lack of success at your school as a failure experience, but rather a mismatch between bags of tricks. Help them find a better match, and you will make a friend for life.

**Build a team of "Reelers-in" rather than "Pushers-out."** A "reeler-in" is some-

one with strong initiative, an entrepreneurial mindset, and a passion for accomplishment. These folks sometimes must be pulled back in, as they outrun resources. But these are the folks that make an organization hum. Pushers-out must continually be monitored and pushed to make progress. You will never build a great organization of pushers-out. Your organization should set a high premium on encouraging entrepreneurial activities within the school, both by staff and faculty members. Be prepared to reward successes from these ventures. Also be prepared to recognize that only a small percentage of new ventures are successful—so failure should not lead to punishment. Rather, failure of a new academic venture provides an opportunity for important lessons to be learned. Remember, too, that failures should not be sustained. There is a tendency only to cancel programs in academe under dire financial circumstances. Success of the organization will be enhanced by getting rid of the dogs early and focusing resources on the successes.

**Remember the "Six-month, one-month rule" of faculty committees.** If you give a faculty committee or task force six months to produce a report, in most cases very little will happen for five months. Then there will be a flurry of activity during the last month, often followed by a request for more time. If you want to get something done with faculty committees, give them short-time horizons and stick to them.

**Dream bigger dreams than your organization has ever considered.** Get the faculty to convert these dreams to action plans that they buy into, and that ultimately can be used as a basis for performance evaluation. Donors fund excellence, not the status quo. As time passes, and successes build, your dreams should get bigger too. Your dreams of five years ago should be your successes of today.

**Watch out for signs of the uniform mediocrity syndrome in your university.** Some universities seek mediocrity at a very high level, while others accept much lower levels. What I mean by this is that most university leaders have a difficult time managing the politics of an organization where one unit becomes substantially better, and better resourced, than other units on the campus. The temptation to take from the haves, and give to the have-nots is very powerful. As a business school dean,

it is important to draw the line in the sand very early in the process regarding the amount of taking that will be tolerated. When that line is crossed, it is time to seek a new career, because you will know that further pursuits of excellence will not be supported. I have been fortunate to work with a university president who understands the importance of autonomy, support, and entrepreneurial activity by individual school deans. If you find yourself in an organization with the uniform mediocrity affliction, it is time to consider alternative career choices.

**Have fun in your organization.** The underlying tenor of your organization should be to have fun. Faculty should enjoy what they do. Staff should enjoy their jobs. You should enjoy yours. Don't take yourself or your organization too seriously. Great things happen when people are having fun.

To be sure, these thoughts don't provide a complete blueprint for success in academic administration. Other things are, perhaps, even more important—such as recruiting the right staff and faculty members, supporting faculty research agendas,

supporting and encouraging the teaching mission of the faculty, attracting the best and brightest students, challenging everyone (faculty, staff and students) for excellence, and securing the resources to pull it all off. But these ideas do have considerable merit as you work to build a great organization. ■

*Feature Editor Krishna S. Dhir invites papers, essays or notes for the Deans' Perspective feature column from administrators and faculty members. It is hoped that this column will become a thriving forum for dialog among our readers on issues pertaining to academic leadership. It offers an opportunity to administrators and faculty members alike to speak their minds on any and all aspects of the various leadership issues confronting them. Articles may be of any length up to a maximum of about 2500 words.*

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### MBA RANKINGS, from page 10

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## Decision Sciences Institute Budget Summary FY 2004-2005

July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005

### Revenues Summary (Exhibit II)

Publications	\$ 53,554
Membership Revenues	220,488
Convention	374,908
<b>Total revenues</b>	<b>\$648,949</b>

### Expenses Summary (Exhibit III)

Publications	\$86,558
Member Services	280,958
Convention	280,264
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$647,780</b>
Net Revenue Over (Under) Expenses	<u>1,170</u>
Plus Depreciation Expense (Not a cash expense)	<u>8,040</u>
<b>Net Revenue Over (Under) Cash Expenses</b>	<b><u>\$9,210</u></b>