

Roger Alan Pick's Statement of Administrative Philosophy

This statement describes how I believe a business school within an American university should be managed. Other units of a university and other types of institutions will have differing missions necessitating different administrative philosophies.

At a strategic level, placement should drive what goes on at a business school. Successful placement implies that students are valued because we are adding value to them during their time at our school. Successful placement constitutes an objective outside measure of the quality of academic programs and the educational experience. Placement requires continuing ties and personal relationships between the school and hiring organizations. These relationships provide feedback about the applicability of programs, quality of graduates, and need for new initiatives. If our graduates receive good jobs, they become grateful alumni. Organizations that consume our product become our supporters.

By viewing placement as the major service of the school, we view hiring organizations as our customers. Students are not our customers but are rather raw material and in-process inventory for our production process. Grading becomes a quality control function. Viewing employers rather than students as customers causes us to focus on academic quality and achievement in the classroom rather than mere entertainment. Thus, by focusing on placement, we change our attitude about teaching and about how we measure teaching. For example, teaching evaluations should become more about measuring factors that educational research has shown affect student achievement rather than measuring how happy the students are.

Focusing on placement forces curriculum planning to be tied to how we will satisfy employers in the future. It requires us to learn employers' plans and to inform them of ours. The curriculum becomes market-driven, and we offer a return to students for their investment of time and tuition money in their education.

Focusing on placement also changes how we think about fund-raising. I have seen schools that base fund-raising upon personal relationships between deans and development officers with various wealthy prospects. Although much can be accomplished in that way and sometimes very quickly, this approach fails more often than it succeeds. Further, I believe those accomplishments that do result from this approach are necessarily ephemeral. Most deans and developers move on to their next position in under six years, and their relationships usually leave with them. Relationships built upon placement will take longer to reach fruition. For example, the newly-placed graduate will not be able to afford a substantial gift for many years. However, the relationships with that alumnus/alumna will be life-long. Similarly, the relationship with the hiring company will be more broadly-based than a relationship with a particular individual and should be able to endure even with turnover at the school or at the company.

Placement also provides a forum where professors and administrators can find inside contacts within businesses. Those contacts can provide opportunities for data collection, case writing, and consulting. Thus, placement also enhances the research productivity of the school as well as resources and insights for better teaching.

And placement should be part of what drives our student advising. Placement should not only be something that happens at the end of students' time with us, it should also be something that happens early in students' time in our program. Early on, the placement office should provide students with professional development to help the students focus their time with us.

It is very easy in higher education to become complacent and declare yourself and your programs as excellent. For that reason, I believe that we need to avoid self-evaluation and rely instead on metrics provided by other parties. This is consistent with my focus on placement. Firms will only hire our students if our recent graduates have done well. If our recent graduates have not done well, then that will be reflected in decreasing numbers of recruiter visits and hires, and we will be signaled to improve. Other objective metrics of excellence include evaluations by students and recent alums of teachers and programs using reliable, validated instruments. Scholarship should not be evaluated by the scholar nor by the scholar's immediate supervisor. Instead, we should use the evaluations implicitly provided by the willingness of journals and other outlets to publish one's scholarly work. In the longer term, we can also use citation analysis as a way of evaluating the impact of scholarship. Funded grant proposals are also an outside measure of excellence. Naturally, accreditation by a nationally or internationally-recognized body such as the AACSB is a metric of competence.

Finally, placement indirectly drives resource allocation. To some extent, students' choices of majors and courses are driven by what they think will help them find and keep a job. As new or replacement faculty lines become available, they should be allocated to the area with the most demonstrated student demand. Newer areas, such as entrepreneurship today or my own field twenty years ago, should be started with an experimental offering of a course. If demand justifies it, additional courses can be offered and additional faculty hired. In my experience, faculty hires or resource allocations dictated by the demands of a donor or by top-down strategic planning do not do the school as much good as allocations based upon bottom-up demand from students.

Tactically, excellent academic administration is first and foremost about exercising good judgment. Although a list of principles can serve as a guide (and mine is given below), sometimes situations occur when those principles recommend conflicting actions. In those situations, an administrator must weigh all sides and act appropriately. Second, it is easy for an administrator to become preoccupied with unimportant issues that are nonetheless urgent. An excellent administrator understands what is important and allocates time accordingly. Third, the ultimate currency of higher education is reputation. Excellent administrators will not devalue that currency personally, for their direct reports, nor for the institution. Finally, I am biased in favor of change by continuous improvements rather than by reengineering. Reengineering efforts are typically highly disruptive, and they fail to achieve the anticipated benefits.

Keeping those ideas in mind, the following principles provide guidance in many situations:

- Do no harm. Understand the implications of an action before taking it.
- Tell the truth.
- Share information with the faculty as soon as possible.
- Treat all people respectfully.

- Give people feedback.
- Listen.
- Maintain an open door policy.
- Be fair; avoid granting special deals.
- Minimize meetings.
- Have a memory. Don't revisit an issue incessantly.
- Be willing to admit to and correct a mistake.
- University governance works best when faculty control policy and administrators control budgets. Initiatives require consent by both sides in order to move forward.
- Many university processes are unnecessarily inefficient; look for opportunities to streamline.
- Measure the right things; that is, those which matter and have to do with your mission.
- It is better to measure results than effort.
- Make sure your incentives encourage people to do what you need them to do.
- Do not tell people bad news and try to convince them it is good news.
- Short-term actions collectively result in long-term strategy.