

Corporate-Style Leaders May Not Make the Best College Presidents...

A burgeoning class of itinerant college presidents, who have more in common with corporate chief executives than with the tweedy campus leaders of yesteryear, does not necessarily bode well for institutions of higher education...

"The revolving door might be a recipe for mediocrity," the researcher and best-selling author Jim Collins said... As colleges and universities have become more focused on their financial bottom lines, often of necessity, their leaders have come to more closely resemble business executives. Presidential tenures have become shorter... higher education's fixation on business culture may be counterproductive. Leaders who prosper in the business world, he said, in many cases appear to be fundamentally different from their successful counterparts in the world of nonprofit institutions.

If he is right, the current fashion of selecting presidents who behave like CEO's could have unintended negative consequences. "Have we created a beast that deselected" the best candidates for college and university presidencies?, Mr. Collins asked.

A former faculty member at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business, Mr. Collins in 1995 founded a management-research laboratory in Boulder, Colo. His ... latest work, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't* (HarperBusiness, 2001), has sold more than one million copies.

Mr. Collins has hypothesized that there are differences between what he calls executive leaders -- men like Jack Welch, who ran General Electric -- and legislative leaders. The latter category includes people like Lyndon B. Johnson, who has been called the most effective U.S. senator of all time... Universities have more in common with legislative bodies like the Senate, with its diffuse power structure, than they do with corporations, Mr. Collins said. Like legislatures, colleges have multiple constituencies that require decision making by consensus.

"Running a university is more difficult than running a Fortune 500 company," Mr. Collins said. "One might learn more from Johnson than from Jack Welch."

Despite the differences between corporations and universities, higher education can learn lessons from the business world. But all too often, Mr. Collins said, colleges reflexively adopt the most common business practices -- what he called "importing the cyanide" -- instead of selecting those practices that are common to uncommonly successful companies.

Mr. Collins cautioned the audience against using the lack of ready gauges, like stock price, as an excuse to settle for mediocrity.

"The lack of measurability is no excuse for the lack of rigor," Mr. Collins said. "Good is the enemy of great."

Failing the Future: A Dean Looks at Higher Education in the 21st Century

By JOHN L. PULLEY
Duke Univ Press, 1998
Additions by Ben Kelley

“What constitutes an accomplished *dean*, however, is always in the eyes of the beholder. The faculty want a fighter who can protect their disciplinary interests, while the central administration wants a team player who is sensitive to the needs of the campus as a whole. Faculty want a dean committed to collegial and shared decision making. Central administration demands that the dean make tough independent decisions, even if that means countering faculty sentiment. Department heads want a dean who will provide all requested resources and then leave them alone to conduct department business as they see fit. Central administration wants a dean to ride herd on department heads, micromanaging them in the same manner that central administration is attempting to micromanage the dean. Donors are looking to back an articulate leader, but many of them also want to be consulted at every juncture or wooed with tickets to major athletic events. Undergraduates rightly complain that, except for ceremonial occasions like Honors Convocation or graduation, deans are invisible. Graduate students want the dean who is a distinguished scholar to teach their seminars and direct their Ph.D. dissertations. And everyone expects the dean to shape a vision for the college, especially when faculty, staff, and students are deeply divided over what that vision should encompass.”

At Baylor, a running joke is that the primary job function of dean's is to “eat on behalf of the University.” Deans maintain an open door policy, always have a few minutes, are happy to give it a quick read over, rate your project the highest, will gladly take the time to explain individually to you what was discussed at the meeting you missed or the e-mail you deleted, and have unlimited financial recourses during the tightest of budget years. Baylor deans are always optimistic about the future, eager for another breakfast meeting, glad to spend their Saturdays with prospective students or at an out of town conference, smile when one asks if they have to work during the summer, and bite their tongues with each new Faculty Senate proclamation . At Baylor there are no less than twenty five offices/processes/groups expecting deans to cheerily commit a fair share of their time, averaging twenty five percent, leaving ample time for family, church, hobbies and community activities. The most active and productive faculty and staff experiences this same phenomenon. Among these offices generating expectations are:

- Faculty (or the dean)
- Staff (or the faculty)
- Students
- Budget/accounting Office
- Purchasing Office
- Admissions
- Development
- President's Office
- Provost's Office
- Research Office
- Physical Plant
- Student Life
- Registrar's Office
- Auditing Office
- Career Services & Internships
- Alumni Office
- Science Fair Office
- Public Relations
- Community Economic Development
- Accrediting Agency
- Orientation Office
- Campus Conferences/Events
- Scholarship & Financial Aid Office
- Graduate School
- Advisory Board
- Human Resource