


# Leadership Traits and Hiring a New Chancellor in a University Setting: A Case Study

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## Abstract

Many challenges arise when attempting to hire a new chancellor in higher education, especially if experiencing enrollment declines, decreased state funding, and turnover in leadership. The first step in this process is to assess the culture within the institution and formulate a list of preferred leadership traits for the new chancellor. These traits mold an effective leader and create a solid foundation for moving forward with the process. The chancellor must have excellent change management principles and exemplary communication skills and surround themselves with the same type of team. Leaders who cultivate synergy and recognize autonomy within the university setting may build mutual respect and a way to move forward in a positive light. Leaders should maximize student outcomes, and set benchmarks, all while managing budgetary pressures and attempting to cultivate long-term positive results. When members of the educational team work in “silos”, this can fragment the work environment and cause a lack of engagement. Giving rewards for excellent performance could incentivize team members to work hard and encourage multidisciplinary collaboration to move the university forward. This particular case study will analyze and evaluate different organizational models as well as how different types of leaders can work with board members to develop a robust strategic plan.

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## Introduction

As a doctoral project, my professor asked us to design a strategic plan and serve as a consultant for a university that has been experiencing issues with enrollment declines, financial constraints, decreased state funding, turnover in leadership, low rankings, and low morale. The university was in the process of hiring a new Chancellor and we had to craft a strategic plan to be utilized by the newly hired administrator. The following questions were investigated for this case study:

- (1) How to assess the culture of the university;
- (2) How to analyze the strategic apex and operating core;
- (3) What models would be beneficial to grasp the current organizational structure and trends within the university setting;
- (4) How to educate the board on the models selected to describe the university and develop a robust strategic plan; and
- (5) What type of leader would be recommended for this specific university setting. In this case study,

the university will be hiring a new Chancellor to be head of the administrative team. All of the questions above will be addressed in this case study.

## **Assessing the Culture and Preferred Leadership Traits for the New Chancellor**

The root word of leader is LEAD. There are leaders that are found in everyday life, in any position or role, and every field (Valiga, 2019). Leaders can have the same impact if they are leading a group of volunteers at a local food pantry or a school director in a university setting. Some can be just as effective at the grassroots level as the university level depending on their characteristics and qualities. Leaders usually have exceptional visionary traits and a decisive way to lead others. Leadership helps to point us in the same direction and harness our efforts jointly (Liphadzi, et al., 2017).

Some people are leaders and some are followers, but the leaders have to be precise in organizing the followers to “follow through” with the job responsibilities (Valiga, 2019). It takes good followers to do the work, but it takes an exceptional leader to “lead” the flock and to guide the followers using sound ethical and methodical principles. Leadership is not a random occurrence; rather it is purposeful and involves communication, vision, engagement, and inspiration to energize a group (Valiga, 2019). A solid communicator can go very far not only in the university system, but also in any aspect of life. Someone with vision sees the big picture and looks into the future with realistic expectations. Engagement is having a solid commitment to a goal and seeing it through until the end. Being inspired by a leader gives you not only an internal energy to do the job, but an ability to exude an external energy that is contagious to others around you.

## **Factors That Make a Leader**

Several factors make a leader and create a solid foundation for success. This can also be true in life as well. In John Maxwell’s book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, he presents a great list of factors all leaders could adopt within everyday practice.

1. **Character**---Who they are---People can see the depth of a person’s character. Be who you say you are and let your character show in each experience.
2. **Relationships**---Who they know---Deep relationships produce great leaders. Be trustworthy and people will recognize you are a great person and leader.
3. **Knowledge**---What they know---Leaders need facts to visualize the future. If the path is foggy, fight through the fog to see what lies ahead. Wait for the fog to rise to see things more clearly.
4. **Intuition**---What they feel---Leaders should recognize and influence things such as energy, time, morale, and momentum. Time is a precious commodity and leaders should respect everyone’s time equally. In addition, if morale is high, a leader will receive the fruit from other people in their work ethic and pride within the work. Momentum is important because if a leader has the drive to get things done, the team members will follow along. Seeking and focusing on rewards at the end of each day and feeling good about accomplishments are true rewards.
5. **Experience**---Where they have been---The greater your past challenges, the more likely followers

will be willing to let you lead. Leaders should not be afraid to share challenges or failures they have throughout their experiences. This is a good way to show followers you are human and have survived many shortcomings. You have to continue to press on, even in times of strife and trouble. Strength will arrive when you need it the most and when you least expect it.

As a consultant, I would encourage the existing university group to work with me to discover a chancellor that has the mindset below:

**Seven Change Management Principles (Deloitte, 2017)**

1. **Start with the end in mind:** Bring together the NTT faculty, the T/TT Faculty, the Program Director and possibly the School Director to discuss potential changes and ideas for future improvement. Locate people who can be “champions” for change and work together to encourage others to be involved. Involve everyone equally so the change will be more well-received and adopted.
2. **Understand the institution’s culture:** Reinforcing the culture and modeling the behavior desired is critical. Connect with not only minds, but hearts. Involve former administrators from the program/school to get feedback on past dynamics within the program (what worked/what did not work).
3. **Communicate, communicate, and communicate:** Know what communication technique works for the faculty and making it work to create knowledge of changes and invite dialogue.
4. **Walk a mile in the shoes of those whose roles will change:** Respect ALL people affected by the change (including staff, faculty and administrators).
5. **Create win-wins and align incentives:** Find benefits for the changes and realize incentives may not be financial. Some of the non-financial incentives are just as viable. Give faculty more responsibility within the program and this should promote “buy-in”.
6. **Embrace relentless incrementalism to help achieve radical change:** Shoot for the stars with goals and take incremental small steps to get there, constantly using formative evaluation as you go through each step.
7. **You will not get what you do not measure:** Leadership would need to be properly aligned for the goals to work. Continual use of formative evaluation is crucial to measure results of the new plan.

**Review University Organizational Structure**

There is a growing belief that higher education institutions should nurture a ‘quality culture’ in which structural/managerial and cultural/psychological elements act in synergy to continuously improve education (Bendermacher et al., 2017). The most successful universities are invested in mutual respect and recognition for a job “well done”. Tools and instruments for quality management might not work as intended—or even have a negative impact on organizational processes—due to their implementation from a top-down direction, neglect of individual staff members’ autonomy and viewing of staff as passive receivers of policy instead of active contributors (Bendermacher et al., 2017; Davies et al., 2007; Harvey & Stensaker, 2008).

Leaders are central ‘drivers’ of quality culture development through their ability to influence resource allocation, clarify roles and responsibilities, create partnerships and optimize people and process management (Bendermacher et al., 2017). As a consultant, I may give some of this type of advice to the new chancellor or existing upper administration. Leaders must listen, learn, and collaborate well with everyone. Be fully aware of your surroundings and have a pulse on not only the university, but the influential and underrepresented groups on campus. Go into different areas on campus and listen, attend meetings, take notes, and organize lists into positives and areas of improvement. Attend service organizations such as Rotary Club and Lions Club as well as city council meetings to understand the climate and what is emphasized within the community. Talk to people around the community and really see what their true feelings and perceptions are about the institution. If they are negative, see what they would suggest helping turn it around into a renewed and dynamic university. Many people have lived in the community for several years, and they have a good pulse on the area at large. The ‘subcultures’ within organizations emerge because of staff being active in a variety of disciplines and departments. Quality culture coincides and overlaps with other organizational subcultures (Bendermacher et al., 2017).

### **Maximize Student Outcomes**

In addition to identifying the specific problem targeted by an intervention, it is important to consider the implications for measurement of academic outcomes. Some interventions focus on promoting motivation and performance in particular courses, where measures would be course specific, such as engagement, interest, and course grades (Harackiewicz & Priniski, 2018). As a consultant, I may suggest working with high schools and home-schooling locations in the area to increase the interest in the university as well as develop successful collaborative education practices for a more seamless academic transition into the university setting. Many interventions are even more general, targeting academic adjustment and performance in college, in which case the outcome measures would be college general, such as college adjustment and fit, overall grade point average (GPA), and graduation rate. The primary outcomes targeted by an intervention serve as a measure of intervention efficacy, but they can also trigger positive recursive processes that drive longer-term impacts (Harackiewicz & Priniski, 2018).

Another interesting concept is the program “Students as Partners” (SaP). This program embraces students and staff (including academic/faculty and professional staff) working together on teaching and learning in higher education. Most are process-oriented instead of outcomes-driven, which is what most universities focus on (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). I would suggest negating the use of testing outcomes, such as the American College Test (ACT) and/or Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), because there are more ways to measure success than using standardized tests.

There is a vast difference in the amount of money spent on education from one district to another. However, more importantly, it means that students entering school are already programmed for success, mediocrity, or failure. Students who can profit from higher education are turned down while students of equal ability who can afford to pay are given aid packages all under the cover of equal opportunity ideology (Rossides, 2004).

### **Manage Various Budgetary Pressures**

Upper administration should be proficient and have a good handle with the university's budget. The chief financial officer should facilitate a workshop where all upper administration go through the university's budget, line item by line item and what percentages are allocated for expenses, how much money comes in from grants, state appropriations, federal funds, and tuition dollars.

Financial aid is a challenge for many higher education institutions. Nevertheless, the most concerning is student indebtedness (Barr & McClellan, 2018). The higher education experience should be positive and create a long-term result as well as be worth the money that is paid to obtain a degree. This means a vast difference in the amount of money spent on education from one district to another. However, more importantly, it means that students entering school are already programmed for success, mediocrity, or failure. Students who can profit from higher education are turned down while students of equal ability who can afford to pay are given aid packages all under the cover of equal opportunity ideology (Rossides, 2004). As a consultant, I would suggest a feasibility study to evaluate the need for programs, especially ones that have a low enrollment or are expensive to run. There may be more short-term and long-term options to move forward within the university's mission and vision. In addition, I would suggest keeping certificate programs or minors to a minimum and ensure they are "in demand".

Leadership training and faculty development is a very crucial step to ensure that everyone feels confident in their new or current role. Another suggestion is to maintain institutional autonomy as well as shared leadership. When more people feel valued and a part of the process to make the university great and viable in the marketplace, this will only reap large rewards. I would suggest a mentoring program for not only new faculty, but existing faculty. Sometimes, faculty or staff do not receive any training or mentorship opportunities when they begin their position, so it is left to chance for things to all work out.

Higher education institutions work in "silos", or very constricted vertical planes. The institutional logics are **state** (emphasis on compliance), **profession** (emphasis on learning), and **market** (emphasis on performance).

1. **State**---Armed forces, civil service, judiciary, etc. that is able to govern a society (Brown, 2017; Scott & Marshall, 2009).
2. **Profession**---Student-learning outcomes, outcomes assessment, focus on learning improvement (Brown, 2017).
3. **Market**---Transfer rates, enrollment data, cost-per ratios, grant funding, and research output among many others (Brown, 2017; Massy, 2016).

Seven identified fields function as specialized silos, each with a unique rationality and approach toward matters of higher education accountability, they are: assessment (learning), accreditation (learning/compliance), institutional research (performance/compliance), institutional effectiveness (learning/performance/compliance), educational evaluation (learning/performance), educational measurement (learning), and higher education public policy (performance/compliance). Within the literature, these seven disparate silos lack engagement with one another and possess conflicting definitions of foundational

terms. Thus, an important challenge that remains is comprehending both the complex social context and the many disparate approaches to higher education accountability (Brown, 2017).

### **Allocation of Resources on Credit Hours**

Performance-based funding can be an option to decrease the amount of red-tape and bureaucratic rules. Giving rewards for good performance is something that could incentivize the university employees that have gotten “comfortable” in their role. Some states actually provide incentives for in-state students, completion of degrees, low socioeconomic students, or minority students (Favero & Rutherford, 2020). One of the drawbacks is the potential of inequity between universities and different student groups. Some programs on campus may not have distance education options, but we can evaluate to see if that is an option. Programs, faculty, and staff may need to think outside the box and do something new that is out of their comfort zone. If it is not working, change is a great option. Building interdisciplinary research and having broad collaborative goals may be the best approach to encourage change.

### **Vertical and Horizontal Structures**

The silo approach of leadership, or top-down approach, may not create cohesiveness; it creates animosity or divisions between groups of professionals. Most universities operate as a silo of vertical dimension. Student affairs tend to perform in a horizontal way. Professors and other administrators may want to stay within their personal comfort level and work in a bubble within their own professional program (Keeling et al., 2007).

Rutgers University developed an Organizational Development and Leadership (ODL) program that was based on *The Red Tape Report* (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017). The discovery from this report was the following recommendations: 1. Creating a more welcoming environment, 2. Introducing technological innovations to enhance service and efficiency, 3. Establishing and enhancing user-focused systems and processes, 4. Improving collaboration and communication, and 5. Establishing a university program for continuous improvement (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017).

### **Programs and Student Outcomes**

Assessment, conceptualization, planning, implementation, and evaluation are pivotal ways that higher education institutions may track success with student outcomes. Concerns about performance and cost efficiency have taken center stage in discussions about the funding and oversight of public universities in recent years. One of the primary manifestations of these concerns is the rise of performance funding policies, or policies that seek to directly link state appropriations to the outcomes institutions generate for students (Rutherford & Rabovsky, 2014). Historically, oversight of higher education has been oriented toward regulating inputs and procedures (most notably with regard to equal access and antidiscrimination efforts), but over the last few decades policy-makers have increasingly demanded that universities be held accountable for their performance, particularly with respect to undergraduate student outcomes (Rutherford & Rabovsky, 2014;

Zumeta, 2001). Outcomes assessment data becomes very critical in the ability set benchmarks to track and record student success. In many instances, citizens and policy-makers have increasingly pushed for focusing on outputs instead of inputs (Rutherford & Rabovsky, 2014; Van Dooren, 2008).

As a consultant, I may encourage this university to keep performance-based funding on the table and at least try it to see how it functions. They could always go a different direction.

### **Analyzing and Utilizing the *Mintzberg Model***

The *Mintzberg Model* is very desirable to use because it takes a complexity and makes it real. The operating core are the workers who provide goods and services such as faculty, clinical coordinators, or other “worker bees”. The administrative component or middle line are managers that supervise and coordinate resources, such as middle management. The strategic apex shapes the design and strategies of the institution, such as senior executives and Board of Trustees. The technostructure and support staff are alongside the administrative component, such as accounting departments, financial aid, secretaries and support staff, respectively (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Most of the team members in the technostructure and support staff are very instrumental in the daily operation of the university. As a consultant, I would propose beginning with a mixture of simple structure (flexible and adaptable) and try to remove the bureaucratic tendencies that higher education embellishes.

### **Multi-Dimensional Models and Current Organizational Structure and Behavior**

The *Birnbaum Model* can be used at this university, especially the collegial dimension. Morale is suffering, so to have a more democratically run university where people actually talk to each other and have a shared engaging quality. Consensus building for each person involved to have a joined decision-making process is important. To add part of the political dimension may be helpful to create a shared governance where faculty, students, and some special interest groups maintain accountability for their actions. Since cybernetic is using two of the model’s dimensions, this is the best route and to intertwine collegial and political together (Williams, 2021).

The *Bolman and Deal Four-Frame Model* can be used at XYZ University to create synergy within the institution’s faculty, staff, and administrators. As a consultant, I would work with utilizing the Structural and Human Resource frame for the following reasons:

1. You must maintain structure so everyone will know his or her role and how to maximize his or her efforts.
2. Strategy and setting goals will help team members know what is expected and how to reach their goals.
3. Obviously, this university has some major issues and creating structure that has not been there for many years is imperative to the future success of the institution.
4. If you can empower people to work together and recognize their needs and truly listen to them, they will feel more valued and morale will improve (Bolman & Deal, 2017).



Using *Baldrige's Three Dimensions Model*, I would suggest for this university to use a mix between the Bureaucratic and the Collegial dimensions. The only aspect of the Bureaucratic dimension that works for this particular university is to have excellent organization within units that have well-defined rules. The Collegial dimension would be beneficial because it moves people toward participatory actions and tries to minimize conflict due to viewing as dysfunctional. I would not recommend the Political dimension for this case study because we do not need conflict and dissension (Baldrige, 1972).

### **Educating on Board Dynamics and Devise a Strategic Plan**

As the consultant for this university, I would investigate the makeup and dynamics of the current board members' appointments to the board. Then, I would attend a few board meetings to see what issues are on the table and how they handle each situation. This will give me information that will be beneficial. It may be a good idea to talk to each board member separately to see his or her personal dynamics.

It is crucial to grasp the importance and components of a strategic plan. Below is an example of a good strategy to use when devising a strategic plan.

#### **Components of a Strategic Plan**

1. **Foundation**--->Mission statement (Why are we existing and what are we supposed to do?)
2. **Supporting Components**--->Values (How do we work?); Institutional goals (Have a target and check it off the list); Vision (What do we become during a certain time?)
3. **Strategic Plan**--->Goals (more broad) and objectives (more specific to the university's needs); implementation plan (setting priorities, find resources, constraints/limitations, strategies to combat constraints/limitations)

After the above components are established, I would set up a Planning Committee and give scope and expectation for each member. Then, the assessment phase would begin including institutional assessment, institutional effectiveness, learning outcomes and strategies to succeed within this university setting (Hinton, 2012).

### **Type of Leader to Hire at This University**

Bass and Riggio (2006) described transactional leaders as utilizing: (a) contingent rewards (characterizes leaders who promise and deliver rewards based on satisfactory performance); (b) passive management by exception (characterizes leaders who await a subordinate's mistakes to take corrective action); and (c) active management by exception (characterizes leaders who point out subordinate's mistakes in order to warn others), as a means of exerting power and influence. The managerial nature of transactional leadership is evident in characteristics of the style outlined by Bass and Riggio (2006), and is evinced by the emphasis placed on setting expectations, monitoring and rewarding compliance and progress, and punishment or correction of deviation. If we are trying to engage everyone on campus, rewards for satisfactory performance do work.

Transformational leaders employ the following tactics: (a) idealized influence (leading by example); (b)



inspirational motivation (leaders inspire commitment by challenging subordinates, providing meaning to their work, and delineating an attractive vision of the future); (c) intellectual stimulation (leaders inspire and support creative thinking and problem solving); and (d) individualized consideration (leaders provide coaching and mentoring to subordinates in order to help achieve both personal and collective goals and growth) (Adserias, et al., 2016; Bass & Riggio, 2006). This type of leadership would be a nice fit as well due to the leader stimulating pride. Pride will spread throughout the university with a common goal and vision.

As a consultant, I would not utilize the Garbage Can Model because it seems too vague and not very concise. This situation needs inputs and outputs to be consistent and fair. The new leader should be on board to look at the end of the problem and work backwards through it (Steen et al., 2017). I would also refrain from organized anarchy. University leaders face ambiguity (a state of uncertainty) from a number of dimensions and this affects their leadership and management abilities in “an organized anarchy” (Cohen & March, 1986), a classic organizational theory which suggests higher education institutions function and achieve uncertain outcomes (Fredericksen, 2017; Cohen & March, 1986).

This assignment and case study was an eye-opening experience into the lives and times of a higher education administrator. Several lessons were learned within this assignment and realizing there is definitely more to it than what is demonstrated here. I have a true respect for our leaders at any university and inspire to make a difference in some way in the near future within my own institution.

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