Academic deans are the middle managers of higher education: They juggle the agendas of top administrators and of professors and students. They craft visions for their schools and seek out the money to support those goals. They hire faculty members to fill classrooms and still, sometimes, carve out time for their own scholarship. They are the faces of their schools.

So what should you be thinking about if you want to become a dean? What do you need to know once you get the job? And what are some ways you can do it better? Here are some tips, trends, and ideas we’ve collected from news articles and first-person accounts we’ve published in recent years.
When Kathryn J. Boor became a dean at Cornell University, change was at the center of her agenda from the very beginning. She began leading the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences in 2010, when the Ivy League institution—like colleges everywhere at the time—was in the midst of streamlining operations and cutting costs. Just four months into Ms. Boor’s tenure, the college announced that its department of education would close. Cornell administrators said they didn’t have the money it would take to raise the small department’s national profile.

Since then, Ms. Boor has overseen a steady stream of change. In the spring, for example, she grouped five departments to create the new School of Integrative Plant Science, with the goal of showcasing the university’s strengths in plant and soil sciences and attracting federal grants, more students, and more top faculty.

“This took reorganizing people and getting people excited about a new structure and a new way of thinking,” says Ms. Boor, a food scientist. “This is a way to ensure our pre-eminence five and 10 years down the line.”

More than ever before, Ms. Boor and other academic deans are the ones top administrators rely on to push schools and colleges to evolve. As universities face new pressures to distinguish themselves from their peers and to demonstrate their worth, deans have their hands on more levers than almost anyone else on campus. More than ever before, deans are the ones top administrators rely on to push schools and colleges to evolve.

THE TAKEAWAY

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As leaders of increasingly complex enterprises, deans must think big and be the public face of their schools even as they still tend to the day-to-day needs of professors and students. Deans must be able to motivate faculty and staff to embrace a university's broad, strategic goals. They need to be shrewd money managers who can attract donations to augment limited budgets.

“Deans today are almost like mini-presidents,” says Jessica S. Kozloff, president of Academic Search Inc., a company that has helped colleges find deans for the past decade. “Like every other senior administrator today, they’re being called on to make really tough decisions and to try to convince people to change.” She adds, “You’re in the line of fire as a dean.”

Job ads reflect the kinds of pressures deans face. Institutions are turning to executive search committees to help them find movers and shakers who are part entrepreneur, part fund raiser, part marketer, and part seasoned administrator.

At Morgan State University, the new dean of the College of Liberal Arts will be charged with “transforming the curriculum to reflect the changes taking place in the world of higher education.” Eastern Michigan University wants its next dean of the College of Technology to know how to “implement interdisciplinary programs and projects.” Private institutions have big expectations for deans, too. Shenandoah University, with about 3,700 students, wants someone with “significant experience in faculty and administrative positions” and a record of landing donations and building community partnerships to be its next dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Compare that with the ads of two decades ago. Administrative experience wasn’t always required. Searches were led in house. And the dean’s role was described as being internally, not externally, focused.

The candidates who now prove the best fits for the job are often senior professors with administrative experience—stints as department chair or associate dean here, directing a center or institute there. And the deans of today need an entrepreneurial bent, too, with the ability to build partnerships and develop strong new programs capable of generating revenue.

Nancy B. Songer, a former professor of science education and learning technologies at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, directed a research center before becoming a dean.

As dean of Drexel University’s School of Education, where she's been since August, Ms. Songer wants to build on the “mini-CEO role” she saw herself playing at the Michigan Center for Essential Science, which focused on getting more urban students into STEM fields.

At Drexel, one of Ms. Songer’s main goals is to ensure that the school keeps making a difference outside of Drexel. The university wants to build a public school on land that it bought near campus. “This is not only a chance for us to define ourselves as a school,” Ms. Songer said, “but to think of how we can redefine how a public school and a school of education partnership could be.”

To help herself learn how to be a good dean, Ms. Songer is reading books about leadership written by a mix of higher-education administration experts and business executives. “I’m trying to look at what I know about being an academic and what I’m learning about being a good business leader and put them together.”

Deans have to be careful, however, in how much of the corporate world they embody, says Mimi Wolverton, a retired professor of educational leadership who worked at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas and is one of the authors of College Deans: Leading From Within.

“If they’re completely business oriented they alienate the faculty,” Ms. Wolverton says. “The better deans are able to maintain an academic mentality at one level, but also embrace a business orientation on another level. Being a dean is more like running a family business than a corporate business.”
In an academic environment, where shared governance is an integral part of the culture, the best leaders must be able to forge relationships with many people across a campus. If they are going to press change, they need a clear understanding of the culture where they work. They must be able to weigh multiple perspectives when making decisions, and to embrace the role of intermediary between professors and the provost.

Patrice Rankine, dean of Hope College’s Arts and Humanities division, leaned on prior experience to shape his interactions with the faculty. He came to Hope from Purdue University, where he was a professor of classics and an assistant head of the School of Languages and Cultures, a position in which he first began to hone his interpersonal skills.

“I would be the person people would come to to talk things out,” Mr. Rankine said. At Hope, where he became dean in July 2013, he has sought out opportunities to meet with faculty and alumni.

“I’m at a small college, and so alumni are really invested in what happens,” says Mr. Rankine. “I like to spend time with people and listen to them.”

But deans have to listen with a discerning ear to figure out how to balance competing interests.

“Everybody’s perspective collides in the dean’s office,” says Gary S. Krahenbuhl, a retired academic administrator whose career included 11 years as dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University. He is also the author of Building the Academic Deanship. “The dean is trying to manage the expectations of all the different people and move the college forward as best as he or she can,” says Mr. Krahenbuhl. “It’s not easy because each group thinks their way is the right way.”

He says deans with a track record of advocating for both faculty and administrative goals are more likely to get the benefit of the doubt from faculty when administrative priorities win out.

“There’s almost nothing that buys more good will than people knowing that you’re going to be fair and objective and even-handed,” Mr. Krahenbuhl says.

Cultivating internal relationships is part of the job, but now so is interacting extensively with outsiders. For the dean of the School of Education at Indiana University at Bloomington, external advocacy has taken the form of speaking out against proposed policies or laws that he believes could harm his school or higher education in general.

“There are a lot of attacks that are being launched on schools of education,” says Gerardo M. Gonzalez, who has been dean for 15 years. “I spend a good deal of my time fending off policy initiatives that are ill-informed. I don’t remember doing this in the early days of my career.” The Indianapolis Star this month published a letter to the editor from Mr. Gonzalez, explaining how he sees Indiana’s school-reform policies contributing to the drop in enrollment in teacher-education programs.

Another recent addition to the dean’s job is the role of ambassador. Deans are now expected to crisscross the globe to make connections with alumni, recruit students, and set up partnerships that will provide students with a global education. As universities branch out globally, establishing programs overseas and drawing more international students, that kind of outreach has become key.

In the spring, Mr. Gonzalez will travel to Cuba, his native country, for a cultural-exchange tour with a group of alumni. The School of Education also has a program that gives students the opportunity to teach in foreign countries, and it hosts scholars from around the world who work with education professors on research.

“None of these kinds of agreements would happen without the dean,” he says. “I’m the point person.”

As the deanship becomes more complex, training for the job has become a bigger priority. The Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences holds a summer seminar for new deans. The American Conference of Academic Deans created its Deans’ Institute four years ago after its members—a mix of deans of all levels and provosts—asked for such a gathering. Attendees at next year’s daylong institute, held during the association’s annual meeting, will hear seasoned deans discuss how their role has changed, the challenges of the job, and how to achieve work-life balance.

Deans with years of experience may have a better handle on the job than newcomers, but they, too, are navigating change as the nature of their job constantly evolves. They’re overseeing schools or colleges that have larger faculty ranks than in the past, growing student populations, and programs that are changing to reflect student and scholarly interests.
Deans are also spending more of their time as fund raisers, and they’re focused on different markers of success than in the past. They are now being asked, for example, to do more to measure how much students are learning.

Graduate-school deans are starting to focus more on tracking student outcomes. Karen Klomparens, dean of the graduate school at Michigan State University since 1997, says she pays more attention now to collecting data about how graduate students move through, and out of, the university’s advanced-degree programs.

The national conversation about graduate education has included vigorous debate about whether it takes students too long to earn a Ph.D. and what kinds of jobs await them. The changing academic workplace, in which tenure-track jobs are scarce, means graduate schools have to take a broader view than they have in the past of students’ post-Ph.D. opportunities. Ms. Klomparens has, in recent years, works with Michigan State’s Ph.D. career-services office to offer graduate students career- and professional-development workshops, along with an interactive website to help them pursue careers in higher education and beyond.

“We’ve really invested resources in this new focus on career outcomes,” says Ms. Klomparens, who is also associate provost for graduate education.

It’s the kind of focus that calls for buy-in from the graduate programs on campus—a task that falls to deans like Ms. Klomparens. She relies on her reputation, in part, to help her drum up support.

“What I hope I have is influence. And that influence comes from being a trusted source of information,” Ms. Klomparens says. “I’m a pretty well-known quantity because I’ve been here so long.”

A key strategy to create buy-in, she says, is to be a reliable source of information and a frequent communicator with a wide range of people on campus.

“My email group on campus has 350 people—deans, associate deans, chairs, graduate program directors, graduate secretaries,” she says. “I think it’s important to have every level of person who is working with graduate students in the information loop.”

Ms. Klomparens, dean of a long-established graduate school, never faced the learning curve that goes with being a dean of a fledgling graduate school. That’s a position that Benjamin D. Caldwell discovered he wasn’t fully prepared for, even with five years as a department chair behind him.

Mr. Caldwell, in his third year as dean of the graduate school at Missouri Western State University, has learned on the job how to do the kind of marketing needed to promote the new school’s programs to potential students so the graduate school can grow. He’s also been trying to bring in money to offer assistantships to the students in the master’s-only program.

Despite the challenges of the job, Mr. Caldwell wrote a column that ran in a magazine for his discipline this year, with tips on what readers should think about if they are considering a move to administration.

Among them: Ask what you can contribute to the larger goals of your unit or institution and how can you add to the institution’s main goals. Both questions underscore how critical it is for deans to maintain a bird’s-eye view. Ms. Boor, who has been a faculty member at Cornell since 1994, remembers how that shift in mind-set was one of her biggest challenges as a new dean.

“As a faculty member you’re generally doing things yourself as opposed to moving to the next level where you have to delegate,” Ms. Boor says. “One of the hardest things was just learning to look at things from the 30,000-foot level.”
A Tale of 2 Deans

By M. Mark Wasicsko and Brad Balch

It is the best of jobs, it is the worst of jobs, it is marked by occasional wisdom and ample amounts of incredulity—well, you get the idea. Being a dean today is a challenging, daunting, and repeatedly gratifying experience—one that we would highly recommend if you have what it takes.

Effective deans are in high demand as baby-boomer deans like us continue to step down or retire. Returning to the classroom last fall has provided us with the time, space, and distance to reflect on our combined 65-year leadership adventure that we call the “lifecycle of a dean.” What follows are our insights on the position to help you decide whether it is a career path you should pursue. Nancy K. Schlossberg’s theory on adult transitions applies well to the dean’s lifecycle: It is a “moving in,” “moving through,” and “moving out” process.

How do I know if it is my turn to move in to a deanship? If you wait until you are ready to be a dean, you will never become one. No one enters the job completely prepared to be a dean, no matter how confident some may seem. It’s like everything else in life: You start where you are, learn by trial and error, improve as you move along, and discover things while practicing the trade.

There are, however, precursors for doing the dean’s work well. Effective leadership, wrote the late Thomas J. Sergiovanni, takes three things—the head, hand, and heart. All three are important, but we believe the difference between a mediocre dean and a good one is primarily a matter of the heart or what we call “dispositions.”

Certain core dispositions are at the heart of good leadership and are a priori conditions for effective deaning. We have seen ample evidence that knowledge and skill can improve rapidly for the rookie dean. Dispositions, however, are more difficult to change and improve upon, as they emanate from our most deeply held values and beliefs. You either have them or you don’t. Among the dispositions we see as necessary for success in the dean’s office:

Believing in the people you lead—that reasonable people provided with reason-
able information will make reasonable decisions.

A keen predilection for listening to diverse viewpoints, finding common ground on most issues, and seeing the big picture.

Understanding that good relationships, effective teams, and shared responsibilities (and rewards) are the pathways to important accomplishments.

Some people might be able to fake such dispositions over the short haul. But since much of what a dean confronts requires improv, the mask quickly falls away and the soul of the leader is exposed.

So what indicators can help you decide if you would be an effective dean? A good clue is the degree to which others are telling you, unsolicited, that you would make a good dean and encouraging you to pursue the job. Another clue: Are senior administrators interested in nominating, sponsoring, or mentoring you on the administrative track? Several professional organizations offer annual institutes for aspiring deans. Those sessions are an excellent opportunity to hear from veteran deans and join others who are considering the position as well.

Other common indicators include a feeling of professional restlessness, a need for a challenge, a perceived duty to help an organization grow, and a sense of responsibility to channel criticism, both your own and other people’s, into positive action.

Oddly enough, many of best deans we have known were initially reluctant to take the job. Reluctant leaders end up being some of the most effective and beloved. While a strong ego is essential for a dean to keep jumping back into the ring after each round, it has to be balanced with ample amounts of humanity and humility.

Do I have what it takes for moving through? We think there is no better job in academe. Deanships come with: (a) resources that can directly affect academic operations, (b) decision-making authority to create and sustain changes, and (c) opportunities to interact with a wide range of people.

As a dean, to ensure the success of both students and faculty in your care, you need ample competence in the college’s disciplines. You need a willingness to be honest and transparent, along with a healthy dose of naive optimism. All of those qualities can help you build a positive campus culture in which people enjoy their work and look forward to a personal and professional affiliation with the college. If all of that resonates with you—and you are willing to be vulnerable and persistent enough to model those imperatives—a deanship may be your cup of tea.

On the practical side, we would be remiss if we didn’t mention the 60-hour work week (and sometimes more). There are no “spring breaks” or summer down periods; instead you have vacation and sick days. Student issues arise in the evenings and on weekends. Donor and alumni activities occur during holidays and at the same time as your children’s events. Travel is a must.

You soon discover that your calendar is no longer under your control. It’s a 24–7, 365-day commitment. Being willing to accept such obligations and then balancing the busy dean’s schedule with all of life’s events is essential to surviving and thriving in the job.

Finally, moving through the dean’s job brings a rollercoaster of highs and lows. You go from enjoying a heartfelt welcome to finding out about the hidden agendas and left-over scores to be settled. You spend hours hiring energetic faculty and staff members only to discover that, even with spending most of your days with people, your job can leave you with feelings of isolation and loneliness. Fortunately, deans have many opportunities to network with their fellow deans both within and outside of the campus. Both of us stayed on as deans so long, in part, because of the vast network of supportive people we met doing like work.

How do you know when you are effective as a dean? If you examine all the duties and responsibilities of the position—compounded by the fact that deans must lead and serve in a shared-governance environment that ranges from idealistic to unrealistic—you will find a near impossible and thankless task from which any sane and reasonable person might justifiably run. So, without doubt, the effective dean must have confidence and a strong sense of purpose to keep getting up in the morning and going to work in hopes of making a difference.

Confidence, vision, and strength of purpose are hallmarks of effective leadership. But even the most charismatic leader will never achieve significant and sustainable outcomes unless others are willing to join in. We regularly gauged our effectiveness by the degree to which others were willing to work with us on difficult and often competing tasks.

Effective deanng, like good teaching, is improved through assessment. Providing opportunities for people to give you an anonymous, constructive criticism (usually in
the form of an annual review) is a good, even if at times painful way to see how you're doing and make course corrections. Effective deans have the personal strength to accept the criticism as well as the praise and see how both inform decisions and directions.

How do you know when it is time to move out? That's more challenging than you might think. There is no bell that tolls or clap of thunder that announces the moment. Sometimes there is a little voice in the back of your head that tells you that your thirst is graciously quenched and it is time to pass the cup to the next generation of energetic and enthusiastic leaders. Sometimes it is your loudest faculty critics who are always generous with advice and criticism but stingy with support or assistance. Sometimes it is blunt trauma like when your doctor, concerned about your stress levels, asks, “Would you rather be dean or live?”

The decision is different and difficult for each of us. It would be so much simpler if we had one person, like the innocent child in the story about the emperor's new clothes, who would yell out, “It is time to move on.” Minus that critical friend, there are a few subtle but telltale signs.

One of the best pieces of career advice that one of us ever received came over a plate of burritos with the writer Ray Bradbury. He said, “I never felt what I did was 'work' and never needed a vacation.” He said he promised himself, while still a young man, that if he couldn’t leap from bed in the morning excited to get going three out of the five week days, he would find something else to do. When your enthusiasm for academic problems and bureaucratic puzzles wanes, that is a good first gauge that it may be time to step down.

Often times the energy and enthusiasm necessary for the job is sustained by strategic benchmarks. The completion of a multiyear strategic plan, the success of a new student program, or the end of a capital campaign are all generally defined by three-to seven-year cycles. As those benchmarks are achieved, take the time to gauge your interest in leading the next new multiyear project. Sometimes there is one more round left within us and sometimes there's not.

In other cases, your reasons for quitting may be far more tactical. Personnel problems, fiscal woes, productivity targets, and donor and alumni relations can trigger significant stress. On one hand the pressure amps up our energy to face the challenges of the job and on the other it wears on our health, wellness, and productivity. Occasionally, problems that seemed short-term and minor can escalate and wise deans will know they have accomplished all they can in the position.

Predictability is another meaningful gauge of your readiness to stay or leave. We both found that our role as dean was largely predictable after five years. Patterns became regular and we were able to anticipate and head off many problems. Paradoxically, while that adds much comfort to the job, it also adds an element of mundaneness. When the job started to feel more mundane than comfortable, we found ourselves far more interested in mentoring other future deans in academe than attending routine meetings on our respective campuses. We both preferred to focus on broad challenges affecting the academy at large rather than forwarding reports that appeared redundant and meaningless. Whether the predictability of your deanship is a source of comfort or distress, it serves as another signpost to guide your career decisions.

Higher education needs strong and sustainable leadership. We hope that our ramblings have piqued your curiosity to consider the greatest job in the academy—the deanship.

Of the academic dean's lifecycle it can rightfully be said, “It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done,” and when the time comes to return to the faculty ranks, “it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known.”

M. Mark Wasicsko is a professor of education at Northern Kentucky University and former dean of its College of Education and Human Services. Brad Balch is a professor of education and dean emeritus of the Bayh College of Education at Indiana State University.

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Business Schools Are Hiring a New Kind of Dean

By KATHERINE MANGAN

Faced with stagnant enrollment, pressure to expand overseas, and the demands of recruiters for more-relevant training, business schools today are searching for a new kind of dean: one who has broad leadership skills rather than narrow expertise in areas like economics or finance, according to a new report. Search committees have, over the past 18 months, zeroed in on candidates with a leadership profile “that emphasizes CEO-style breadth and organizational expertise over more-narrow academic mastery,” says the report, “The Business School Dean Redefined.” It was published by the Korn/Ferry Institute, which studies executive-recruiting trends.

Many of the new deans emerge from fields like organizational development and management, while in the past they were more likely to have backgrounds in finance and economics, says one of the report’s authors, Kenneth L. Kring, a senior client partner in the Philadelphia office of Korn/Ferry International, the institute’s parent company.

Leading a business school is particularly challenging now, he and his co-author, Stuart Kaplan, chief operating officer of the group’s leadership consulting group, say.

“Managing the ‘business of the business school’ is a complex job, similar to that of a CEO, yet with challenges that do not constrain private-enterprise chief executives,” the report states. “Few CEOs, for example, must grapple with the concept of a tenured work force, highly diffused authority, and funding constraints placed by donors.”

The same economic pressures that have battered endowments, squeezed fund-raising, and forced business schools to rely more heavily on tuition have crimped companies’ willingness to help send their promising executives to school, causing flat or falling enrollments in many business programs.

Many students who were considering graduate business school are questioning whether the investment will pay off as tuition rises and starting salaries in the field fall.

“Business schools have enjoyed strong growth, and that’s over for now,” Daniel A. Levinthal, a professor of corporate management at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School, says in the report. Mr. Levinthal served on the school’s most-recent dean search committee. “You can tap into overseas markets, but that’s a little more complicated. As a result, the intensity of demands on business-school deans has increased.”

Seeking Managers

Among the new breed of deans is Sally Blount, who last year was named dean of Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management. Ms. Blount, who spent two years as a management consultant before becoming a professor, came from a background in management rather than economics or finance. As a result, she says, “I sometimes challenged the taken-for-grant-
ed assumptions of the academy. Ten years ago, I don’t think any business school would have considered me as a dean candidate.”

Instead of simply looking for someone who gets along with the faculty, has a solid research reputation, and gets things done, search committees want someone who can build rankings, as well as market share, and “manage relationships with multiple stakeholders,” she says.

Alison Davis-Blake, a management and organizational-behavior expert who became dean of the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business in July, agrees.

“Deans are divisional managers who run a business that had better make a profit to generate the investment capital we need,” she says in the report. “We have multiple lines of business—tuition and nondegree lines of business—that need to be managed as a portfolio.”

Many business schools that have seen applications to their traditional M.B.A. programs flatten or decrease have created niche programs and joint degrees that set them apart from the competition. The result has been a proliferation of accelerated M.B.A.’s, hybrid or online offerings, and global partnerships, as well as programs focused on specific sectors, such as energy or hospital administration.

And as corporations grapple with complex challenges like climate change and an overhaul of health care, they are looking to business schools to produce graduates with more interdisciplinary training, the report notes.

Among the new deans tackling such challenges is Nitin Nohria, who became dean of Harvard Business School last year. Previously, he led the school’s Organizational Behavior unit, and his research interests include leadership and corporate transformation and accountability. Another former chair of that unit, David A. Thomas, became dean at Georgetown University’s McDonough School of Business in August.

“People who study organizations tend to have more of an affinity to lead organizations,” the report’s co-author, Mr. Kring, said in an interview this week.

“They’re starting to populate the dean’s ranks,” he added. The difficult issues these deans face “require a different psychological disposition and management orientation.”
Don’t Fear Fund Raising
Learning how to be the public face of your department

By DAVID D. PERLMUTTER

WHEN I GOT INVOLVED in fund raising as an academic, a wise development officer noted a key difference in the way donors saw him and me. “I am a salesman,” he said. Most donors, being business people, understand sales, he explained, and have no problem evaluating sales pitches.

But before they give a substantial amount of money to an organization, he added, they really want to know and develop confidence in its leadership: “You are the public face of the unit. They need to trust you and believe in you.”

In other words, donors certainly want to see facts, figures, plans, and prospects, but faith in the person who presents them is paramount. As an academic, you’re used to going it alone and representing your own scholarly interests until you take on an administrative role and have to start fund raising. So how do you become an ambassador for your department’s causes and win the trust of disparate potential donors?

Be in command of the facts. As the public face of the department (or college), you must know a lot about what you are advocating for. Don’t go on the road until you:

• Are knowledgeable about your program’s and your university’s basic numbers and statistics. Nothing is more embarrassing than asking for help to create a scholarship and then drawing a blank when the donor inquires, “So, what does tuition run nowadays, with room and board?”

• Have handy, perhaps in aesthetically pleasing pamphlet or flier form, a menu of some of the top projects or programs for which you seek support. That

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Dean is synonymous with salesman. You’ve got to tell others why your school is the best of its kind and why it’s worth the money. And while facts and figures are impressive, donors need to have faith in the person who’s in charge.
list should reflect the consensus of the faculty, not just your own preferences.

- Understand the history—quantitative and qualitative—of the department. You don't want to be surprised by a donor bringing up a major problem from the past that you don't know anything about.

At the same time, if you really don't know how to answer a particular question, don't try to fake it. It is perfectly acceptable to reply, "Hmm, that's a good question. Let me find out about that."

**Be able to translate academic jargon and processes.** Part of your job as the public face of your department is being able to describe what it does in ways that outsiders can understand and appreciate.

A dean acquaintance described how he was seeking money for an endowed chair from a donor who, like most people outside higher education, knew nothing about academic hiring. Basically the donor had said, "If I give you the money next week, could we find somebody and hire them by the end of the month?" The dean quickly and clearly explained the process of approvals, committees, ads, interviews, and faculty votes. In a nutshell: "It is complicated and takes a relatively long time, but we do it this way so we can hire the best possible person."

**Be positive.** Another piece of advice I appreciated from development folks is this: "Nobody pours money into a sinking ship." Appeals for exceptional emergencies or to stave off disaster can work ... once. In the long run, people will help you if they think investment will mean better times, not just keeping the wolf from the door for a semester. Indeed, research on charitable giving shows that sustainable positive outcomes get more donations than "woe is me."

You need to be positive in personality to bear the positive message. If you are dour and grievance-laden, then academic administration and fund raising may not be for you. You may well have a long list of complaints you yearn to share with the world (e.g., "The conference-room ceiling leaks!" or "The head of the promotion-and-tenure committee is a supervillain!")). Keep them to yourself.

Positive does not mean delusional. The donors want to know that you are a shrewd evaluator of the challenges your institution faces, and they will appreciate sensible solutions. They can tell when someone is being a Pollyanna.

**Understand the donor's background and interests as best you can.** As dean, I replaced someone who had retired after being dean since the college's founding at Texas Tech and had been at the university for 30 years in one capacity or another. As a development administrator put it to me, "Almost every donor knows your predecessor on a first-name basis. It's going to take you years to get close to that." That's why I have been writing, calling, and, above all, traveling as much as I reasonably can.

I am helped, as you should be, by the memory, notes, and files that were kept about past development efforts. Procedurally, every time anyone from the university foundation or the college meets with a donor, there should be a “contact report” added to that donor's profile. Important points from past conversations should be available, and you should be familiar with them—as in "very concerned about access to college for needy students" or "strongly grateful to Professor Sellmeyer, who was his mentor."

**Don't be afraid to ask for help.** The retired dean of our college is my go-to for advice and background knowledge. I have also found that donors themselves are good sources of advice about the passions and concerns of their friends.

Of course, humans are complex, and surprises crop up all the time. In the give-and-take of conversation, you will learn that donors have multiple interests or interests that no one expected. Go with the flow, and take notes. You never know when a seemingly tangential aside or thought bubble may prove significantly useful months or years down the road.

**Be presentable.** If you are already a chair, dean, or director, or are about to become one, you probably have some inkling that the dress codes, manners, and ways of speaking in your peer group are different than for faculty members. Consider: Would you write a big check to somebody who was wearing flip-flops? Well, maybe you would, as a faculty member. But in the business world—the one in which most donors have spent their postcollege lives—"unkempt" translates as "unprofessional."

Context and setting matter, of course. When visiting New York in winter, I pack my blue suit, school tie, and black shoes. In California I go tieless (but with a university pin) and sport pastels. If I am meeting an 80-year-old donor and spouse for the first time at a fancy restaurant, I dress up. If I am staying at his house and we are old friends, a polo shirt and sandals may be fine. In time and with experience, you will
learn which sartorial aspect fits which occasion and audience.

**Become a good listener.** An acquaintance recalled that when he became department chair, he found that one big difference from being a faculty member was that he had to “hear out” his colleagues. It’s true: At faculty meetings, anyone can daydream, play World of Tanks online, or catch up on correspondence—except for the chair, who will incite resentment if she or he seems distracted. Likewise, in your office you should not seem bored if a senior professor comes to complain about his teaching schedule. Pay attention; it’s part of the job.

It’s no different dealing with donors. They are most likely achievers, people who have done well in their careers. They are meeting with you out of courtesy and are generally disposed to hear you out, but not just to hear you. They have ideas, reminiscences and stories, questions, and propositions that you should courteously consider.

Don’t do it just to be polite or because you hope it will result in money. Do it because it’s good for you and your department. Alumni in particular can provide external feedback on the quality of the education you are providing or on industry trends. Their ideas for helping your department may be ones that have never occurred to you. Listen and learn.

One of the misimpressions that people who don’t work with donors have is that the enterprise involves a lot of “kissing up.” Well, no. Grovel to donors, over-flatter them, and they will soon lose respect for you and lose faith in your causes. Most donors want to work with someone they can grow to admire and trust, not a sycophant.

Nevertheless, you should be, to borrow a phrase from Samuel Johnson, “most able” to make yourself “agreeable to those with whom there was business to be done.” It’s not difficult, and the rewards are personal satisfaction and the accelerated progress of your academic program.

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The Value of 10 Minutes: Writing Advice for the Time-Less Academic

By GREGORY SEMENZA

Write every day. Over the years, this is the single bit of advice I’ve given most regularly to graduate students who aim to become professors. Unfortunately, after grad school, it’s a lot easier said than done. The seminar and ABD stages present young scholars with a misleading sense that an academic schedule leaves relatively large blocks of time for writing.

With the possible exception of the summer research months, it doesn’t. In fact, I think it’s fair to say that writing time shrinks for most of us as our careers advance.

Though I was involved in departmental and university service as a graduate student, I was by no means prepared for the realities of a full-time academic job. In the first two to three years following graduation, university service requirements quadrupled, my teaching load increased, external consulting and reviewing activities proliferated, and so too did undergraduate- and graduate-advising duties. Throw in a house, a yard, maybe even a family, and you’ve got yourself a dilemma: For those of us who are required to write, or simply wish to write, time is not on our side.

During my dissertation phase, I developed a daily writing strategy that served me well for several years, which was to try to write at least two double-spaced pages first thing every morning. This strategy was an adaptation of a system practiced by one of my dissertation advisors, who writes for at least two hours each day. The two systems are a lot alike—especially since, for me, two pages of solid writing very often requires about two hours of work. Whereas some people work better with time limits, others find it more productive to set page goals. I continue to believe that systems such as these are ideal both for establishing a productive writing schedule and ingraining habits that will carry over well into a variety of academic positions after graduate school. (Those interested in learning more about such plans should see Graduate Study for the 21st Century.) But there’s the ideal and then there’s real life. While I continue to dole out this advice on a regular basis, I’m finding it harder and harder to find two hours—or even time for two unspeakably bad pages—in my day.

What I often do have, in between meetings with students, classes, and so forth, is 10 or 15 minutes. My first inclination at such moments is to watch YouTube or check Twitter. That’s because these activities are less intellectually demanding than the ones which, I’ve been led to believe, require considerably larger chunks of time and more sustained focus. Procrastination thrives on such assumptions. What can one really accomplish in 10 minutes anyway? Surely tomorrow, when that unexpected block of eight hours or so descends from the sky, I’ll forget all my worries and finally write that article.

Right.

Most people make the mistake of surrendering these small bits of time to distractions. But what if we made a habit of using one, two, or even three of the 10- to 15-minute troughs in our day for real writing instead? My intention here isn’t merely to promote the value of writing in fits and starts as a motivational strategy (a topic that’s already covered well by Joan Bolker). Nor am I suggesting that such writ-

THE TAKEAWAY

It’s hard to worry about your own scholarship when you’re making curriculum decisions for next year or contacting maintenance about the leaky air conditioner on the third floor. But don’t let your own work fall by the wayside. Take just 10 minutes every day to sit down and write.
ing bursts will be of equal value to the longer stretches: Undoubtedly your best writing will still come in focused periods of about 90 to 120 minutes. But I can think of at least three reasons why writing in 10- to 15-minute bursts throughout your work week will make you a significantly more productive, focused, and satisfied writer. It may also make you a better teacher, colleague, even parent, by assuaging the feelings of guilt, anxiety, and resentment that sometimes result from not being able to write.

**Reason 1: It makes writing less daunting.** Let’s start with the obvious point that writing in short bursts will declaw the activity of writing precisely by demystifying and normalizing it. If writing is something you can do in 10 minutes, like running to the mailroom or shoving a sandwich down your throat, then it seems hardly worth the paralyzing stress it tends to cause so many of us. More than any activity I know, writing provokes the worst forms of procrastination, leading in some cases to a downward spiral from which it can take us weeks—sometimes months!—to recover. There’s nothing special about writing, though. Rather than stare at the wall for 10 minutes and stress out about never having enough time, use the time you do have to write a paragraph. Gradually you’ll come to see that if you can manage a paragraph in those 10 minutes, you’ll be able to do much more with two hours when time finally does slow down for you.

**Reason 2: It makes you want to write more.** Writing for 10 minutes can be effective for the specific reason that it’s writing for only 10 minutes. A two-hour session can exhaust me and leave me feeling nauseous about my subject, the weakness of my style, or whatever. But a 10-minute interlude leaves me full of energy and wanting more. Later on, if an idea, or a superior formulation of one, pops into my head on that stretch between classrooms, I can’t wait to get back to a screen to jot down my thoughts or put a new sentence on the page. Old feelings of dread about having to write have been transformed into an itching desire to write.

**Reason 3: It helps you stay in the flow.** One frustrating aspect of many two-hour writing sessions is the amount of time we can waste trying to remember what the hell we were writing about the last time out. By working in short bursts, you’ll maintain a greater sense of focus on the general topic with which you’re engaging, on the methodological or philosophical problems you need to solve to advance your argument, and most importantly, on the specific sentence or paragraph you’ll be starting in on the next time you write. If I manage to snatch 10 minutes of writing time in between classes, then even the walk to my next class might be quite productive, as the specific problems with which I’m wrestling will tend to remain central in my mind. This greater focus on what I’m writing, then, which I’m able to maintain all day long, results in greater efficiency once I get back to my computer. The key to getting ahead is simply getting started, and writing in bursts can help us feel like we’ve always already begun.

Now, learning this technique will of course require just as much practice and patience as it took to master writing in larger chunks of time. That’s why it makes sense to start now, in the summer, when you might be just a bit less busy than you are in the fall and spring semesters. So try making use of your 10-minute troughs over the coming weeks; it might well pay off for you during the madness of autumn.

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Superpowers for Supervisors

By NICOLE MATOS

I recently served a year-long stint as associate dean of my community college’s English department while surviving my five-year-old son’s obsession with superheroes. Given our hour-long commute, I had plenty of time to hear about good guys and bad guys, adamantium claws and power rings. Somewhere along the line, I began to think about my new administrative role in the same fantastical terms. Must fly (from meeting to meeting). Must scale (in an architect's plan) tall buildings in a single bound.

But if anything, my first experience moving from a faculty to a supervisory role actually taught me that true superpowers for administrators aren’t anything flashy. You don’t need to be Professor X to be a good manager of people and resources. To be successful, you just need to focus on a few very human powers—and acknowledge your own very human limitations.

The power of courtesy. One of the most common problems I dealt with as associate dean, to the tune of several cases a week, was student-faculty disputes. Although the specifics varied, you’d be surprised how often seemingly complex complaints came down to a simple perception of a lack of courtesy on one or both sides. The lesson? One of the easiest ways you can erode morale as a supervisor is simply by being cranky, brusque, or thoughtless in your style of communication.

An unintentional lack of courtesy on the part of supervisors often seems to arise from a sense of SSDD—same (er) stuff, different day. That is, the same issues and concerns tend to repeat, just with different players. Someone is squeezing more than the allowed number of copies out of the staff copy machine ... again. A committee member was late on producing a scheduled report ... again. A faculty member has a complaint about this year’s in-service speaker—just like somebody had a complaint last year, and the year before that.

But it is easy to forget that only you as supervisor have access to, and thus feel the effects of, that cumulative memory. To fire off a snippy email (“YOU ARE LIMITED TO 50 COPIES!”) to a first-time offender is essentially to punish a man for the sins of his fathers. It is the same ultimately fallacious temptation as being annoyed that this year's crop of students is no better at comma splices when you taught them so nicely, last year. Treat each person like new, even if the problem is old—that is my best anti-cranky advice.

The power of transparency. Before I tried administration, I honestly had no idea how my college operated internally. As far as I knew, for example, the courses I taught were magically scheduled by the flick of a wand. Little did I know that there was actually a master schedule of courses produced about a year ahead of time, then a secondary process where courses were matched to available rooms, all long before faculty members might ask themselves, “What would I like to teach next term?” The result of this opaque process, at least in my department, was a continual, frustrating mismatch between faculty course requests and available courses and/or rooms.

It only took a little bit of extra instruction—essentially, a memo—to explain to faculty members the precise process and timeline by which courses are scheduled. Suddenly disappointments which seemed personal (“What do you mean, there’s no Tuesday section of Medieval Zooplankton?”) became operational (“Oh, I get it, the course requests are locked in in July, the room requests in January, and the priority list goes in seniority order; I’ll plan my request for next time accordingly”).

Never assume that your supervisees “simply won’t be interested” in a transparent accounting of how institutional systems work, or that informing people about process is somehow a diminishment of your managerial control. Yes, making systems trans-

THE TAKEAWAY

Move over, Professor X. Academic deans can be super, too. They just need to engage a few human powers: courtesy, transparency, and apology.
The power of apology. Time travel is a pretty desirable superpower. My son informed me that it is actually pretty rare in the superhero universe ("Apocalypse can only do it because he stole Cable's computer!")], but I know a way to make it much more common in the administrative realm: the power of apology, of simply saying, "Ack, I messed that one up, my fault, let me try that again."

Rare indeed is the individual who will look down on you for apologizing, and rare is the situation where a redo isn't possible. Think of it this way: Screwing something up, so long as you fix it afterward, is time travel with the added bonus of an opportunity for an improved relationship. The person who caught your error or who was affected by it has the chance to test your humility and integrity, and you have the chance to prove those qualities sound.

"I don't know—let me do some research and get back to you" is another wonderful temporal manipulation that combines the power of the present with the resources of the future. It is strange that the same academics who spent eight years probing their field's thorniest unanswered questions should suddenly become allergic to admitting that they don't have all the answers. But too often, that is the case. Before you employ some new New Math to produce the exact elusive statistic your compatriot casually requested, consider instead a quick freeze-frame in which you offer, "I want to be sure I have it right, so I'll get you that info by the end of the day."

The power of reciprocity. The biggest lesson I took away from my year "on the dark side" is a healthy skepticism over why an administrative role needs to be "the dark side" at all. Both faculty and supervisors, temporary or permanent, could do a much better job avoiding Othering the other side.

Not everyone will want to pull a Mystique, as I did, and transmogrify from one campus role to another (although, I would argue, more people should). But you shouldn't need X-ray vision to appreciate that both faculty and administration can be everyday superheroes in their own right.

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Bouncing Back
After a Rough Patch

By PAULA KREBS

Within five months last winter and early spring, my mother was diagnosed with cancer, moved into an assisted-living facility, and died. All of that happened five hours away from where I live, and it meant thousands of miles of driving, many trips to doctors and hospitals, and dozens of nights sleeping next to a wonderful, life-loving woman who was smaller and quieter every time I arrived.

During my mom’s illness, I took more and more time off from my job to be with her. I tried to keep up with my day-to-day responsibilities at work, answering emails, filling out online forms, and scheduling meetings around my increasingly extended visits to Mom.

The long car rides, the takeout food (I wasn’t a fan of the dining-room fare at the assisted-living facility), and the endless hours of sitting took a toll on my own health, which was easy to recognize. I put on weight and felt uncomfortable in my body. After my mother’s death, I knew I needed to get my old body back, to feel strong and fit again. It would be a way to mark a transition: from the difficult months centered on helping her to end her life well, back to a life that isn’t (at least, not so immediately) leading to death.

So I began cultivating better eating habits. And at my local Y, I invested some money in sessions with a personal trainer. She helped me to get into a fitness routine, and push past what had become my physical limits. I dropped the 15 pounds I had gained and soon shed the trainer, too, having rekindled my love of sweat-inducing activities.

What I hadn’t realized until lately, however, was that fitness wasn’t the only thing I’d sacrificed while helping my mom. The emotional intensity of the experience, shared with my siblings who lived closer to Mom, had left little time for me to focus on my work. Now that’s as it should be, of course, and I was very grateful to my employer for allowing me the sick time and the psychic space to do what had to be done. I’m not saying that I should have been more dedicated to my job during my mother’s illness; what I mean is that I didn’t realize until recently how much work it would be to fully return to work.

As soon as the funeral and accompanying obligations were through—removing her belongings from the assisted-living home, sending thank-you notes—I went back to work five days a week, picking up where I’d left off and trying to get back to all the things either left undone on my desk or kindly picked up by others.

But just as I needed help from a personal trainer to devise a new fitness regime, I’ve realized now that I need the same thing for my professional life.

During those months of crisis, I had slipped away from a proactive relationship to my job. I had, of necessity, pared down my work to the absolute basics, to the stuff that had to get done in order to keep my bit of the university running. When I returned, I ramped it up, of course, working to catch up. What was difficult was recapturing my old, entrepreneurial relationship to the job—the new ideas, the enthusiasm, the drive. People had moved ahead in my absence, making decisions, charting new courses, doing their jobs (and sometimes mine—and thank you, all!). It is taking some effort to get back to my professional fitness level, to re-establish myself in my job, in my institution, and even in my sense of the profession.

I don’t want to be too hard on myself by expecting that it would be easy to bounce back from such a big disruption in my life. I’m just trying to get a handle on all the ways it slowed me down. And on what I need to do to feel like myself again, professionally, the way I now do physically.

I can’t exactly find a personal trainer to whip me back into dean-shape. Well, I

THE TAKEAWAY

We’ve told you what it takes to be a Super Dean, but you don’t have to be superhuman all the time. Sometimes life gets overwhelming, and that’s OK.
guess I could, but that would be considerably more expensive than the already sizable sum I paid for the personal trainer at the Y. What I’m trying to do is kickstart my professional self with a project for which I have some enthusiasm. It’s easy to make something work if you genuinely believe in it, and I am really charged up about a project I’ve been developing. It links New England doctoral institutions with regional comprehensives and community colleges to help doctoral students prepare for teaching at teaching-intensive institutions. As that project has taken shape, I find myself regaining confidence professionally and bringing the old enthusiasm back to my work.

As I meet with the chairs in my college and with faculty in various venues, I can see that we’re working together better than ever, and I’m feeling like my old, pushy self. I’m taking more pleasure in the relationships that make up the job—with faculty members, students (75 students turned up for my Yummy Breakfast with the Dean on Labor Day!), and my fellow staffers.

Lessons to be learned from this? Maybe this: After a rough patch in your life, don’t expect to bounce right back. Give yourself a break. Then figure out what you’ll need to do to be happy with yourself again, and do it.

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Resources

Deans are increasingly hiring more adjuncts to save costs and fill classrooms, but many deans aren’t clear on how many part-timers they should hire, or how to support those faculty members once they’re there. Here are a few resources to help academic deans get to know this growing segment of the professoriate.

Non-Tenure-Track Faculty in Our Department: In 2012, the Delphi Project released a guide to help department and program leaders better understand the working conditions of non-tenure-track faculty members and how to improve them.


The Just-in-Time Professor: After U.S. Rep. George Miller asked adjuncts to submit stories of their working conditions, the Democratic staff of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce released this report summarizing its findings and posed a few solutions.


Crisis at the Boiling Point: This report from SEIU and Adjunct Action documents how much work part-time faculty members are doing and how federal employment laws may fail to protect them. It also offers recommendations for actions that deans and others can take to improve the situation of adjuncts.