

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

This article presents a rare comparative analysis of the alternatives of being promoted into the dean's office from within the institution and being hired as an outsider. Dean Sarah Bower of Clarion University of Pennsylvania was hired from the outside. With her she brought extensive experience acquired at the City University Business School in London, the U.S. Treasury in Washington, D.C., Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and other places. Dean Eileen Hogan of Kutztown University of Pennsylvania was promoted from within the institution. She had been a faculty member at Kutztown University since 1996. The differences in their subsequent experience are striking and cover the full spectrum of the 'deaning' experience. These experiences, presented below in an easy conversational format, make for an interesting exploration of various issues in academic leadership.

## Two Deans' Perspectives: Internal Promotion vs. Outside Hire

by Sarah Bryant Bower, Dean, College of Business Administration, Clarion University of Pennsylvania  
and  
Eileen A. Hogan, Dean, College of Business, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania



**Sarah Bryant Bower** was hired as dean of the College of Business Administration at Clarion University in May 2002. While steering this AACSB International accredited college, she continues to emphasize its tradition of

academic quality and focus on students. Prior to this appointment, Dr. Bower was executive director of MBA programs and senior lecturer at City University of London, England. She has served as department chair of Finance and International Business at Johns Hopkins University and assistant professor at The George Washington University.

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**Eileen A. Hogan** became dean of the College of Business at Kutztown University in June 2003, where she had served as a professor teaching courses in Organizational Behavior; Management of Staffing, Training, and Development; and Organizational Structure and Design since 1996. Dr. Hogan obtained her B.A., M.B.A., and Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. She has taught at the University of Virginia's Darden Graduate School of Business Administration, George Mason University, Valdosta State University, University of California at Berkeley, and University of Richmond.

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What follows are the thoughts of two deans—both relatively new—in the same system of universities. One of us was hired from outside the system, while the other was promoted from within. Here, we compare notes on our experiences.

We both find that we share some experiences as deans; for instance, being female and leading faculties that consist mostly of males. Here, though, we want to concentrate on contrasting what it is like to come in from the outside versus being promoted from within.

### Interviewing

**Sarah:** As with anything else, being an outside hire rather than an internal promotion has its benefits. I did not know who my competition was and did not have to take the risk of being rejected. I was a free agent, which was a clean break. I could apply for other deanships without the fear of appearing disloyal, if revealed.

However, I would go into interviews knowing only information on the issues and concerns that I could discover on the Internet or in materials sent to me. This was a disadvantage when applying alongside those who had worked within the system.

**Eileen:** As an insider, I had the advantage of familiarity with the institution, the system, and the collective bargaining agreement, not to mention the various personalities and interests within the College. While that's mostly an advantage, sometimes knowing so much can be like not being able to see the forest for the trees—you're so close to the problems and the situation that you really have to make a conscious effort to step back and take a bigger view.

One of the more interesting aspects of being an internal candidate is going through the interview process with folks you already know, being asked the same questions as other candidates. Actually, I found it to be very useful, as it gave me a more distinct chance to state

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my positions on issues facing the College than one has in the day-to-day chaos of keeping up with the dean's job.

## After Being Hired

**Sarah:** Since they hired a Change Agent—me—at least some faculty and staff must have wanted to change, to move forward. However, I didn't know who or what politics surrounded my hire. I knew that some faculty and staff feared change, while others did not mind moving forward, albeit somewhat slower than my normal pace. So I took time to learn what could be done and at what speed.

**Eileen:** I, too, was hired as a change agent, and there certainly were mixed feelings among the faculty about whether that change would be a good one or not. I did have a good idea of where people stood on the issue of change, but my ability to convince people of the good of the change may have been limited by their familiarity with me.

**Sarah:** After being hired, I then had the challenge of learning new territory. For the first time, I had a two-week orientation set up for me. (This is now standard procedure at my university.) This helped me get better acquainted with the faculty and my surroundings, but personalities and issues were to unfold over time. I spent nearly seven to eight months before I really felt "I had my feet under me."

Faculty and staff, too, had to learn about me and my style gradually. I have always been taught that deans are "first among equals," only to find that faculty wanted me to be a leader and that they would follow as long as it suited them. Some of them told me that they wanted me to tell them what they should do. In the first few months, I had to learn who did what, where they were located, and how I fit into the process. "What was expected of the dean in this university?" "Did the faculty want a leader or someone to keep the ship afloat while they did their normal duties?"

**Eileen:** While as an inside candidate I had some knowledge of the situa-

tion, the world looks different from the position of the dean, regardless if you know the institution and the people or not! This was particularly true for me, as I moved into the dean's position from a faculty position, through a stint as interim dean. I had a lot of paperwork to learn.

## Credibility

**Sarah:** I am not sure who has the upper hand when considering credibility, the internal or external choice. I, as the external choice, had to establish my credibility early. At the same time, I was learning my way around. The internal choice may already have credibility as a faculty member, department chair, or from some other position of authority. Still, it can be hard to be taken seriously as the new dean, because faculty and friends know, or suspect, your warts.

**Eileen:** I think an external candidate has more credibility as a dean. Presumably, they have external validation. Granted, a person from the inside may be well liked and have credibility as a faculty member, but in a leadership role, a different kind of credibility is required. The fact that the person is familiar, used to be just "one of the gang," and now needs to come across as knowledgeable about higher administration, the business community, and or external bodies such as AACSB—well, it's hard for people to put faith in that.

**Sarah:** Faculty are a part of the hiring process and do have opportunities to interact with dean candidates. Once the hire is made, faculty can be excited about the new hire, but have a safer feeling about the internal choice. There can be a comfort with the known internal choice. No one knows how the external choice will react to the myriad of issues and personalities that await. There may be stories about the person obtained from colleagues at other schools, but these are rumors only, compared to having worked with the internal choice.

**Eileen:** Yes, but sometimes that "safer" feeling comes from believing that your person from the inside won't take a hard line when needed, won't

"hurt" his/her "friends." Also, I have found that the position I take as a dean may not be completely in line with what my position might have been as a faculty member—again, the world looks different when you are the leader of the whole college, rather than just an individual part of the group.

## Relationship with Peers and Upper Administration

**Sarah:** The upper administration must have some faith in you because there were, hopefully, other good, viable candidates from which to choose. I found it necessary to establish careful contacts with my campus peers to be able to discuss issues openly and in a timely manner. In addition, I established friends among the other "sister" university deans, who helped the new dean over a few hurdles and through a few mine fields.

**Eileen:** Here, the person coming from inside may have an advantage. Certainly, being an insider, knowing your peers and their positions is useful. Both peers and upper administration are more likely to see your strengths—and also your weaknesses. If you're in a good place, they work with you to get better where you need to, and utilize your strong points.

## Making Tough Decisions

**Sarah:** Being an outsider coming in, I found it difficult to make tough decisions in as timely a manner as I really felt necessary. I had to spend time getting to know whose feathers would be ruffled, who had the clout, who was a favorite among faculty, and who had the provost's ear. At the same time, I learned that the dean's job was not a popularity contest, so decision making became easier. However, I found it tough going at first, since I did not know personalities or have already established relationships, positive or negative.

When I did have to make decisions where I was unsure of myself, I had to make sure that I read the union contracts for faculty and staff, so that I knew my footing. On several occasions, I had

faculty criticizing me for a decision because they thought that I did not know the rules. As it turned out, they were the ones who did not know the rules, but were trying to use the rules to their favor. In addition, a good relation with the head of human resources was one of the best alliances I made. He steered me through with comments like “of course you can ask for course syllabi” or “you may talk to the faculty member about his/her performance.” This all seems ridiculous now, but when the new dean is threatened with grievances because she is making sure that teachers are doing their best, someone has to reassure her that all is well.

**Eileen:** Perhaps one of the hardest things for me coming up from the inside is giving negative feedback or news to people that I also consider friends. I imagine that someone coming from outside has an easier time keeping people at arm’s length. In my situation, for years I had no expectation of becoming a dean, and made several close friends on the faculty—friends who are now my “subordinates.” Sometimes the situation arises where I have to convey a performance review that is negative in some way, or I need to communicate a decision that hasn’t gone their way. It certainly isn’t easy to put on your “manager’s hat,” when you know that your actions can hurt your friends. You have to have faith that if these folks are really your friends, they will see that you are working for the good of the college. Although, frankly, they may not see that right away!

It’s not easy for them, either. It wasn’t that long ago that I was just another faculty member in a regular office down the hall. Now, I’m the person who might make decisions that have significant impact on their lives.

## Vision of Potential

**Sarah:** I see several issues where the vision of potential is concerned. As the external choice, one comes in with newness and idealism. This may lead to new ways of doing new and old things. Change may be viewed from needs in

former positions, for example, wanting to influence teaching quality that was not dealt with by the dean in one’s former position. However, the new dean hopefully sees opportunities in this new, exciting environment. Part of the assessment of whether to accept the position in a new school has to be determining what opportunities there are, what is possible, and what the dean can encourage happening given faculty and other resources.

**Eileen:** As the internal choice, one may see needs not fulfilled previously. Therefore, the zest may be to correct old problems with a limited view of what is possible. Experience, even as a faculty person in other institutions, probably relieves some of that problem. If the internal choice knows the faculty’s shortcomings, disgruntled nature, and/or slowness to proceed, the internal choice may be reticent to try new things.

Importantly, however, both the external and internal choices must ascertain and set a goal path consistent with the university’s goals for the university and the college. If the university appears to be stuck, the new dean can still set the goal path for the college that enhances the university, without overstepping boundaries.

## Summary

External and internal choices face the deanship from different starting points. Each must deal with the personalities and issues, while gaining respect from higher administrators, faculty, staff, and even the unions. For the most part, people do not like change, or may cheer on change only as long as they are not affected. At some point, the external and internal choices will converge, as the external choice gains from active learning of what the internal choice already has had advantage. However, there are many areas where the external choices and internal choices must fend for themselves as they perform their functions. Gaining respect and credibility as deans comes only with practice. ■

*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 dialogue 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. Please contact Dean Dhir at kdhir@berry.edu, or call him at (706) 238-7942 or (706) 346-5066, or send fax to him at (706) 802-6728. Articles may be of any length up to a maximum of about 2500 words.*

## DEVELOPMENT, from page 17

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