

DISCUSSION

Reappointment and tenure may be one of the richest opportunities for the nuances of collegiality, disciplinary loyalty, and faculty culture to be expressed. While most reappointment, promotion, and tenure processes proceed without the difficulties and priority conflicts illustrated in this case, it is not unusual for political and personal clashes to be played out among faculty. The AAUP has a rich collection of guidelines on tenure, self-governance, and collegiality that can inform faculty and administrators on helpful ways to shape reappointment, promotion, and tenure procedures. Solid procedures assuring fairness and equitable procedures can help assure that reappointment, promotion, and tenure procedures are not overly defined by those challenges.

Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Resources

- American Association of University Professors. (1968). *Statement on faculty workload with interpretive comments*. Washington, DC: Author.
- American Association of University Professors. (1990). *Statement of principles on academic freedom and tenure with 1970 interpretive comments*. Washington, DC: Author.
- American Association of University Professors. (2009). *Conversion of appointments to the tenure track*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Chait, R. P. (Ed.) (2002). *The questions of tenure*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Plater, W. M. (2008, July-August). The twenty-first-century professoriate: We need a new vision if we want to create a positive future for the faculty. *Academe*.
- Stanley, C. A. (2006). Coloring the academic landscape: Faculty of color breaking the silence in predominantly white colleges and universities. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(4), 701-736.
- Tierney, W. (1998). Tenure is dead. Long live tenure. In W. Tierney (Ed.), *The responsive university: Restructuring for high performance* (pp. 38-61). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

6

POLITICAL

This place is more like a political jungle, alive and screaming, than a rigid, quiet bureaucracy. (Baldrige, 1971b, p. 9)

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of any cultural beliefs about the rationality or serenity of college campuses, higher education history including the social unrest of the 1960s, intense public scrutiny of the 1990s, and economic crisis of the early 21st century shapes these organizations as contested political ground composed of stakeholders, power elites, conflicting priorities, and strategic maneuvering.

The birth of the political perspective in higher education is unmistakably identified with the writings of J. Victor Baldrige from the early 1970s. Baldrige observed that the widely accepted perspectives of bureaucracy and collegiums did not adequately explain university administration or faculty life (1971c): "we see neither the rigid, formal aspects of bureaucracy nor the calm, consensus-directed elements of an academic collegium" (pp. 19-20). The lack of fit in the bureaucratic and collegial perspectives was particularly evident regarding organizational change. Higher education organizational theorists suggested that the political perspective might better explain higher education organizations than other choices available (Baldrige et al., 1978). Although considered a taboo subject, Baldrige opened a realistic discussion of the political nature of higher education including the strengths this perspective brings to an analysis of higher education institutions.

SOCIOLOGY AS A FOUNDATION FOR THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

In any organization, relationships are key to understanding behavior, structure, and interactions. At its basic level, the political perspective is about relationships because this perspective accounts for interactions, connections, and exchanges among people,

Table 6.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Sociological Theoretical Foundation

Strengths	Weaknesses
Assists administrators and faculty to understand a systems approach to organizations.	Over-explains group behavior while it under-explains individual behavior.
Explains interconnections among different campus groups and constituencies.	Inadequately accounts for organizational structures.
Provides a potent analysis of power.	Views power struggles as a central component of organizational life.
Draws connections among coalitions, interest groups, and power elites.	Places an emphasis on competition at the expense of adequate analysis of cooperation.

organizational levels, and institutional capital. Viewing an organization as an interacting set of relationships embraces the view of leadership advanced by Rost (1993): "Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 102; emphasis in original). In this chapter, the sociological theoretical perspective is used to consider the interacting relationships within higher education institutions. As with any theoretical perspective, the sociological one brings strengths and weaknesses to bear on its use as a point of analysis (see Table 6.1).

METAPHOR

Though apt in many ways, the jungle metaphor, commonly used to describe political organizations, overemphasizes the negative and underemphasizes the positive aspects of the political perspective. If the negative side of political organizations—the power plays, gamesmanship, and deal making—is the primary consideration, political organizations are seen as competitive, treacherous, and suitable only for the most fit. The positive side of the political perspective—the richness of constituent involvement, potential for goal achievement, and possibility of change through policy making—go unremarked when institutions are pictured as environments teeming with danger and unpredictability. Without a view that embraces both the positive and negative aspects of politics in organizations, the negative features of the perspective (e.g., rivalry, backstabbing, and competing goals) overpower the positive features (e.g., attention cues, relationship building, and goal clarification).

Knowledge about colleges and universities as political organizations assists administrators, faculty, and students to achieve their goals in an environment containing conflict, interest groups, and divergent points of view. The ideas presented in this chapter can help administrators, faculty, and students recognize when they already are or are becoming embroiled in a political situation, particularly one they would rather avoid. "The political metaphor encourages us to recognize how and why the organizational actor is a political actor and to understand the political significance of the patterns of meaning" (Morgan, 2006, p. 205). With knowledge about the political perspective, institutional members can choose to participate, take action to cope with the situation, or stay out of the way.

STRUCTURE

Viewing relationships among individuals as an organizing principle, Morgan (2006) stated: "the political metaphor encourages us to see organizations as loose networks of people with divergent interests who gather together for the sake of expediency" (p. 161). The dynamics and relationships among people are areas where the political perspective is most explanatory and insightful. Coalitions form and dissolve, depending on the issue, task, or conflict; bedfellows are exchanged, subject to the goal; and conflict ebbs and flows with the passage of time and experience.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The political perspective has several characteristics that make this perspective unique among possible higher education organizational choices. These features include conflict as normal, interest groups and coalitions, inactivity prevails, fluid participation, and attention cues. Particularly applicable during times of intense change, a constant situation for higher education institutions, the political perspective enables insights into policymaking, change, and strategy.

Conflict as Normal

From the political perspective, conflict is natural and to be expected in organizations such as higher education institutions that are dynamic and complex (Baldrige, 1971b). Whether explicit or implicit, conflict is always present in organizations. Conflict identifies allies, empowers underrepresented groups, and motivates organizational members. "Conflict may be personal, interpersonal, or between rival groups or coalitions. It may be built into organizational structures, roles, attitudes, and stereotypes or arise over a scarcity of resources" (Morgan, 2006, p. 163). In contrast to perspectives that view conflict as dysfunctional (Childers, 1981), conflict from a political perspective exposes institutional priorities, focuses commitment to the goals, and connects people to goal achievement.

Morgan (2006) borrowed from Thomas (1976, 1977) to discuss five styles of conflict management: collaborating, compromising, accommodating, avoiding, and competing. Collaborators seek win-win situations and use this style when learning, integration, and relationship building is necessary to meet a goal. Negotiation is at the heart of collaboration and involves exchanges of favors, services, or future commitment. *Compromise* is an often-used style and involves give and take. Organizational members *accommodate* when they submit or comply. This approach may alleviate the conflict in the short term, but does not prevent it from arising later. Higher education administrators and faculty use *avoidance* when they wait out or ignore conflicts. Attention can be deflected to other priorities in the institution. Over time, the conflict may fade or it may become a lingering and tolerated aspect of organizational life. This approach is useful when the conflict is trivial and one must pick one's battles. *Competing*, because it creates win-lose situations, is to be avoided completely or perhaps used judiciously in higher education settings. This approach has its usefulness during emergencies or circumstances when immediate action is needed but there are always adverse consequences with this approach to managing conflict. Because "conflict arises whenever interests collide" (Morgan, 2006, p. 163), a discussion of interest groups can aid one's understanding of conflict.

Interest Groups and Coalitions

A major characteristic of higher education organizations and systems is the presence of stakeholders. Whether directly associated with the institution (e.g., faculty, alumni, parents) or not (e.g., neighbors, employers, state legislators, government officials), many have an interest in the actions and decisions of colleges and universities. Whether demanding lower tuition, increased teaching of employable skills for corporations, or provision of services to local communities, stakeholders lobby to exert their influence on higher education institutions.

These groups articulate their interests in many different ways, bringing pressure to bear on the decision-making process from any number of angles, and using power and force whenever it is available and necessary. Once articulated, power and influence go through a complex process until policies are shaped, reshaped, and forged from the competing claims of multiple groups. (Baldrige, 1971a, p. 8)

While coalitions enable those with limited power to increase their influence, these groups can also form among those who already have sufficient positional or institutional power. Closely related to the concept of interest groups, these groups are called power elites. Powerful organizational players can combine and increase their power base by joining forces. When interest groups form among those at the top of the hierarchy (e.g., presidential cabinet members) or those with power (e.g., senior faculty), they become power elites.

While a power elite such as the president's staff is responsible for a wide range of major decisions (Baldrige, 1971b), no one group makes *all* the decisions *all* the time. Instead, several fluid and ever-changing groups determine the direction of college or university life. In higher education, the presence of faculty with professional expertise, student affairs professionals with a strong influence on student life, and trustees with fiduciary and planning responsibilities means that several power elites operate simultaneously. Faculty control the curriculum, the president and vice presidents make key budget decisions, and trustees approve or disapprove the strategic direction of the institution.

Inactivity Prevails

Although the decision-making ability of interest groups and power elites is constrained, disinterest by the majority of organizational members means that the majority of decisions are left to interest groups and power elites. The sentiment, "for most people most of the time ... they allow administrators to run the show" (Baldrige et al., 1978, p. 35), may be more true today than when this statement was first written. Academic and administrative activities have increased significantly with the advent of technology, raised expectations by parents and students, and accountability by state and federal governments. This applies to committee work, governance leadership, and service activities. Whether by preference or circumstance, many members prefer not to be involved, lack the interest to serve on campus-wide groups, are without the power to influence, or do not have access to the decision making processes impacting the organization as a whole. This detached stance is a particular preference of faculty (Baldrige et al., 1978) who see their primary roles as teaching, research, and service. From their point of view, management, decision making, and policy determination are the purviews of administrators. This inactive stance changes when and if the decisions made have a direct impact on or

negatively affect faculty activities. In that case, the norms of inactivity shift to the collegial expectation of consultation and discussion.

Fluid Participation

Fluid participation is closely related to the political organization characteristic that inactivity prevails. The political perspective assumes that organizational participants will "move in and out of the decision-making process" (Baldrige et al., 1978, p. 35). Unlike bureaucratic processes that assume fixed job responsibilities and procedures, decision making from a political perspective occurs in fits and starts. If expectations are not met, previously uninvolved actors may suddenly become politically active. Seen from a political perspective, it is not unusual for organizational members to expect their opinion on an issue to be considered; even on an issue previously and thoroughly vetted. Higher education's democratic practices and the tradition of consultation built into faculty culture build expectations concerning access to decision making, the "right" to exercise voice, and a prerogative to intervene at any stage of the process. With fluid participation as an expectation, administrators, faculty leaders, and others must plan for an iterative and prolonged decision-making process. Newer technologies both help and exacerbate fluid participation. Anyone can build websites, send widely distributed e-mails, and write blogs that aid communication. These dynamic and accessible communications enhance democratic processes while simultaneously making the organization more politically sensitive.

Attention Cues

While the shift from inactivity to activism by faculty and students, in particular, often feels seismic, attention cues often foretell when institutional members are moving out of their inactive stance. Discussions about a vote of no confidence in the president, department chair rumblings of dissatisfaction about a dean's behavior, or student protests about campus social justice efforts, there are always advance cues to which politically astute administrators can attend. "Powerful political forces ... cause a given issue to emerge from the limbo of on-going problems and certain 'attention cues' force the political community to consider the problem" (Baldrige, 1971c, pp. 190–191). While it may be difficult to accurately predict who will attend to specific goals and when they will do so, administrators are well advised to attend to the early cues that portend political challenges.

Access to information, expectations about consultation about decisions, and ability to exercise voice are examples of privilege held by selected organizational members.

Privilege increases the odds of having things your own way, of being able to set the agenda in a social situation and determine the rules and standards and how they're applied. Privilege grants the cultural authority to make judgments about others and to have those judgments stick. It allows people to define reality and to have prevailing definitions of reality fit their experience. Privilege means being able to decide who gets taken seriously, who receives attention, who is accountable to whom and for what. (Johnson, 2008, p. 117)

Faculty possess privilege accrued from the double advantage of academic freedom and expert power. Executive leaders possess privilege emanating from their access to

HOW

information and experience with institutional roles that led them to the positions they hold. Their privilege also arises from the deference dictated by cultural mores given to those occupying upper level positions. Regardless of the dynamic of the privilege, there is no doubt that this force operates in political situations. The political perspective offers insights on why exercising privilege is common, frequently unwise, and often undemocratic.

PROCESSES IN POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Political acumen and expertise by any institutional player requires an understanding of how political organizations work. Knowledge of how power and authority interact and are expressed is particularly essential for faculty and administrators who seek to be politically astute.

Power

Power is a context-specific, relationship-oriented resource used to achieve goals and realize relationships. Power from a political perspective is dynamic, transient, and volatile. Power has been a topic of considerable speculation and discussion over the millennia, giving rise to a thought-provoking collection of quotes (see Table 6.2). If higher education is to be a force for societal transformation, power must be understood and taken into consideration as a means to achieve that goal.

Although personal style and specific situations dictate which kind of power is to be used, understanding the different forms can provide insight about the potential for organizational decisions and processes. Morgan (2006) sketched out various ways power can be expressed in organizations. Adapted for higher education organizations, expressions of power as enacted through various campus offices are outlined in Table 6.3.

Control of scarce resources is a form and source of power (Morgan, 2006). The exercise of this power is particularly effective when the resource, for example, money, is limited. But money is not the only resource and source of power. Positions, administrators' time, and space are resources available for maneuvering and acquiring power. An important resource, particularly in higher education, is knowledge. Although controlling knowledge to gain power is a less potent mechanism with the increased access to

Table 6.2 Memorable Sayings about Power

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."
Alice Walker

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating." Kofi Annan

"Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Lord Acton

The "prince who bases his [sic] power entirely on ... words, finding himself completely without other preparations, comes to ruin." Niccolò Machiavelli

"A good indignation brings out all one's powers." Ralph Waldo Emerson

"A friend in power is a friend lost." Henry Adams

Table 6.3 Power within Organizations

Autocracy "We'll do it this way."	Traditional presidents' model
Bureaucracy "We're supposed to do it this way."	Financial aid office
Technocracy "It's best to do it this way."	Registrar's office
Codetermination "Let's decide how to do it together."	Career services
Representative democracy "How do your constituents want to do it?"	Faculty senate and faculty unions
Direct democracy "How shall we do it?"	Women's Faculty Caucus

Adapted from Morgan (2006, p. 156)

information available through the Internet, gatekeepers can still gain power by controlling, shaping, or spinning information.

In the volatile climate in which higher education exists, the ability to cope with uncertainty is an important source of power. Postmodern theoretical perspectives such as critical theory, feminism, and critical race theory identify the inevitable uncertainty that exists within and outside higher education institutions. When administrators see uncertainty as opportunity rather than threat, power can increase as that person remains effective in situations where others are not. Institutional and individual reputation and the concomitant increase in power flow if situations fraught with hazards are transformed into new or renewed programs and innovative approaches.

Interpersonal power is a palatable form gained through associations and friendships. This type of power is particularly appropriate for higher education organizations, because few institutions enable lifelong friendships as completely as these organizations. Networks established in colleges and universities have always been traded for power and influence to gain jobs, work connections, and favor. The more influence one has to trade, the more power is gained. Old style associations (e.g., old boy and old girl networks) of the past have recently been supplanted with social media. These newer forms of connecting with friends and others expand people's reach that had been previously limited by time and distance. Asynchronous communication and access to global linkages are dismantling physical and temporal barriers. Ease of communication, links to friends of friends, and global connections have exponentially increased the possibilities of interpersonal alliances from which influence can be gained.

The Interrelationship of Power and Authority

Power and authority, although related concepts, are different. Authority is more formal than power and emanates from one's position (Morgan, 2006). As a result of social approval, tradition, or law, administrators possess authority to act that is defined by the position they occupy. Using authority, administrators, particularly executive leaders, can, among other responsibilities, hire and fire employees, determine budgets, and set goals. Authority is exercised in the influence of supervisors over employees and the

Chair of the Board of Trustees over the president. Although an important concept in organizational structures, higher education institutions and the people within them have significant limits on their authority. The presence of faculty governance structures, student organizations, and informal elements such as charisma and non-positional power means that no one has ultimate or limitless authority. Because the authority and ability to enact decisions is distributed across interest groups, coalitions, and power elites, power from a political perspective is limited and diffuse. Although many people assume that power is located primarily in the upper executive ranks (in other words, authority and positional power are equated), in higher education structures, "power is more diffuse, lodged with professional experts and fragmented into many departments and subdivisions" (Baldrige et al., 1978, p. 44). A college president, provost, or dean may have the authority to enact a decision, but lack the political power to make that change.

Understanding the limitations of authority and dynamics of power can help administrators avoid naiveté about their range of influence and effectiveness. Leaders are not immune from challenges to their authority and power. In addition to the issues that occur as a result of these challenges, power is distributed throughout the organization, even at levels where there is less positional authority.

Lower level organizational members have, in reality, a great amount of power ... in spite of the considerable degree of power possessed by lower level employees, these employees seldom attempt to exercise their power or to resist the instructions of their managers. (Pfeffer, 1991/2005, p. 291)

Employee strikes, faculty "work to rule" action, and student activism are ways that authority can be challenged and power exercised. Students, often erroneously viewed as powerless, express their voice and power through formal student governance organizations, collective action, and informal student activist groups.

Decision Making

Rationality is assumed to be the basis for decision making by those who believe that colleges and universities operate in orderly, methodical ways. From a political perspective, order and rationality are not assumed. Instead, it is assumed that "political constraints can seriously undermine attempts to arrive at rational decisions" (Baldrige et al., 1978, p. 36). Baldrige et al. (1978) devised a political model of decision making that assumed fluidity and complexity. Unlike the linear step-by-step procedures of the rational model, these higher education theorists believed that "decision making is likely to be diffuse, segmentalized, and decentralized" (Baldrige et al., 1978, p. 38; emphasis in original). They outlined the *why*, *who*, *how*, and *which* of decision making including the political controversy, compromises, and bargaining likely to occur within higher education institutions. The following questions can be used to assess successful ways to pursue decision making in a political climate:

1. *Why is a decision being made?* Political forces often bring the problem to someone's attention. Those political forces could be a downward shift in enrollment, the upcoming retirement of key faculty members, a president's retirement, or a host

of other issues. Because momentum and institutional procedures will carry an institution through the day-to-day decisions, it takes political pressure for larger scale decisions and change initiatives to capture the attention of administrators and faculty.

2. *Who should be making the decision?* "The right to make the decision often determines the outcome" (Baldrige et al., 1978, p. 38). Anyone can make a decision but it takes power and authority to implement it.
3. *How do you gain the advice of others?* The political model assumes that leaders will solicit input from colleagues (and foes, in some cases), gain support, and build ownership prior to making a decision. In higher education, this consultation often takes place through strategic planning committees, faculty governance bodies, and unofficial conversations.
4. *Which solutions are realistically available?* A solution may appear to be appropriate but unfeasible given the monetary, human, and time resources available. Some solutions are possible when an event, particularly a crisis, captures attention and makes a previously unpalatable decision inevitable.

The political perspective assumes that controversy, compromise, and bargaining are part of decision making. These are particularly in play when faculty are involved in the decision. Three types of faculty decision-making involvement have been identified: (a) *inactive*, employed primarily by faculty who concentrate their efforts on teaching and research; (b) *power elite*, used by senior faculty with the connections and longevity within the organization to unify other like-minded associates; and (c) *strategic*, initiated by faculty unions or other groups (e.g., college or school faculty groups) within the campus organizational structure (Baldrige et al., 1978). In general, a small group of faculty influences decision making while the majority of organizational members remains inactive and disinterested.

Internal and external stakeholder groups, including students, administrators, alumni, parents, and others, can carve out "spheres of influence" in which they make or influence decisions (Baldrige et al., 1978). In political organizations, it is the practice that groups outside a particular "sphere of influence" refrain from participating in decisions in that area. The character and range of the spheres shift depending on the environment, issue at hand, and type of campus. Administrators make decisions on a community college campus, for example, that would normally be executed by faculty at a liberal arts college. Political decision making depends on timing, finesse, and persistence. Administrators avoid curricular decision making; faculty eschew detailed budget decisions; student opinion is seldom exercised in long-term capital improvements. By establishing relationships, perfecting timing, and cultivating determination, faculty and administrators in political organizations can achieve their institutional purposes despite the inevitable setbacks and challenges.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Political Perspective

Knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses (see Table 6.4) of the political perspective can assist faculty, students, and administrators involved in higher education to more effectively make decisions, set policy, and avoid undesirable associations.

Table 6.4 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Political Perspective

Strengths	Weaknesses
Provides a powerful analysis for decision making and policy making.	Can highlight divisiveness, competition, and other negative aspects of organizational life.
Clarifies organizational vision, mission, and goals.	Can focus institutional membership on immediate rather than long-term goals.
Provides attention cues for institutional leadership.	Can redirect attention onto tangential organizational goals.
Offers alternatives to the positional view of power and authority.	Can disempower the underrepresented and those with less access to power.
Explains the dynamic of relationships across bureaucratic levels.	Can diminish morale and healthy work environments.
Builds processes for change.	Can concentrate major decision making in the hands of an elite few.

NEXT STEPS: BRINGING THE THEORY INTO CURRENT USE

Critical race theory is suggested as a contemporary application of the political model (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). This theory, first advanced in the mid-1990s in the legal studies literature, was further articulated in K-12 and higher education settings (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Patton, McEwen, Rendon, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). The theory takes political, economic, and philosophical contexts of educational settings into consideration.

Critical Race Theory

Derrick Bell, a law professor at Harvard University, first advanced critical race theory (CRT) in his book, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* (1992). The following principles define the theory, which can be used as a powerful interdisciplinary analysis and critique of the social and political contexts of educational settings.

1. Critical race theorists acknowledge that racism is normal and endemic to U.S. society. They expect to see expressions of racism and oppression throughout the institutions, including education, which make up U.S. society.
2. With recognition of the permanence of racism and its nature as a socially constructed dynamic, CRT proponents are skeptical about legal claims of neutrality, color-blindness, and objectivity. Instead, they articulate processes through which the political, economic, and social contexts, among others, are shaped by the racist dynamics early established in the United States.
3. Because racism and oppression underscore social structures, these dynamics affect the ways that group advantage and disadvantage are meted out.
4. Counterstorytelling is used as a methodology to convey the experiences of people of color and display the stark differences from the dominant master narrative.
5. An innovative and particularly useful principle in CRT is the idea of Whiteness as property. Many people view property as only applicable to tangible items. In contrast, CRT theorists articulate the ways that Whiteness can be bartered,

exchanged, and "cashed in" for other forms of capital. This could include money or more abstract forms of capital, such as social and cultural capital. Whiteness as property has particular application in educational settings where the color of one's skin can be exchanged for privilege, access to higher paying jobs, better neighborhoods, and higher quality schools; experiences that are then parlayed into additional property and capital.

6. CRT theorists seek to eliminate racism as a way to address all forms of oppression.

Although the application of CRT to higher education is nascent, Patton and her colleagues (Patton et al., 2007) offered insights into how this theory can be applied to college and university settings. They challenge the neutrality of theory used within higher education, address the way racism produces inequities including processes that render students of color invisible on college campuses, and expose the microaggressions prevalent on college campuses. (For additional information on CRT see DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matsuda et al., 1993; Patton et al., 2007; Solórzano et al., 2000).

The neutrality contested by CRT is most applicable to the political perspective through its challenge of the hypothetical unbiased political position advanced by theories and approaches with objectivity at their core. Counterstories as told by students of color and other oppressed groups on campus expose the aspects of higher education and political and social systems where inequalities and oppression exist. As opposed to possessing a "political agenda," a charge often leveled at CRT, critical theorists, and others adopting a social justice perspective to their educational work, CRT theorists discuss the ways that racism is a normal, everyday presence in U.S. society and, by implication, college campuses.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the fact that the political model has been touted as particularly relevant for higher education, the approach may be one that many find distasteful. Others may find information about the model useful as they avoid politically charged associations and situations. Morgan (2006) offered some advice about situations to avoid when considering the political model. If one views these political games with insight, the efficacy of the political model can be revealed.

Being co-opted. Dissent can be quelled by inviting the dissenters into "official" ranks. Women faculty members with legitimate complaints about inequitable salaries are appointed as department chairs; student protesters are recruited onto presidential advisory boards.

Careerism. A long-established practice in political organizations is to establish oneself on a committee or in association with a person or group to advance one's career. With knowledge of how this political game is played, decisions that are advantageous to an individual but disadvantageous to an organization can be avoided.

Gamesmanship. Some people play the political game simply for its enjoyment. For those uninterested in this approach, it is best to avoid these people and the situations in which they operate.

Turf protection. The administrative overzealous defense of resources and power within a unit is a challenge to all organizations. This turf protection is particularly a problem in higher education institutions where individual colleges and schools compete for limited resources. When administrators or faculty concentrate on local goals at the expense of institution-wide purposes, all are disadvantaged.

Freewheeling. Organizational participants who loosely apply the rules, disregard policies seeking fairness, and play by "who you know" principles rather than equity create a negative political climate. Caution must be exercised to avoid being embroiled in this political game.

The positive aspects of the political model have much to lend administrators, faculty, and students seeking to better understand higher education institutions. Knowledge of the negative aspects of this model can aid those seeking to improve the organization through more collaborative and equitable means.

Questions for Discussion

- How does coalition building between faculty and students support activism within colleges and universities?
- How can conflict be viewed as a positive force for change in higher education settings?
- How can conflict be a negative force for change?
- How can political principles be used to affect change at the Board of Trustees level of an institution?
- How can CRT be applied to the political perspective?
- What political, economic, and cultural implications need to be exposed to reveal the liberatory potential of higher education?

Recommended Readings in the Political Perspective

- Baldrige, J. V. (1971). *Power and conflict in the university*. New York: Wiley.
- Bergquist, W. H., & Pawlak, K. (2008). *Engaging the six cultures of the academy* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bruns, J. W., & Bruns, D. L. (2007). Effecting change in colleges and universities. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 1(2), 53-63.
- Hatch, M. J., & Cunliffe, A. L. (2006). *Organization theory: Modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Kezar, A. (2010). Organizational theory. In J. H. Schuh, S. R. Jones, & S. R. Harper (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (pp. 226-241). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Rhoads, R. A., & Liu, A. (2009). Globalization, social movements, and the American university: Implications for research and practice. *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, 24, 273-315.

7

CASE

Coalition Building by the Board of Trustees and the Women's Faculty Caucus

The political perspective embraces interest groups as a normal occurrence within organizations. Interest groups often coalesce into coalitions to influence decisions, affect change, and exercise power. They particularly form when people do not have sufficient power on their own, so they combine their efforts. Interest groups and coalitions are particularly useful when resources, power, and valuable institutional assets are at stake. Because coalition members have agreed to cooperate, they are a group of individuals who act and can be treated as one (Cyert & March, 1959/2005). Interest groups and coalitions enable the less powerful to exert collective power as well as express their voices in the academic and administrative processes. Through bargaining and side payments, among other approaches, coalition participants exert influence, define objectives, and facilitate decisions.

Women's faculty caucuses, coalitions of administrators of color, and voting blocs among trustees all exert political pressure within higher education organizations. Interest groups and coalitions, particularly in higher education, which simultaneously acts as a public good and an elite feature of society, enhance the democratic nature of higher education (Baldrige, 1971b). Rather than a hindrance, astute members of political organizations must find "ways ... to create order and direction among people with potentially diverse and conflicting interests" (Morgan, 2006, p. 150). When input is solicited from neighbors in advance of new construction or opportunities are created for legislators to offer feedback about new majors, research centers, and campus programs, higher education administrators are following the political perspective. The needs, wants, and opinions of internal and external stakeholders are essential to the success of campus decisions, policies, and processes.

Political action and activism on college campuses through formal and informal activities of faculty and students is a long-standing tradition in U.S. higher education. The earliest colleges saw political action regarding student life (e.g., food service), curricular (e.g., faculty advising), and nationally focused issues (e.g., antiwar demonstrations) (Miser, 1988). Student activism has significantly affected national politics including action against the war in Vietnam in the 1960s, anti-Apartheid demonstrations of the

1980s, opposition to the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, and challenges to economic injustice through the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations of 2011.

THE CASE

The following case outlines a circumstance of coalition building among a faculty group and the political action taken to manage their influence. Using the political perspective, readers can consider the characteristics of that organizational approach including power, constituencies, attention cues, decision making, interest groups, and power elites.

Institutional Context

Countryside State University (a pseudonym), a research-intensive university with 2,000 faculty members, has long struggled to create gender equity among its employees. Despite efforts to recruit high quality women from the best programs in the country, the percentage of women on the faculty is 30%. This percentage lags nearly 20% behind the national average of 47% for all higher education institutional types (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2010).

Approximately 200 years old, Countryside is a land grant institution with a mix of professional and liberal arts colleges and schools with the former representing among the finest programs at the institution. The engineering school is particularly strong, an academic reputation that increases the male dominated nature of the institution. The paternalistic nature of the institution is further heightened by the recruitment of executive leaders from the medical school. There are few women administrators in that particular school, a fact not lost on women faculty aspiring to administrative positions. The practice of privileging males for leadership positions brings with it the tendency toward leadership styles that value expert authority and power, top-down decision making, and hard-hitting approaches to university business.

The Women's Faculty Caucus

The Women's Faculty Caucus, a group that has existed at Countryside State for 10 years, includes all full-time female faculty as its members. Concerned about diversity, equity, and social justice on campus, several senior women faculty established the Caucus to address these issues. Four or five women faculty serve on an organizing board, a loosely formed group that manages the Caucus's business. Membership on the board is open to anyone willing and available to come to meetings and join the discussion. The Women's Faculty Caucus was purposely organized with an informal structure including an absence of official recognition. The group lacks a budget, bylaws, or formal structure. It does not answer to any university administrative office or group. In this way, the Caucus is free to operate without the institutional parameters that define governance groups and administrative entities. The group was organized without the burden of a bureaucratic structure, ongoing agenda, or weighty overhead. There is no unwieldy administrative structure needing energy and resources to maintain it.

Questions to Consider

- How does the lack of formal structure enable the political success of the Women's Faculty Caucus?
- What is gained from a lack of formal structure?
- What is lost from a lack of formal structure?
- In what ways might the Women's Faculty Caucus be considered a power elite?

Regularly scheduled meetings of the Caucus are rare. Periodic meetings, often over lunch, are occasionally called when an issue presents itself. Anyone in the Caucus, essentially any female faculty member, could call a meeting of the board or Caucus. Despite the lack of organizing meetings, the interests and goals of the Caucus are clear: to promote diversity, equity, and social justice within the university's faculty and institution as a whole. Although by definition the Caucus's membership is made up of women, its equity and social justice mission extends to faculty of color, including men.

The Caucus has had several notable successes in its 10 years of existence. Activism by Caucus members has included letters to the president, provost, and executive officers signed by the most senior women on campus. Meetings with university officials outlining desired diversity efforts have resulted in several equal opportunity hires. Pressure exerted through motions to the Faculty Senate helped pass a diversity course requirement. At the urging of the Caucus, the institutional research office conducted two surveys to assess salary equity among women, faculty of color, and men on campus. They established a faculty mentoring program managed through the provost's office, an administrative office that, at the urging of the Caucus, held exit interviews for all departing women faculty and faculty of color. The Caucus successfully lobbied for periodic reviews of deans and vice presidents. They long advocated for family-friendly policies including family leave procedures and probationary (i.e., tenure) timeline extensions for family circumstances. Through e-mail communication that endorsed university and faculty senate committee nominees, Caucus members successfully supported female and feminist-oriented male candidates for faculty senate positions, including those of president and vice president. They endorsed like-minded candidates on college and school tenure/promotion and curriculum committees. An additional notable success of the Caucus was its campaign to mount a vote of no confidence in the president through a motion at the Faculty Senate. Although unsuccessful, this action precipitated the departure of two university officers, the former president and provost. These two officers were widely viewed as having taken inadequate action toward diversifying the faculty and creating equity throughout the institution. Through these actions, the Caucus affected significant change at the governance level of the university.

Questions to Consider

- What is the role of faculty caucuses and what political mechanisms can they use to effect change?
- How can other groups on campus (e.g., students, faculty of color organizations, faculty senates) form coalitions with caucus groups to effect change within institutions?

- How do academic freedom and tenure impact the role that faculty play in institutional activism?
- What power dynamics are exercised by groups such as the Women's Faculty Caucus?

Characters

Dr. Beth Deere: At the time of the Women's Faculty Caucus formation, Dr. Deere, a psychology professor, had worked at the university for 15 years. She had tenure and the rank of full professor. A political activist by nature, Dr. Deere had a keen sense of the power of political action and the strength of a well-formed strategy. She was not afraid of conflict and believed that struggle was one of the only ways that change was effected at traditional institutions such as universities.

Spurred on by the realization that the university was not sufficiently attentive to diversity and social justice, Dr. Deere organized the Women's Faculty Caucus. She felt that collective action was an effective way to address these issues. The informally appointed "head" of the organization, Dr. Deere had neither the title nor the legitimate authority emanating from an official position. Notwithstanding the lack of these bureaucratic trappings, Dr. Deere had substantial political power. She had the charisma to persuade small and large groups. She skillfully devised a strategy for the group that included dedication to a singular mission and avoided being distracted by issues that were not central to diversity and social justice. Her longevity at the institution provided a historical context and the understanding that even if the Caucus was not active for months or years, they could be called together through a few e-mails. In this way, the political action would pick up where it had previously left off.

The Women's Faculty Caucus Organizing Board: The organizing board of the Women's Faculty Caucus was a loosely collected group of five female faculty. Although predominantly from the College of Liberal Arts, there were female faculty from engineering, education, and social work who occasionally joined the board. The Caucus organizing board represented a wide range of women faculty across the university. Meeting every few months when the occasion called, meetings could be organized and run by any member of the board and, for that matter, any member of the Women's Faculty Caucus. In essence, any female faculty member with an issue could call a meeting of the organizing board.

The Women's Faculty Caucus as an interest group had issues to which they were committed. These included diversity within the faculty, pay equity for female faculty, and preservation of the academic core. The group felt that the recent increase in what they called "administrative bloat" put diversity and equity issues at risk. The increased salaries at the executive level increased the difference between the highest and lowest paid members of the institution and concentrated resources at the top of the bureaucratic hierarchy. The increase in administrative positions was accompanied by a concomitant decrease in the number of new tenure track lines available throughout the institution. Caucus organizing board members felt strongly that one of the ways to fight for diversity within the institution was to combat administrative bloat.

Dr. Thomas Urick President: Dr. Urick had been president of Countryside State University for 7 years. He was hired and arrived at the university shortly after the resignation of

the previous president. That president, Dr. Bogue, was the subject of a no confidence vote organized by the Faculty Women's Caucus. President Urick was therefore acutely aware of the power of the Caucus. Respecting this influence, he agreed to meet with Caucus members throughout his tenure as president. He did, however, limit the meetings to once a semester. More than that would imply that he was beholden to them for political approval and favor. While Urick was respectful of the Caucus's power and influence, he was puzzled by their organizational structure. He was accustomed to bureaucratic structures, particularly ones that reported to him. Through these structures, he communicated his vision, administratively gathered support for that vision, and managed efforts to achieve his goals. He was adept at organizing efforts using executive power toward the attainment of his vision and could not understand how a group operated without someone in charge. The president shared a set of interests in common with his executives, a group that formed a power elite on campus. They worked to maintain good relations with and support of the Board of Trustees, gain political support among institutional players, maximize their own and their close colleagues' salaries as a symbolic gesture of their worth, enhance the reputation of the institution through athletic championships, and exercise legitimate power to achieve the president's vision.

Urlick had recently read an article that outlined five styles of conflict management: collaborating, compromising, accommodating, avoiding, and competing (Morgan, 2006). He was most comfortable with avoiding or competing. As a former business faculty member and dean, he could collaborate and compromise but preferred a more commanding approach. Urick was a decisive leader who liked to issue orders. The collaborative approach of the Women's Faculty Caucus was a mystery to him. How could anyone make decisions or achieve their vision if you had to consult with everyone first? The episodic nature of the Caucus's action particularly puzzled him. Each time he thought the Caucus had disbanded, he heard rumblings of its actions again. To this, he often thought, "here we go again."

Dr. Scott Lang: Dr. Lang had been the Chief of Staff through three presidencies at Countryside State University. He was extremely adept at his job and knew that his role was to minimize the political fall-out inherent in institutions like Countryside. He knew that he worked for the President and he protected Urick at all costs. Throughout his 12-year tenure at the institution, Lang had gained considerable political clout. He was a familiar face at Board of Trustees meetings. He knew how change could be effected—and stopped. Although Urick wanted to bring his administrative assistant from his previous institution, the chair of the Board of Trustees had insisted that Lang remain on as Chief of Staff. The chair could not imagine how Urick would be successful without Lang as his right hand man.

Lang's primary interests were the president's, whoever that person was at that moment in time. His secondary interests were personal and professional survival in the political climate of the university. He knew that university politics could be cutthroat and he was determined not to be a casualty of those machinations. He had survived two failed presidents and was determined to influence the success of the current president and survive that president's tenure if the success strategy failed.

Dr. Robert Bogue: Dr. Bogue was the president of Countryside State preceding Urick. The trustees had removed him and his provost after a failed vote of no confidence by

the Faculty Senate. Currently on the history faculty, Bogue had returned to teach and conduct his research after a yearlong administrative leave. Bogue had used a collaborative style as president which some claimed was the downfall of his presidency. The chair of the Board of Trustees, in particular, saw Bogue's style as weak and indecisive. After 3 years with lackluster progress on recruitment gains, the vote of no confidence, failed to not, gave the chair of the Board a good excuse to ask for Bogue's resignation.

Bogue's interests had been to increase participation in the university governance bodies, create commissions that advised him on and distanced him from pressing university issues such as diversity and social justice, and to keep executive positions at a minimum to maintain the academic core.

Mr. John Rogers, Chair, Board of Trustees: Mr. Rogers, a lawyer in the local community and alumnus of the institution, was very proud of his work as a trustee. With the credibility of a governor-appointed position and knowledge gained through 10 years of experience on the board, he was very confident that the institution was on the right track. As chair of the presidential search committee that hired Urick, Rogers sought and hired a president whom he felt would provide the tough leadership the institution needed. The Board of Trustees had struggled through 10 years of two failed presidents. They were particularly displeased with the last president's collaborative leadership style, which betrayed lack of strength. Bogue had expended excess energy and resources on diversity hiring; energy that Rogers felt should have been expended on a strategic budget and long-range plan for the institution.

When the trustees were deliberating about how to dismiss Bogue, Rogers heard of the Women Faculty Caucus's plans to call a vote of no confidence. Although the Caucus's action provided trustees with the momentum to urge the resignation of President Bogue, Rogers was wary of the group. He did not want the Caucus to learn that their action had exerted any influence on the board. In Rogers's mind, Bogue and Urick could not be more different. Urick had a tough leadership style, exerted direction during critical decision making, and possessed all the qualities that one desires in an executive leader. Rogers had no desire to see a group of women, a minority of the faculty, take down the current president, Urick, in whom he had so much confidence. Therefore, the overlapping goal to remove Bogue was never openly discussed. Rogers felt that it would be inappropriate for his board to share goals with a radical group of female faculty. He also knew that participation in such groups as the Women's Faculty Caucus ebbed and flowed. If he, the board, and the president could wait the women out, their interest would, most likely, wane over time.

Rogers represents the interests of the Board of Trustees, a power elite at Countryside State University. Their interests are to maintain the legitimate power of the president, ensure the success of President Urick (at nearly any cost), uphold their fiduciary responsibility, and hire and retain the highest quality executive leaders to manage the institution. The board was in agreement that high salaries and a well-constructed package of incentives were necessary to attract the highest quality executive leaders.

Questions to Consider

- What kind of power does the Women's Faculty Caucus exercise?
- What kind of power does President Bogue exercise? President Urick?

- How is influence exerted through power elite groups such as the Board of Trustees?
- What styles of conflict management are effective among the various interest groups and administrative leaders?

Organizing Against Administrative Bloat

Typical of coalitions in politically oriented institutions, the Women's Faculty Caucus had been inactive for 18 months. After this relatively long period of inactivity, the organizing board met upon hearing concerns from women faculty about the level of administrative bloat at the institution. Countryside State University had traditionally operated from a "lean and mean" perspective with executive level costs historically held at modest levels. At the end of President Bogue's presidency, the president and provost offices shared a single executive assistant. There were only three vice presidents at the institution and they each had one associate vice president per office. Costs were contained and money was then invested in the academic mission.

With the hiring of President Urick, the mean and lean philosophy was replaced with a corporatization approach. Using this new philosophy, institutional leaders felt that executive staff assistants could be hired to manage many executive functions previously managed by a few administrative assistants. The deans of the colleges and schools followed suit by hiring chiefs of staffs within their areas. These newly established administrative positions were filled with highly qualified (e.g., doctorate holding) and liberally paid staff assistants.

The Women's Faculty Caucus saw the spread of administrative bloat as evidence of a negative effort to use corporate approaches to manage the institution. The provost's staff grew from one vice provost to four. The legal council's office expanded from two to six lawyers with a number of legal firms on retainer. Vice presidents grew from three to eight in number. Two colleges were split resulting in the hiring of an additional dean, bringing the total number of deans to 10. The Women's Faculty Caucus viewed these developments as a shift in philosophy away from unqualified support of the academic core to a corporate view of highly paid executives with complicated administrative support structures.

Questions to Consider:

- What organizational perspectives can help faculty understand the increase in the number of administrative positions needed to support institutional activities?
- What trends in higher education have resulted in an increased number of administrative positions?
- What attention cues should the president be attending to?
- What conflicting values in organizational perspectives (e.g., collegial and political) could explain the difference in point of view regarding the increased need for administrative positions?

In addition to the administrative bloat, the Caucus felt that excessive resources were being invested in nonacademically based student amenities (e.g., cable television in the residence halls, a new athletic facility with private exercise and weight facilities for athletes, a renovated student union, 24-hour food service). While the Women's Faculty Caucus understood the recruitment driven need for amenities to attract new students,

they did not feel that these should be provided at the expense of a high quality academic mission. Investment in the academic mission must come first with nonacademic amenities following that initial investment. Dr. Deere, as the informal head of the Women's Faculty Caucus, had several conversations with female faculty who had concerns about the corporatization of the institution. They expressed their dismay at the deflection of resources away from the academic core and toward the executive salaries and student amenities.

Meeting with the President

Dr. Deere, the Women's Faculty Caucus organizing board, and four senior women faculty were highly engaged in the weeks leading to the fall Board of Trustees meeting. Devising a strategy for political action, this group (who privately named themselves the Anti-Administrative Bloat Committee) mounted a campaign to communicate their concern to the Board of Trustees about the rising levels of administrative staff and their accompanying salaries. Their first step was to meet with the president to express their concern to him about the trend he was pursuing. Following this meeting, which they did not expect to be satisfactory, they would meet with the Student Government Association to gain their support. Their next action would be a letter to the chair of the Board of Trustees. This letter would request time on the upcoming meeting agenda to discuss pay equity, lagging diversity among administrators and faculty within the institution, and administrative bloat. The women were particularly concerned about the lack of racial diversity within the executive leadership ranks at Countryside State. They did not expect their request to be honored by the board. Understanding that conflict is normal in political organizations such as the university, their next move would be to stage a protest at the Board of Trustees meeting, the only one in the annual schedule that was held on campus.

Upon entering the office for the meeting with the Women's Faculty Caucus, President Urick immediately asked, "Who's in charge of this group?" The women answered, "We all are." The president was clearly puzzled by this response and said, "You mean there is no one in charge here?" He turned to Dr. Deere and said, "I understand you are in charge" to which she responded, "Actually, I'm not. We all run the group together." Veterans of the Caucus had earlier explained to other organizing board members that over the 7 years of Urick's presidency, they had several meetings where he expressed dismay at the informal and collaborative structure of the Caucus. Each meeting with him started with the same question, "Who is in charge?" This was the case despite the fact that they gave him the same answer each time: "We all are." President Urick then said, "Surely there must be someone who calls the meetings and manages the group?" A different woman from the first responder said, "No, we all do that." President Urick decided that since he had not gotten his answer that they should move on. He addressed his questions to Dr. Deere who he knew had the most longevity with the group, was a senior professor, and a former department chair. He assumed that she would be most able to understand the administrative structure and needs of the institution.

Questions to Consider

- What are differences in the style of the president and that of the Women's Faculty Caucus?

- What political practices does the Women's Faculty Caucus have at its disposal?
- What political practices does President Urick have at his disposal?
- What are ways that the president could "hear" the perspective of the Women's Faculty Caucus?
- What are ways that the Women's Faculty Caucus could "hear" the perspective of the president?

The meeting with the president went as the Caucus members expected. The women knew that the meeting was pro forma and would not result in any tangible results. Caucus members viewed the meeting as a step to put the president on notice that they were concerned with his hiring practices, and more fundamentally, his inaction regarding hiring a diverse faculty and staff. Their strategy was aimed at the Board of Trustees more so than the president. The president was not sympathetic to their cause, nor did he understand their structure or ways of operating. As a political caucus, their ways of operating differed from the managerial style that the president was accustomed to using. Though met with polite conversation, the women did not feel that their perspective was heard. This was particularly the case because the President had invited his chief of staff, Dr. Scott Lang, to sit in on the meeting with the Caucus. The women were amazed that the President had missed the symbolism of including the chief of staff at a meeting during which increasing administrative bloat was the topic of concern. The women interpreted this action as a sign that the highly paid executive staff member was tasked with managing the actions of the Caucus.

Over the 10 years of the Women's Faculty Caucus existence, presidents and deans had attempted to co-opt the group. Because the women faculty understood the political nature of higher education, members knew that any connection to a formal administrative structure would leave them beholden to the entity that granted them the privilege of a budget or administrative oversight. In this way, the Caucus women understood that they gained more power by operating outside the structure. Instead, they used their political and informal power to effect institutional change. This approach meant that this stance, though congruent with their political strategy and collaborative structure, came at a cost. Lacking a budget, the group solicited sponsorship from sympathetic deans, academic programs (e.g., women's studies), and departments (e.g., The Women's Center). They recognized the contradiction in their refusal to exist within the administrative structure and their simultaneous use of institutional resources. Although these contradictions existed, they were ones the Women's Faculty Caucus felt they could live with.

Meeting With the Student Government Senate

Following their opening salvo to the president, the Women's Faculty Caucus met with the Student Government Senate. The purpose of the meeting was to present a motion for the student group to support the request to the Board of Trustees to reduce administrative bloat at the institution. Prior to their meeting with the senators, the Women's Faculty Caucus committee met with the executive officers of the student government and felt they had solid support for their motion. They felt particular congruence with the students about keeping tuition costs as low as possible and maintaining the academic core. Based on the support expressed by the executive officers, the Women's Faculty Caucus members were surprised by the vehement resistance of the student government

senators regarding their letter to the Board of Trustees. Although a minority, several student government senators voiced agreement with the Board of Trustees that faculty were overpaid for the amount of work that they performed in the institution. These senators were particularly concerned about the low quality of academic advising and lack of office hours held by many faculty. One senator felt that their resistance to the Caucus's request was a statement against faculty calls for increased salaries. They saw the calls for a decreased number of administrators on campus to be a ploy to increase faculty salaries.

Questions to Consider

- How can the Women's Faculty Caucus form a coalition with the Student Government Senate regarding their efforts to reduce administrative bloat?
- What attention cues could the Women's Faculty Caucus members have noticed? How might these been used to gauge the climate of the Senate?
- Lacking a coalition with the students, what other groups might the Women's Faculty Caucus approach?

Demoralized by their lack of success with the student government senators, the Women's Faculty Caucus committee members regrouped over a brown bag lunch. Because she knew that even the best laid strategy often went awry, Dr. Deere did her best to energize the group about the next steps in their strategy. She emphasized the successes gained with the Student Government Executive Committee. They decided that one person should talk to the president of the Student Government Association who they felt had supported their efforts. Although they had not received a positive vote concerning the motion they carried to the Student Government Senate, the support from the student government president and her executive officers could be useful in their efforts to decrease administrative bloat. A meeting between Dr. Deere and the student government president was held with disappointing results. Given the senators' vote, the student government president stated that she was required to abide by the vote of her constituency. While she agreed to informally talk to President Urick and members of the Board of Trustees, she would not take a public stance that contradicted the vote of the body over which she presided.

Letter to the Board of Trustees

Dr. Deere and her Faculty Caucus colleagues understood the strong support that President Urick had from the Board of Trustees. Despite this support, Caucus members felt that they must voice their concerns about the present direction of the institution. They felt that they could make their case if the Board of Trustees was convinced of the dire fiscal consequences of increasing administrative bloat. While this was a Caucus concern, it was not the primary one. Their first concern was the inattention to diversity and the erosion of the academic core. Through their discussions, they strategized that using arguments about diversity or academic core erosion would not persuade the board. This board had previously voiced disdain for faculty whom they saw as privileged members of the academy with limited workweeks and long vacations. They had previously voiced their opinion that faculty taught dated material out of step with the needs of today's business world. In their minds, faculty were anachronistic societal members who failed to understand the current state of U.S. higher education.

The Caucus knew they would never be granted a face-to-face meeting with the board chair or assigned time on the board's agenda. Because the board had lived through disruptions in their meetings by faculty and students, they had adopted a policy of tightly controlled meetings. Agenda items were set months in advance by the board executive committee. Speakers before the board were approved in advance and placed on a list by the president's office.

With the realities of how political systems worked within higher education, the Women's Faculty Caucus members composed a letter, which they sent to the chair of the Board of Trustees. Because they felt that staying within the sanctioned communication channels of the institution would yield the best results, they forwarded their letter to the institutional e-mail set up for the trustees. The letter outlined the issues as discussed with President Urick and student government officers and senators. The women felt they made a strong case against administrative bloat and a convincing argument about why the current institutional track disadvantaged the academic core and institutional reputation. Weeks after their letter was forwarded to the trustees e-mail address, the Caucus had received no response. They continued to meet and strategize ways for their message to get out to the board and others with power and influence in the institution. They knew that their effort would extend over the long haul and they were prepared to continue their efforts.

Unbeknownst to the Women's Faculty Caucus, the trustees' e-mail address was monitored by the president's chief of staff. This e-mail address was public and subject to all manner of unusual and inappropriate messages. Chief of staff Lang screened the messages from this e-mail address and forwarded only those messages to chair Rogers that he deemed essential for board business. Using the rationale that the agenda for the upcoming board meeting was already established, Dr. Lang decided that forwarding the letter to the trustees would have little effect beyond clouding already contentious issues.

Questions to Consider

- What political strategizing best explains Lang's decision not to forward the Women's Faculty Caucus's letter to the Board of Trustees?
- How can Lang's position of power be used as a way to explain his actions?
- What constituency does Lang serve?
- What are the competing interests that Lang is juggling with his decision not to forward the letter?

DISCUSSION

The political perspective through characteristics such as the normality of conflict, attention cues, presence of coalitions, power and authority, and power elites can explain a wide variety of action within higher education institutions. The perspective lends itself to an understanding of the political maneuvering and strategizing of administrators, faculty, students, and members of the Board of Trustees.