SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH LEADERSHIP IN THE
SIX CULTURES OF CONTEMPORARY COLLEGIATE INSTITUTIONS

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Diane Winston is an academic administrator. She is deeply involved in her own academic institution with several other members of the administrative staff (and several faculty members) right now who absolutely drive her crazy. They have made working life difficult not because they are problematic; rather, it is because they hold quite different attitudes about leadership and organizational sustainability. Diane feels like a chameleon: she must constantly change her color (administrative style) depending on the divergent needs of her colleagues—hence, she can't offer a coherent and consistent message regarding her administration role and her preferred way of promoting a specific strategy for sustainability in her institution.

We would propose that her frustration is a product, in part, of the diverse organizational cultures operating in her institution. We believe that to work more effectively as an academic administrator, Diane must more fully appreciate these diverse cultures and the assumptions, values and aspirations held by colleagues who are operating in one or more of these cultures. In this essay we will identify and discuss six organizational cultures that strongly influence the ways in which contemporary academic administrators frame their work. We then turn to the intercultural dynamics created by the interplay among these six cultures and focus on ways in which culture helps to create meaning, and ways in which culture and leadership help contain the anxiety that inevitably exists in contemporary academic institutions.

Six Organizational Cultures

Over the past twenty years, we have recognized the need for cultural analyses of organizations from the perspective of those who lead and work in these organizations. (Bergquist, 1993; Bergquist, Guest and Rooney, 2003; Bergquist and Pawlak, 2007, Bergquist and Brock, 2008) We propose that six different, yet interrelated, cultures are to be found in contemporary colleges and universities. These cultures have a profound impact on the ways in which administrators view their current work and the ways in which they perceive organizational sustainability. Two of the six cultures, *collegial* and *managerial,* can be traced back several centuries. The *developmental* and *advocacy* cultures have emerged more recently, partially in response to the seeming failure of the two original cultures to adapt effectively to changes in contemporary colleges and universities. The last two cultures, *virtual* and *tangible,* are emerging in organizations as a result of new external (often global) forces. The virtual culture has been prompted by

the technological and social forces that have emerged over the past twenty years. The tangible culture has existed in various forms for quite some time, yet has only recently been evident as a separate culture partly in response to the expanding virtual culture and concern about the loss of continuity and stability in contemporary societies.

We propose that each of these six distinct cultures (with its own history and values) yields a specific perspective with regard to academic administration. Leaders such as Diane Winston bring their own cultural preference to their work and are often called (at least temporarily) to adopt other approaches and styles in order to synchronize with the organizational culture of other administrators, administrative staff and faculty members.

The Collegial Culture

Administrators who are aligned with this culture tend to believe that their institution can best be sustained through rational planning, a focus on educational quality and a reliance on strong administrative/faculty interaction. Those aligned with this culture are likely to find meaning primarily in their own discipline (if they are working within a specific academic department) or more generally in their identity as a "professional." The motives behind their professional concern(s) are laudable: quality of service and adequate foundation of theory-based and evidential research and reflection to support their practices (Schön, 1983).

Let's assume for a moment that Diane Winston is strongly associated with the collegial culture. She and other members of her academic community who associate with this culture are likely to embrace many untested assumptions about the dominance of rationality in organizations. Diane is likely to find it hard to work with "irrational" colleagues—those who seem to dwell only in the heart rather than in the head. Diane is therefore likely to believe that a "knowledgeable" leader must always look at the "big picture" and she assists her colleagues in seeing and carefully analyzing this systemic picture. At a fundamental level, Diane and her colleagues in the collegial culture conceive of the academic enterprise as the generation, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge. They are also likely to envision their institution as a setting in which students emulate the values and perspectives of their instructors—this often leading to a bias in favor of the traditionally-aged student rather than the older student, working student or students who cherish independence. .

Those aligned with the collegial culture are inclined to identify their own role as one of leadership, rather than the more "mundane" (in their view) role of manager. They are likely to agree

with Warren Bennis (2003) who suggests that managers "only" administer, ask how and when, focus on systems, do things right, maintain, rely on control, and have a short-term perspective. Bennis also suggests that managers tend to accept the status-quo, have an eye on the bottom line, and imitate. They are the classic good soldier and are copies of the stereotypical manager of the 60s and 70s. The role to be played by academic administrators within a collegial culture is not just to perform specific organizational functions but also to serve as leaders—helping to decide what these managerial functions should be rather than just providing these functions.

The Managerial Culture

Members of the academic community who are aligned with the managerial culture conceive of their work as "getting the job done." They believe that their institution can best be sustained through consistent attention to the quality of daily operations. They are much less enamored, compared to those oriented to the collegial culture, with "big pictures" and the focus on leadership. Management is where the action is. Management and instruction are often identified with a specific set of organizational functions and responsibilities. What if Diane Winston is an administrator who is oriented toward the managerial culture? She would focus on specified goals and purposes—and would judge her own success and that of other members of her institution with regard to achievement of these goals and purposes. As an administrator oriented toward the managerial culture, Diane is not likely to perceive any important differences between management and leadership. Managers *are* leaders. Managers are the employees who really make an organization work.

Those who are aligned with this culture value fiscal responsibility and the quantifiable measurement of educational outcomes. They believe that management skills can be specified and developed through training. They believe that academic managers must play a key role in the clear definition and measurement of institutional goals and objectives. They conceive of the educational enterprise as the inculcation or reinforcement of specific and measurable knowledge, skills, and attitudes in their students.

The Developmental Culture

Those academic administrators who are aligned with the developmental culture conceive of themselves as the co-creators of programs and activities that further the personal and professional growth of all members of the institution. Flaherty (2005, p. 3) says "leading is a way of working with people that

leaves them more competent and more fulfilled so that they are more able to contribute to their organizations and find meaning in what they are doing". Those administrators who are aligned with this culture turn to colleagues who value personal openness and service to others, as well as the integration of mind, body and spirit. The distinction between personal and organizational sustainability is considered artificial. Collegiate institutions flourish when those working in these institutions tend themselves to flourish—when learning occurs among all members of the academic community.

If Diane Winston were aligned with the developmental culture, she would feel most comfortable working with colleagues who want to freely share their life issues inside and outside the workplace. She would embrace many untested assumptions about the inherent desire of all employees to attain their own personal maturation. Adherents of this culture conceive of the leading enterprise as the encouragement of potential for cognitive, affective, physical (and in some settings even spiritual) development among all members of the organization—not just the students. They want their colleagues to ask fundamental questions and find answers to these deeper questions: Of what ultimate importance is the work I do and what do I sacrifice in my life to complete this work in a successful manner?

The Advocacy Culture

Those academic administrators who are aligned with the advocacy culture believe that their institution can be sustained with the establishment and reinforcement of equitable and egalitarian policies and procedures regarding the distribution of resources and benefits in the organization. Rosinski (2003) views this as the equality end of the "hierarchy/equality" continuum. Academic administrators who are aligned with this culture turn to colleagues who value equitable, enabling and empowering strategies that bring all stakeholders "to the table." Administrators with an advocacy orientation rely on those who recognize the inevitable presence of (and need for) multiple constituencies with vested interests that are inherently in opposition. They worry about ways in which education might be inequitably provided in their institution—producing even greater division between the "haves" and the "have nots."

Those in Diane's institution who are associated with this culture are likely to embrace many untested assumptions about the ultimate role of power in the organization. If Diane were aligned with this culture she would frequently identify the need for outside mediation to deal with these power-based issues. She is likely to wish that the educational enterprise of her institution were dedicated more consistently to the surfacing of existing and often repressive social attitudes and structures. As an advocate for social justice, Diane is likely to recommend the establishment of new and more liberating

attitudes and structures in her college or university. She is clearly not "neutral" about her work or the men and women with whom she works. She would not hide her own beliefs and is likely to be quite selective regarding the specific members of her institution with whom she chooses to interact.

The Virtual Culture

Members of an academic institution who are aligned with the virtual culture tend to conceive of their work as a vehicle for the engagement and use of knowledge and expertise that is being produced and modified at an exponential rate in our postmodern world. The institution will be sustained (and will thrive) if it is flexible, if its boundaries are open, and if it is collaboratively involved with many other educational (and non-educational) institutions in the world. Rosinski (2003, p. 54) describes this culture as one that "values a dynamic and flexible environment, promotes effectiveness through adaptability and innovations, and avoids routine which is perceived as boring" (p. 54). Those aligned with this culture tend to value a global perspective and make extensive use of open, shared, and responsive learning systems. They are participants in what Thomas Friedman (2006) describes as a "flat world" which has abandoned traditional organizational and national boundaries.

If Diane Winston were aligned with the virtual culture, she would embrace many untested assumptions about her colleagues' ability to make sense of the fragmentation and ambiguity that exists in the postmodern world (Bergquist, 1993; Bergquist & Mura, 2005). Diane would undoubtedly be quite skillful in making use of digital technologies. She might even do some of her leading via the Internet and is likely to enjoy working most with colleagues who are also technologically savvy. Diane would be frustrated in working with faculty members who are not readily accessible via some portable digital device, and would be inclined to work quickly and decisively with faculty members via many different media.

Administrators who are oriented toward the virtual culture are likely to conceive of the educational enterprise as linking the student's learning needs to new ways of learning and thinking. This leads to the support of technological resources that enable the student and other members of their institution, to access a global market and learning network. They would fervently propose that contemporary colleges and universities can't be sustained without this global access.

The Tangible Culture

Those who are aligned with the tangible culture believe that their institution can only be sustained if the traditions of the institution are honored and if there is a strong sense of community in their college or university. These administrators value legacy, symbols and the grounding of their institution in its distinctive history. They thrive in an organizational setting that resides at the opposite end of the continuum from the virtual culture. Labeled "stability" by Rosinski (2003, p. 54), it "values a static and orderly environment, encourages efficiency through systematic and disciplined work, and minimizes change and ambiguity which is perceived as disruptive". Those aligned with this culture tend to value the predictability of a value-based, face-to-face leading process. They like to work with people they can see and "touch" and work in tangible relationships that are long-term and grounded in reality.

Leaders who are aligned with this culture turn to and choose to interact with those in their community who focus on deeply-embedded patterns and traditions in the organization. Cultural-change is either considered impossible or unwise. A strong emphasis is placed on the full appreciation of the existing and often long-standing dynamics of the organization. With an orientation toward the tangible culture, Diane would be frustrated with colleagues who have no time to get together, always insisting on meeting by phone or email. Academic administrators associated with this culture embrace many untested assumptions not only about the value of personal relationships, but also about the ability of organizations and their leaders to "weather the storm" and move beyond the seduction of faddish change. They conceive of the educational enterprise as the honoring and reintegration of learning from the existing sources of distinctive wisdom located in their specific organization.

Culture, Leadership and Meaning

Although most academic administrators tend to embrace or exemplify one of these six cultures, the other five cultures are always present and interact with the dominant culture in their institution. The dynamic interaction among these six cultures is critical. We would suggest that each culture has an "opposite" on which it depends and with which it shares many features and assumptions. Thus, one culture evolved primarily in response to deficits and strengths of another culture. The developmental responded to deficits in the collegial culture; the advocacy opposes yet looks to the managerial culture for identity and purpose; the virtual, eshewing face to face interactions, awoke the tangible culture. Even though three cultures grew out of opposition, they share many values and perspectives with the opposing culture. It is often in the interaction among cultures that organizations create shared meaning. We will focus briefly on this dynamic process of creating meaning through culture.

A culture provides a framework and guidelines that help to define the nature of reality - the lens through which its members interpret and assign value to the various events and products of this world. If we are to understand and influence men and women in their daily work inside contemporary colleges and universities, then we must come to understand and fully appreciate their implicitly held models of reality. Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one group or category of people from another and distinguishes between different ways in which members of organizations find meaning and purpose in their work. Therefore, the cultures of organizations must be understood within the context of each organization's multiple purposes. Precisely because of its subordinate (though critical) role, culture is a phenomenon so elusive that, unless it is explicitly targeted, it can often be seen only when an organization is struggling with a particularly complicated or intractable problem. An effective leader can bring culture (and the untested assumptions, values and beliefs associated with culture) to the foreground—and provide support and resources to address the situation. This leading process can be of great value in helping members of organizations not only cease waiting for a crisis to create insight, but also more effectively contain the anxiety that is inevitably associated with the crises that do occur.

Culture, Leadership and Anxiety

We've identified three ways in which anxiety is created in organizations relative to culture. First, anxiety is generally created in the midst of organizational crises. Second, it is present in relation to the work of the leader and the formal and informal processes of evaluation and monitoring that are associated with this work. Third, anxiety is often stirred when the assumptions of one culture collide with those of other cultures in the organization or when a group is adapting to external circumstances and establishing internal integration. The group feels better (at first) because the culture provides a solution – a way of perceiving, thinking, and feeling about the challenges it faces.

Organizational cultures do not change easily. This is partly due to the ability of culture to assuage the anxieties and fears that inherently develop through the course of organizational life and leadership work. If the assumptions and beliefs upon which a culture is based are challenged through external or internal situations, or through an organizational change process, people will tend to resist the challenges. People tend to avoid the pain caused by the fear and anxiety associated with instability.. The human mind needs cognitive stability so people avoid change. The shared basic assumptions and beliefs

that make up the culture of a group can be thought of as psychological defense mechanisms that permit the group to remain viable and manage its anxiety.

Organizational Culture as a Container of Anxiety

Isabel Menzies Lyth (1988) provides an even more provocative portrait of the relationship between organizational culture and anxiety. She describes ways in which nurses in an English hospital cope with the anxiety associated with the issues of health, life and death found in the nurses' daily work lives. She suggests that a health care organization is primarily in the business of reducing this anxiety and that all other functions of the organization are secondary to this anxiety-reduction function. Colleges and universities are similarly awash with anxiety—the challenging processes associated with education and training as well as the inevitable struggles associated with incorporating and balancing multiple and contradictory demands made on the institution by increasingly diverse communities. It is specifically the six cultures that serve as the primary vehicles for addressing and easing the existing anxiety and stress in contemporary colleges and universities.

Menzies Lyth suggests that the cultures of an organization are highly resistant to change precisely because change promotes anxiety and that anxiety directly threatens the informal system that has been established in the organization to help those working in it to confront and make sense their working life. As an organization evokes anxiety among its employees its members must discover or construct a buffer that both isolates (contains) the anxiety and addresses the realistic, daily needs of its employees. She further suggests that anxiety gets addressed in organizations through the "social defense system"—that is, the patterns of interpersonal and group relationships that exist in the organization. The rituals, routines, stories, and norms (implicit values) of the organization help members of the organization manage anxiety inside the organization. These rituals, routines, stories, and norms are not a random assortment of activities. Rather, they cluster together and form a single, coherent dimension of the organization— the culture creates meaning and contains anxiety. As Edgar Schein (1999) has suggested, the culture of an organization is the residue of the organization's success in confronting previous conditions in the world.

Reducing Anxiety and Creating Meaning: Leading Through Culture

How might Diane Winston best operate as an academic administrator? Perhaps Diane can consider how to create more meaning and reduce anxiety in her institution by bringing forward the diverse strengths and perspectives that the six cultures offer to her institution. Taken in isolation, each of the six cultures provides a vehicle that is only partially successful in providing meaning and reducing the anxieties of people about their own learning. Even when successful, each culture produces only part of the cluster of values and meaning associated with a specific organization and alleviates only the symptoms of the anxiety not its ultimate source. Meaning and anxiety will only be fully addressed when people feel they are being valued by their organization. They will feel valued when their own concerns are effectively addressed by other members of the organization, regardless of culture.

It is crucial for academic administrators like Diane Winston to appreciate each of the cultures so that they can help their colleagues (and themselves) operate effectively within and among them. With this sense of appreciation, she can insure that each culture becomes a force for sustained improvement rather than sustained conflict in her institution. Each culture can contribute to the ability of Diane and her colleagues to learn from one another rather than reinforcing limiting and inflexible assumptions about the nature and direction of the enterprise to which they are all committed. We would suggest that this shared learning is a key to sustaining any academic institution and to providing the kind of education and training that best meets the shifting needs of the communities being served by this institution.

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