

**Chapter 8**  
**Leadership Challenges for the**  
**Campus and the Profession**

Brian L. Hawkins and Deanna B. Marcum

**Technology Everywhere**  
**A Campus Agenda for Educating and Managing**  
**Workers in the Digital Age**

Brian L. Hawkins, Julia A. Rudy, and William H. Wallace, Jr., Editors

A Publication of EDUCAUSE

Copyright 2002 Jossey-Bass Inc.

Published by Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Company. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. For personal use only. Not for distribution.

## Leadership Challenges for the Campus and the Profession

Brian L. Hawkins, Deanna B. Marcum

Cornelius Pings, past president of the Association of American Universities, wrote of the sweeping impact that technology is having on higher education: “The explosive development of digital technology has engaged every sector of the academic community, but the future impact of the technology will be even more sweeping. Digital information technology will profoundly influence the production, dissemination, and management of information; its impact may affect the structure, operation, and governance of the higher education enterprise as well” (1998, p. viii). Although this statement still rings largely true today, the suggestion by Pings that this new technology *may* affect structure, operation, and governance now appears to be a serious understatement.

Clearly, information technology (IT) is having an enormous impact on every dimension of college and university life. The new technologies are profoundly affecting teaching and learning, creating new opportunities and new competitors in the world of distributed learning. E-business strategies are transforming how business transactions are conducted, and interactive on-line student services demand more comprehensive and complex support structures. New technological tools are creating new opportunities for scholarly inquiry; for example, researchers can now visualize complex data sets and collect information in ways that were never possible before. Networks enable real-time collaboration among scholars who may

be geographically distant. Increasingly, important issues are arising as to how a college or university presents itself, with more attention paid to Web sites and portal technologies than was ever given to counterpart print materials, largely because of the ubiquity of the Internet.

As they work to integrate information technology into the fabric of their institution, campus leaders are struggling more than ever with structural, operational, and governance issues. Not only is IT transforming how colleges and universities conduct their affairs, but the manner in which digital resources and information technology and services are provided is also changing. Two decades ago, the chief technology administrator on campus was usually the director of a central computer facility. However, with technology everywhere and becoming integral to achieving campus academic and administrative goals, the technology leader has progressed from overseeing a physical facility to helping oversee and assume responsibility for the institution's strategic investment in and effective management of information resources and technology.

The traditional roles of the computer center and the library—and the professionals who have led these organizations—are no longer adequate to support the changed environment. A new kind of leadership—with new sets of skills and orientations—is needed; throughout the institution, various managers of digital resources and information technologies have to assume new roles. This is true whether these leaders are chief information officers (CIOs), chief technology officers, IT directors, librarians, or other high-level administrators with responsibility for managing an institution's digital resources and information technology.

Thus, colleges and universities are challenged not only by the shortage of and competition for the specific technical skill sets needed to advance institutional strategies related to IT but also by the need to ensure effective information technology leadership at the highest levels. This chapter explores new roles for such leadership and recommends some leadership strategies and tactics to fos-

ter effective stewardship of campus information resources and technology in the digital age.

## **Defining New Leadership Roles**

Too many people with functional responsibilities in a higher education institution see themselves solely as advocates for their area of responsibility. Leaders, on the other hand, see themselves not in terms of the functional units they head but as part of the institution as a whole. The leader of an information resource or technology unit on campus increasingly must be an active participant in the central administration of the academic enterprise, both to be personally effective and to make the institution effective. This new leadership approach requires the individual to be a partner in reconceptualizing the institutional mission, articulating a vision, and forging the political alliances necessary to achieve the kind of change that is required. These new roles have little to do with the skills and mind-set that the leader might have found critical in an earlier stage of his or her career. The leader today must know how to move beyond the comfortable realm of technical expertise to tackle the hard questions—especially “What must the college or university become to remain successful?”

The information resource and technology leader today needs to understand that his or her role is no longer that of a specialist but rather that of a generalist, acting and participating as a critical partner in the central administration of the college or the university. To do this, the individuals must have at least rudimentary knowledge of things such as grants and contract administration, endowment spending policies, intercollegiate athletics, financial aid and tuition discounting, and myriad other facets of the institution as a whole. Since all of these issues present problems and challenges, it is imperative that the senior administrative team in the institution be able to look at all of the needs, weigh the tradeoffs, and make informed decisions. This mitigates against the notion of advocating solely for

the needs of the “stovepipe” that a given individual may officially represent. The objective must be to find an optimal solution for the institution, not to maximize the advantage for a given unit or set of units. To do the latter is to create a suboptimal solution; the management literature is full of examples in which such solutions have led to poor overall organizational health.

This is a fine line to walk, because leaders are expected to advocate for the functional area that they represent. It is the balance between advocating for special needs and looking out for the larger interests of the institution that ultimately determines the credibility and the respect given to any senior administrator responsible for leading information resources and technology. Is this individual seen as being at the top level of the IT or library organization, or at the bottom level of the central administration? If either role predominates, then the individual is probably not executing the role well, as it is a blend of these two functions that is essential to effective leadership.

## **Strategies for Effective Leadership**

A number of strategies seem to be increasingly important for effective leadership within the broad scope of managing information resources and technology.

### **Articulate a Vision**

One of the fundamental responsibilities incumbent on a CIO, librarian, IT director, or other administrator charged with institutional IT leadership is the ability to articulate a vision clearly. With the rapid changes in higher education, most of which are driven by information technology, it is important to provide a sense of what the future might look like and how it will affect the operations and functions within the academy.

Nobody’s crystal ball is going to be entirely accurate, but this vision of the future serves as a yardstick against which to measure

the importance of day-to-day concerns, placing them in perspective and allowing other executives in the institution to understand the transitions that are affecting them. Warren Bennis (1989) describes the greatest obstacle to leadership as “being consumed by the routine.” It is precisely this routine that cannot and should not dominate discussion of technological change at the college or university. Rather, these conversations need to be shaped and facilitated by someone who can talk about the vision for the institution and its mission, not just about technological innovations per se. Such a leader uses every opportunity possible to share the *why* of the plan so that others understand the bigger picture. The ability to explain what a specific decision or act leads to is often the defining element of a leadership role. Effective information resource and technology leaders tend to think broadly, and they certainly think collaboratively. The vision is based on what *we* can achieve, rather than what *I* can accomplish.

Another dimension of the challenge of articulating a vision is assuming the role of teacher, helping other senior officers of the college or university begin to articulate their own vision of the new opportunity generated by information technology and the communication opportunities that are created by this technology.

### **Aim to Make a Difference**

The head of an organizational unit is concerned about doing his or her job effectively, but for a leader that isn't enough. A leader is also committed to making a difference! An IT leader in particular needs to be driven to make change in fundamental societal and organizational structures. It is the passion for making something better that determines the immediate course of action for that leader. Making a difference is an intrinsic motivation, separate from the public acclaim or rebuke that may be associated with such efforts. It is what keeps real leaders coming back when it would be easier to take a course of much less resistance. This concept is captured succinctly in George Bernard Shaw's famous quote, “Some men see things the

way they are and ask, ‘Why?’ I dream things that never were, and ask, ‘Why not?’”

Information resource and technology leaders need to act from an ingrained set of principles that they can define for others. They cannot be satisfied with a strategic plan unless it corresponds with their fundamental principles. This value-driven approach to leadership may, at times, lead to jousting at windmills, so the leader must temper idealism with realism.

Increasingly, these leaders need to be sure that they are focusing on the big issues of high importance to the institution and to themselves personally. Often the issues they choose are controversial because all fundamental innovation by definition violates the status quo; but in the long run, these are the issues most likely to have the greatest influence on the institution. However, all of this requires careful tactical choices; it is important not to get involved in every issue that comes along, nor to fight every battle, because of the ultimate loss of credibility and the diminishing energy level that ensue.

### **Share and Accept Responsibility**

Information resource and technology leaders should help others understand that their job now includes responsibility for managing and leveraging the information and technology assets that fall within their purview. It is no longer acceptable that all IT-related issues be relegated to the chief information officer, chief technology officer, dean of libraries, or whomever the institution has made responsible for information resources and technology. Information technology challenges need to be integrated into the portfolio of all upper-level managers in a college or university, but surely this requires education, tutelage, and encouragement. Occasionally, it means that the leader accepts responsibility for an effort that is not spelled out as part of a job description or even remotely associated with an official role, just because it needs doing for the betterment of the institution. Though there is sometimes danger in that such behavior might be perceived as stepping out of line, more often it

is seen as demonstrating commitment to institutional betterment and being a partner in the overall enterprise.

Once a more collective ownership of responsibility is achieved, it is important for information resource and technology leaders to ensure the success of an effort by rallying support and inspiring other members of the community to get behind it. This is just another element in the overall effort to educate and persuade the community to buy into the vision, the objectives, and the rationale for information technology investment.

### **Understand Yourself**

The information resource and technology leader is likely to work with disparate groups on campus. Making change in the institution requires working in a number of ways with constituencies. The ability to work effectively with many groups requires deep personal understanding of both style and approach. It is understanding of one's own style and strengths that makes it possible for the IT leader to work effectively under varying circumstances.

The effective leader understands that each style has advantages and disadvantages. Those who excel at bringing disparate groups together may lead in a quiet way, while others may exercise influence through motivational speeches or finely crafted essays. Some are able to translate the highly specialized language of a technical and academic discipline into general language that is readily adopted by funders and legislators. The most effective leaders know their strengths and surround themselves with others who complement those strengths. The leader understands his or her humanity and effect on other people and therefore acknowledges bias and filtering in discussing problems with others who may see things differently.

### **Focus on Multiple Constituencies**

In assuming any management position, it is important to understand that the position is defined by three sets of roles and relationships: with one's superior, subordinates, and peers. Each individual or constituency

has expectations and needs that must be met, and how heavily the manager responds to one or another of these expectations can define—or essentially redefine—the position. Everyone has encountered a person who sucks up to the boss, giving the superior all of the attention and deference in order to ingratiate himself or herself. An effective leader, however, communicates with all of the people with whom she or he interacts with equal respect and care. Too many people believe they can get away with treating the boss well while showing disrespect to others; ultimately they all seem to get caught in this shortsighted approach. Information resource and technology leaders must understand that relationships to the boss, to subordinates, and to peers are all important for institutional success, and the successful leader does not neglect any one of these areas. This approach is perhaps nothing more than an organizational equivalent of the golden rule, but all too many managers (not to be confused with true leaders) fail to comprehend this concept. A leader who has credibility and respect from all sectors of the community can invariably be found to treat all parties in this respectful, communicative, and engaging manner.

### **Take Risks**

Leadership in the new digital environment, almost by definition, means working in a highly uncertain and dynamic environment. There are no safe and secure routes to pursue while practicing leadership. This is an environment in which a leader *must* take risks. This does not imply being careless or foolhardy, but it does mean being willing to chart a course or route that has not been thoroughly tested, rather than relying on one that is comfortable or has always worked in the past. In an environment where technology is everywhere, following established practice is a luxury that leaders can rarely afford. However, it is important for information resource and technology leaders to be able to articulate the risk, the alternatives, and the consequences of inaction as they define a direction for the campus. To do this requires the leader to have one mana-

gerial attribute that is scarce on college and university campuses today: courage.

It is also important for leaders not only to be willing to take a risk personally but also to give those around them license to take risks. Recognizing that they are visible and that any mistakes will be quite public, leaders must establish an environment that encourages risk for important issues, providing assurance that individuals who work for and with them will not be victimized for taking risks. Leaders must establish a climate that accepts that failure is bound to occur in such an uncertain environment.

In essence, these leaders need to develop a safety net for their staff, letting them know that trying new approaches and defining new alternatives is something that is rewarded rather than punished. As described already, a key responsibility for leaders in managing information resources and technology today is to share their vision for the future with both institutional leaders and subordinates, inspiring them to have their own vision, and to take appropriate risks to achieve it.

## **Where Will We Find This New Leadership Talent?**

Just where will our colleges and universities find the talent to fill leadership positions that are so critical to accomplishing the institutional mission in the digital age? Most likely, the talent will come from a far wider array of sources than at any time in recent history. In both information technology and librarianship, the traditional career path is less defined today than in the past and possibly not relevant to producing the new kind of leadership that is called for. As already discussed, IT leadership positions now call for a generalist, but everything about the traditional career path has emphasized specialized skills as a route to advancement. Specialist skills do not mitigate against having the perspective of a generalist, but the broader viewpoint must be developed and nurtured throughout a professional career. This has important implications for mentoring within the

organization and for the professional development opportunities sought and encouraged outside the institution.

Leadership in information resources and technology increasingly requires the ability to integrate core academic functions with information support and services; consequently, the people filling these positions should have a clear view and be a partner in the educational enterprise. For this reason, we are seeing, and are likely to see more, faculty assuming top leadership positions in information resources and technology. Most of all, however, we must not just seek alternative venues in which to find such leaders; we must actively and consciously try to develop leaders by mentoring the next generation and helping to anticipate the burgeoning need for such talent.

It is this broader institutional perspective and awareness of the influences on the entire higher education enterprise that are much of the focus of the Frye Leadership Institute sponsored by EDUCAUSE, the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), and Emory University. (More information about this program can be found at [www.frye.org](http://www.frye.org).) We believe this effort is an important element in meeting the need for more leaders in this arena, but the current—not to mention anticipated—demand far exceeds the supply, as illustrated by the number of failed searches for CIOs and librarians with the new leadership mind-set and skills through all sectors of the higher education community. It is necessary for the current generation of leaders to tackle more aggressively the challenges of mentoring and preparing a new generation of leaders. This is extremely difficult when facing relentless and sometimes overwhelming challenges; nonetheless this must become a priority for the long-term health of our institutions.

## Conclusion

Institutional change will come through the dedicated efforts and hard work of committed leaders. Colleges and universities cannot expect the new generation of leaders to wait patiently for their turn.

The institution must support education and training programs that help talented younger staff find their leadership *métier*. Programs such as the Frye Leadership Institute help, but one person taking part in a program—even if it is very good—is not enough to create a climate of change on a campus. An environment that encourages experimentation, rewards innovation, and tolerates mistakes is necessary for the young manager to move into a leadership role.

## References

- Bennis, W. *Why Leaders Can't Lead: The Unconscious Conspiracy Continues*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989.
- Pings, C. "Foreword." In B. L. Hawkins and P. Battin (eds.), *The Mirage of Continuity: Reconfiguring Academic Information Resources for the 21st Century*. Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources and American Association of Universities, 1998.