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Résumé de l'article

Basculer du côté obscur est une référence populaire à la décision de quitter le côté supposé « bon, pur et honnête » de quelque chose pour aller vers son côté « mauvais, maléfique et suspect ». Cette expression est généralement utilisée lorsqu’un administrateur accède à un poste de professeur ou vice versa. Bien qu’il existe une pléthore d’ouvrages sur les défis auxquels sont confrontés les nouveaux venus dans le monde universitaire, on connaît moins l’expérience vécue par ceux qui passent du statut d’administrateur à celui de professeur. On pourrait penser que la transition est simple, mais nos propres expériences suggèrent le contraire. Cette étude explore les expériences de transition de sept administrateurs de l’enseignement supérieur canadien vers des postes de professeurs. Les participants ont rapporté des expériences et des points de vue communs sur les différences entre les rôles, qui sont toutes exacerbées par la méfiance entre les deux parties. Les résultats permettent de mieux comprendre les nuances et les idées fausses entretenues par les deux parties et proposent des domaines où approfondir les recherches.

HOW DARK IS IT? FROM ADMINISTRATION TO FACULTY

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Abstract

Crossing over to the dark side is a popular reference to someone's decision to leave the supposed "good, pure, and honest" side of something to go to its "bad, evil, and suspicious" side. This idiom is typically used when an administrator moves into a faculty position or vice versa. While there is a plethora of literature on the challenges new scholars face as they enter the academy, less is known about the lived experience of moving from being an administrator to faculty member. One might assume the move is straightforward; our own experiences, however, suggest otherwise. This study explores the transition experiences of seven Canadian higher education administrators to faculty positions. Participants shared common experiences and perspectives on the differences between the roles, all of which are exacerbated by the distrust between the two sides. Findings offer further understanding of the nuances and misconceptions held by both parties and propose areas for further research.

Keywords: transition, faculty, senior administration, higher education

Résumé

Basculer du côté obscur est une référence populaire à la décision de quitter le côté supposé « bon, pur et honnête » de quelque chose pour aller vers son côté « mauvais, maléfique et suspect ». Cette expression est généralement utilisée lorsqu'un administrateur accède à un poste de professeur ou vice versa. Bien qu'il existe une pléthore d'ouvrages sur les défis auxquels sont confrontés les nouveaux venus dans le monde universitaire, on connaît moins l'expérience vécue par ceux qui passent du statut d'administrateur à celui de professeur. On pourrait penser que la transition est simple, mais nos propres expériences suggèrent le contraire. Cette étude explore les expériences de transition de sept administrateurs de l'enseignement supérieur canadien vers des postes de professeurs. Les participants ont rapporté des expériences et des points de vue communs sur les différences entre les rôles, qui sont toutes exacerbées par la méfiance entre les deux parties. Les résultats permettent de mieux comprendre les nuances et les idées fausses entretenues par les deux parties et proposent des domaines où approfondir les recherches.

Mots-clés : transition, corps professoral, administration supérieure, enseignement supérieur

Introduction

Crossing over to the dark side is a popular culture reference popularized by the film *Star Wars* to reference someone's decision to leave the supposed "good, pure, and honest" side to go to its "bad, evil, and suspicious" side. *Stars Wars* is recognized for transcending race, gender, ethnicity, and space. Reference to this common phrase serves to open dialogue that seeks to understand two sides from a place of inclusion and questioning. Within higher education this idiom is used by both administrators moving into a faculty position and vice versa (e.g., Bess & Dee, 2014; Glick, 2006; Palm, 2016; Payne, 2016; Reed, 2015; Sale, 2013; Willis, 2010). We started our careers in various student affairs administrative roles, eventually being drawn into tenure-track faculty positions to work more directly with students. We remember clearly telling our respective leaders that we were resigning from our administrative positions to become faculty members and being surprised when met with comments about moving to "the dark side" or doing our careers backwards. This never occurred to us, nor did we think of the other side as "the dark side."

How different could it be? "The dark side" seemed an overly dramatic way to describe the perceived silos within higher education. As student affairs leaders we were accustomed to working collaboratively with faculty, staff, and students, and we took comfort in believing our work experiences would equip us for the transition from administrator to faculty.

The notion of there being "sides" to a university may suggest opposition or tension, however we use it in the same way it is often used in the literature (e.g., Firmin, 2008; Griffith, 2006; Jacobs, 2015; Sanagha, 2020) to draw attention to the key stakeholder groups of administration and faculty that are subjected to shared challenges and motivated by shared goals.

Over the past decade we have been each other's critical colleagues and confidants in dialogue about our experiences. We questioned, wondered, learned, and eventually made sense of some of our new reality. We grew curious to learn more about the experiences of others in similar situations.

Literature Review

Career transition has long been an area of research since Louis's 1980 foundational publication. There has been continued interest in the new faculty experience (Stupnisky et al., 2015), and the challenges they encounter. Although somewhat dated, Frost and Taylor's 1996 publication *Rhythms of Academic Life: Personal Accounts of Careers in Academia* offered new academics advice that is still deemed relevant today. Bedeian (1996, as cited in Frost & Taylor, 1996, pp. 3–9) advised that new faculty need to focus on getting as many publications as possible in the early years, develop a professional network and establish an academic reputation, and learn how to effectively manage time. Bedeian's recommendations offer strategies to address what current research identifies as the pressures of learning and balancing the teaching, research, and service expectations of the academic role (Hamin et al., 2000; McLoughlin et al., 2019; Murray, 2008; Payne & Berry, 2014; Phillips & Dennison, 2015; Stupnisky et al., 2015) and in securing tenure (Stupnisky et al., 2015; Twale, 2013). The value of mentorship for new faculty (Cawyer et al., 2002; Mullen & Forbes, 2000; Stupnisky et al., 2015) and faculty orientation programs (Morin & Ashton, 2004) have been found to help faculty become acquainted with their new roles and how to meet expectations and effectively balance personal and professional life.

There is also a body of research that explores the transition within the academy from faculty to academic administration (Lucas & Murry, 2002; Iding & Thomas, 2015; McMinn, 2016; Payne, 2016), becoming a chair or dean (Buller, 2012, 2015; Gmelch et al., 2011), provost (Nielsen, 2013; Justice, 2019), or president (Paul, 2015), and lessons learned from transitioning (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Glick, 2006; Willis, 2010). There are resources available to support faculty's leadership and professional development as administrators (Buller, 2012, 2015; Martin & Samels, 2015). However, less is written about the experiences of administrators becoming faculty (Bosetti et al., 2008; Groen & Kawalilak, 2014, Perry et al., 2019), and much of that is autobiographical (Bosetti et al., 2008; Firmin, 2008; Patterson, 2019; Quincy, 2021; Willis, 2010).

At one time faculty and administrators worked closely together, relied on one another to operate the university, and had a shared understanding of the university's priority role in knowledge creation and dissemination (Rhodes, 2017). In the 1960s the top administrators and mid-level managers often came from faculty for short contract periods (Ginsberg, 2011). With so many faculty-turned-administrators engaged in the institution's management, their relationship was stronger. Administrators supported faculty and faculty provided administration with the output necessary for the institution to prosper (Ginsberg, 2011). The culture was collegial, with both parties engaged in shared governance and committed to student learning and the institution's continued success (Paul, 2015). The relationships between faculty and administration look different today (Lincoln, 2018; Rhodes, 2017). The external pressures on institutions with increased public accountability and scrutiny, decreased government funding, and global competition for enrolment continue to fuel capitalistic and corporate priorities and move the focus away from learning (Lincoln, 2018; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Rhodes, 2017), which threatens a culture of collegiality (Paul, 2015). The division in focus and priorities between administration and faculty has widened. Most of the power has shifted to the administration, leaving faculty seemingly powerless (Lincoln, 2018; Rhodes, 2017).

This perceived division promotes the "dark side" metaphor, and moving from one side to the other would suggest there is some sort of unknown or possibly frightening aspect of the transition. Administration and faculty are both vital roles and every institution needs both. By exploring the transition experiences of administrators to faculty we gain insight into differences in roles and can identify ways to mitigate transition and relationship challenges—perhaps shedding some light onto the proposed "darkness."

Methods

Malin (2003) pointed out "there is no one type of research that is closer to enlightenment than any other, but that certain kinds of research are better able to answer certain kinds of research questions" (p. 21). Phenomenological research is a way to receive, hear, and interpret the lived experience of others (van Manen, 2001). It is commonly used to support the inquiry into lived experiences of others. However, it recommends that the researchers suspend their own experiences. Alternatively, heuristic inquiry is related to the phenomenological research tradition, but differs in that it is an empirical qualitative research method that does not require the researcher to "bracket," as Husserl (1970) described, their own experiences outside the inquiry. Instead of removing yourself from the research process, heuristic inquiry requires the researcher to move into the process—bringing your own experiences into the process (Sultan, 2019). You are expected to approach the research in an open-minded manner—not have a predetermined outcome or finding. You are required to be fully engaged as a learner in the research process by both observing and dialoguing with the self and others (Moustakas, 1990, 2001). Moustakas stressed that autobiographical contributions are required of the researcher and are deeply embedded in this form of research. We used Moustakas's (1990) constructiveness framework for conducting heuristic inquiry because it provided an open, deeply exploratory and methodologically rigorous approach. Heuristic inquiry only becomes effective when the researcher(s) can invest in the reflective effort needed to explore their own experiences and the experiences of others (Moustakas, 1990). Patton (2002) pointed out that heuristic inquiry can only be done by a researcher with personal experience (pp. 107–109). As researchers we have been engaging in this reflective practice for the past 10 years and have come to appreciate that these experiences, as Patton (2002) outlined, are a valuable data source. Reflective of Sultan's (2019) explanation of heuristic inquiry (p. 11), our initial engagement with making the move from administrator to faculty sparked our interest to explore whether our own experiences were unique or like others. What do our combined experiences—as researchers and participants—tell us about the transition experience? We agreed with Rossman and Rallis (1998) that methodologies that help to further inquiry into individual experience and question status quo assumptions are valuable if—when comparing the experiences of others—the researchers thoroughly question aspects of their own constructed knowledge (p. 35).

Nine prospective participants were identified through the researchers' networks and snowball sampling. Participants had to have held an administrative position prior to becoming a full-time faculty member, tenured or tenure-track, at a Canadian university or college within the past 10 years. Each participant engaged in an hour-long interview with both researchers, using a virtual platform that recorded the discussion. Open-ended guide questions invited the participants to share their perspectives. Using heuristic inquiry methods, the interviews were designed to be conversational and personally reflective (Moustakas, 1990, 2001). Each participant approached the questions differently to contextualize their own experiences. Given the conversational nature of the interview, both researchers were engaged in the discussion and took notes. Through review of the interview notes, extensive reviews of the transcripts, and thematically coding each interview, commonalities surfaced and then were compared against the researchers' experiences.

Participants

Seven of nine prospective participants volunteered. Six participants hold a doctoral degree and the seventh holds a master's degree. They each began their career in Canadian higher education as administrators, with four of them holding a faculty cross-appointment. The variety of administrative positions included: associate vice-president, vice-provost, dean, registrar, senior director, executive director, and manager. There was equal representation between those at research-focused universities and teaching-intensive universities. Currently the participants hold either a faculty rank position or a cross-appointed academic administrative position and tenured faculty position.

Data Analysis

The transcripts were coded into themes following Patton's (2002) recommended "systematic observations of and dialogue with self and others, as well as in-depth interviewing of co-researchers" (p. 108). Through a systematic process, this heuristic inquiry rigorously constructed a full interpretive description of the lived experience. Therefore, validity was achieved by the "ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one's own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others, which presents comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32).

Findings

Four themes were identified to organize and differentiate the participants' experiences and perspectives: (1) motivating factors, (2) transition, (3) different work environments, and (4) exploring both sides.

Motivating Factors

Each participant outlined that they "fell" into administration because someone noticed they demonstrated a problem-solving mindset, strong communication skills, an abundance of patience, project management ability, and collaborative team-building skills. None of the participants had formal leadership training prior to taking their first administrative role. It is interesting to note that all the participants had backgrounds in student affairs or education.

The rationale for assuming an administrative role before a faculty position was similar between participants and related to our experiences. There was a desire to be actively engaged in decision-making processes, a willingness to assume responsibility, lead change, and to contribute to the leadership of the institution. Several of the participants shared their experiences of being identified internally as a potential leader and asked to serve in an acting or interim leadership role. Once they had the experience of being a leader they opted to continue in or seek out similar roles.

The reasons for moving from administration into faculty varied among participants, with some being intrinsically motivated to work more directly with students, learn more about the academic side, or because they were feeling burned out by the pressures of administration and seeking a change. For other participants the move was driven by external factors, such as a reorganization resulting in their reassignment to a faculty role. Regardless of the reason for moving into a faculty role, each participant reported being excited by the opportunity and embraced the change.

Of the seven participants, three have returned from being full-time faculty members to senior administrators. They each referenced being sought out by their respective institution to again resume an administrative position. One participant hopes to return to administration at some point, and the other three indicated that they currently have no desire to go back. One participant described the drawback to administration as "the seeds were sown in service" and having a desire to effect change as an active leader within the institution. Another noted that they still taught at least one course a year so that the transition back to faculty once their administrative appointment was fulfilled would not be as abrupt.

Transition

Participants collectively described the overall transition as relatively smooth and without major incidents. Each participant was left on their own to seek out the support and guidance they needed. Any ease was attributed to their own initiative and the strong relationships they had built over time with faculty while in their administrative role. They also reported being familiar with the overall operations of the academic units was beneficial. Participant "Rick" described his transition as being "virtually no transition at all. In many ways I just got to do more of the things I like to do."

While several of the participants had not completed doctorate degrees before taking on their first administrative roles, six of the seven participants felt that now having a doctorate was advantageous in terms of being perceived as having an equal and legitimate status among their faculty colleagues.

> A positive reception from faculty when they learn they were dealing with another faculty member rather than director of XXX...you know, professor in front of your name.... People were looking at me differently and... paying more attention to what I was saying. (Participant "Jim")

Two of the seven participants took the option of a paid leave, earned while being an administrator. Both participants used the time to refamiliarize themselves in their respective disciplines. The remaining five participants transitioned into the faculty role with no formal training or professional development provided to them. Participant "Paul" reflected on the value of having a mentor as a senior faculty member.

> I knew the chair of that program quite well, we used to work indirectly together. He was also a senior administrator turned faculty member, that was a huge piece that

> really supported me…having colleagues who were willing to share resources so that I could at least get started and I wasn't starting from scratch.

All of the participants noted the differences between the typical workday of an administrator compared to a faculty member. The administrator's workday was described as all-consuming, heavily scheduled with meetings, being part of a collective, having limited scope for independent decision making, high expectations to be visible on campus, and sharing the responsibility of the university burdens. Each reflected on how it took them time to appreciate that the faculty workload was completely different, but equally as busy. They highlighted faculty's autonomy to decide when and where to work as the most significant change and that it took them a while to adjust to being free to direct their teaching and research, and that no one really noticed if they were physically on campus. For some participants the newfound "freedom" was welcomed as overdue time to think, and for others it was a less comfortable unstructured reality that they had to navigate. Participant "Ruth" shared, "I think the biggest thing is…the autonomy that individual faculty have and that they're rewarded for that singularity and independent work. It's not a collective."

With the singularity as a faculty, participants described their challenges as feelings of isolation, uncertainty, competitiveness, and a tenure process that could be all-consuming.

> Surprised at faculty not being on campus or in office—administration conditioned me to 8–4 office hours but faculty have much more flexibility.… You have autonomy…nobody is watching you, which is a really big thing to figure out, a big leap to make. (Participant "Ruth")

Going from being actively engaged in and responsible for decision-making processes as an administrator to focusing on one's own teaching and research agenda left some of the participants feeling out of the loop with respect to the institution's operations. Participant "Erin" shared that she "found it difficult to be so out of the loop, in terms of communication." She was surprised at what she described as very limited information being communicated from administration to the rest of the campus.

One participant, "Beth," shared the frustration of being thought of as the newest faculty member coming into the academy, with over two decades of professional work experience as an educator, and yet still feeling as though their colleagues did not see them as an equal.

Different Perspectives

Participants were asked to share their perspectives on what, if any, differences they felt existed between the two roles. All the participants referenced what they perceived to be a limited understanding on the part of each side of one another's mandates, roles and responsibilities, and challenges. Having experience with both roles, each participant offered insight into what they described as an inherent distrust between the two sides based on misconceptions of roles and responsibilities.

Participants acknowledged that there are specific attributes to being an effective administrator or a successful faculty member, and although there is overlap, there are significant differences. The role of administration was described by participants as managerialism, and as fostering a sense of distrust about faculty, who may be seen as not "seeing the bigger picture" and having the "luxury of tenure." Participant "Jim" described faculty having "an egotistical attitude towards what a university is about," and faculty feeling a sense of superiority toward administration: "Why would I talk to you unless I need you?" Another participant, "Sam," described administrators as trying to avoid a negative reaction from faculty, whom they see as having to argue about everything so they "insulate themselves from that potential negative reaction and they get a little arrogant in the assumptions that faculty members aren't aware of the big picture." "Sam" also recalled that, as an administrator, there was a feeling of having to withhold information from faculty: "I must keep these decisions secret because…who knows what hell will break loose if the truth gets out, and so I think they're both self-feeding thoughts and that builds a distrusting gulf." Participant "Rick" described the difference in focus between the two stakeholders as:

> The health of two different parts of the institution. One is the institution itself and the other is student success. In the case of the administrator, I find that they focused mostly on institutional health. In the case of the faculty member, they focused mostly on student success. Both contribute to the overall success of the institution.

One side not understanding the roles of the other was referenced numerous times as a significant contributing factor to the tensions between the two. The recognition by participants that their faculty colleagues may not have all the information or context, or may hold a misconception about an administrative position, was something they handled carefully. Some participants were reluctant to share too much with faculty colleagues for fear of being perceived as "against faculty," and others felt they were able to mitigate conflict by proactively offering an administrative perspective, not to lobby against faculty, but to help empower them to make informed decisions.

> Administration don't have a bloody clue as to what's going on in the classroom. And yet, they're often talking about what teachers need to do. And faculty they don't have a clue of the kinds of complexities you have to deal with, so they're thinking why didn't you answer my email that I sent at midnight? (Participant "Beth")

The nature of the day-to-day operations was also identified as contributing to the distrust or skepticism between administrators and faculty. Often the limited interactions between them tend to revolve around conflict and, as such, each side can be left with a rather negative impression of the other. There may also be a feeling that one side is getting in the way of the other. Participant "Sam" commented:

> There's also perhaps an idealized view of a faculty member's life from the administrative side. I put in my 9:00 to 5:00 and I have been here slogging it away and they're sitting having coffee on a Tuesday afternoon enjoying the sunshine. They have so much more freedom… wouldn't that be the life?

Participant "Jim" explained the negative perception of faculty toward administration as: "Faculty see the administration side whether it be HR or finance, getting in the way of them doing more…they just think you're there because I bring in money and I teach, and you need to support me."

Exploring Both Sides

To better understand how and why a divide appears to exist between administration and faculty, we considered the participants' perspectives on what both sides could do differently.

Participants described both administrators and faculty as being suspicious of the other, and they felt that more transparency and regular communication between the two would help to address assumptions and misconceptions. Participants differed in where they saw the responsibility for improved communication resting—one felt the onus should be on faculty, another felt it rests with administrative leaders, and the rest felt it was a shared task.

Doubt in faculty's experience with, and ability to fully comprehend, the financial workings of the institution was raised several times as a common position among administration. Recognizing that faculty are often not privy to the financial workings of the institution, participants suggested that providing additional information about budget allocation and pressures for faculty may help to mitigate their frustration with what they can perceive to be a closed, unfair process.

Participants also highlighted the limited knowledge administrators often have of what is involved in being a faculty member. Beyond knowing that faculty members are expected to fulfill a work plan that involves teaching, research, and service, administrators do not fully understand the pressure of having to manage all three aspects of the job to secure tenure. Having to establish an academic identity, secure research money, successfully publish—all of which involve peer scrutiny and competition—is difficult to understand unless you have done it. Several participants reinforced Lincoln's (2018), Ginsberg's (2011), and Paul's (2015) observations that over the years university governance has moved from an academic model to a managerial model—often lead by administrators and boards with MBA degrees and without established scholarship practices. Without the academic voice at the leadership tables, it is challenging for administrators to relate to faculty working conditions.

All participants acknowledged that having experience as both an administrator and as a faculty member proved to be very valuable in working with and across both sides. Participants described being able to offer additional context or rationale to their faculty colleagues to help contextualize the administrative side of an issue. Likewise, having faculty experience and returning to administration proved equally as valuable, as they were able to advocate for faculty and present a faculty perspective in administrative discussions.

Discussion

Our motivation for conducting this study was to identify the experiences of administrators within Canadian higher education who transitioned to faculty positions. As former administrators who also made this transition, we were keen to compare our experiences with our findings. We discovered that not only did we share many similarities between the experiences the two of us have had, we also gained deeper insights. By deconstructing these experiences, we identified factors that contribute to a successful transition, as well as the tensions that exist between administration and faculty.

The findings from each of the four identified themes are discussed below.

Motivating Factors

The nuances of faculty autonomy and pressures of having to establish an academic identity, produce research, and successfully publish—all the while being routinely subjected to peer review—are not for the faint of heart. These have been identified in the literature as factors that contribute to many new scholars having a difficult experience (Gale, 2011; Yeo et al., 2015). Moving from administration into faculty roles was a personal and professional choice for both of us. We each chose to pursue faculty appointments after completing a doctorate, wanting to work more closely with students and believing that if one day we chose to return to administration, we would be that much more qualified. Since having made the initial transition, one of us has returned to administration but continues to hold a faculty appointment. Like the participants' experiences, our respective choices to initially assume administrative roles were motivated by an interest in being actively engaged with the institution's operations and decision-making processes, to effect and lead change, and to advance professionally into higher leadership roles. The choice to transition into a faculty role was rooted in a desire to learn more about the academic aspects of higher education, work directly with students, and contribute to the scholarship within our field. We both quickly realized, like Bosetti and colleagues (2008) and our study participants, that the experiences of having been university administrators did not sufficiently prepare us or give us an advantage for becoming a faculty member. The two positions are very different. It is worth noting that, like most of the participants, we each came from a student affairs background. Whether or not there is a positive correlation between being an administrator in student affairs and becoming a faculty member is an unknown, and perhaps worthy of further study. The common denominator between student affairs and faculty work is students—the opportunity and responsibility to effectively support the personal and/or academic development of students. Perhaps it is the regular exposure to students' academic experiences as a student affairs administrator that fosters an interest in working as a faculty member, or perhaps it is an assumed skillset and knowledge of student development that offers confidence to an administrator that they are capable of being successful as a faculty member.

Transition

All the participants described their transition as being relatively smooth, with no significant challenges. They acknowledged the support from their faculty colleagues, access to professional development, and having existing strong relationships with faculty as helpful in navigating the teaching, research, and service components of the job. The value of having this type of support is consistent with the recommendations offered by Cawyer et al. (2002), Morin and Ashton (2004), Mullen and Forbes (2000), and Stupnisky et al. (2015). Similarly, we each had relatively smooth transitions with teaching and working with students, which may be attributed to our experiences as student affairs practitioners and leaders. It is interesting to note that six of the seven study participants held credentials and experiences in education, with one holding a doctorate in psychology. Perhaps the interest in student learning and development and experience with programming gave all of us a sense of confidence and strong foundation to assume the teaching duties of a faculty member.

Different Work Environments

The autonomy of being a faculty member as a significant difference from being an administrator resonated with both of us. The silence of the office hallways, limited interaction with colleagues, and the independent nature of faculty work can initially offer a calming pause from what was described by some participants as all-consuming, toxic, and stressful administrative environments. Consistent with Foster (2006) and Kniess (2019), our findings highlight that how each position organizes their time differs significantly, with administrators running from meeting to meeting, having to consult extensively before making decisions, and having regular interaction with colleagues, compared to faculty, who are largely left on their own to manage their own time and, other than being in a classroom on campus for in-person teaching, no one really pays attention. That same autonomy can be a source of difficulty for some administrators who are not accustomed to self-directed work, and who may struggle with feeling out of the loop with respect to the institution's decisions and operations.

Exploring Both Sides

Shortly after moving into faculty roles, we would share stories with one another of being surprised at what we perceived to be our faculty colleagues' limited understanding of the administrative and operational components of the institution. Equally as surprising at times was our own realization that we did not understand the faculty side as well as we thought. All participants shared experiences like ours and took advantage of any opportunity to share their insights as an administrator with faculty when they felt it might help clarify context or address a misconception. One participant clarified that they were always cautious in sharing an administrative perspective among their faculty colleagues for fear of being perceived as against faculty, while another referenced being able to offer additional context to help inform faculty. For participants who returned to an administrative role, they found opportunities to share a faculty perspective, based on their own experience, with their administrative colleagues hoping to foster positive working relationships and enhance the understanding between the two sides.

One participant referred to administration and faculty as each being a part of the institution's well-being, with administration focusing on the health of the institution (finances, operations, human resources, policies) and faculty concerned primarily with the success (health) of the students. Both are equally important and vital to the institution's continued success, yet each is significantly different in their mandates and priorities. We have described the push and pull between the two sides as a clash of two key stakeholder groups. Foster (2006) posits that faculty's focus on being "program focused" (p. 50) regarding their research, teaching, and the interdisciplinarity of their work is actually "insulated from the business side in critical ways" (p. 50). Faculty are expected to seek truth, to challenge and critique the status quo, and administrators are expected to maintain and often protect the status quo. For a faculty member to exercise their academic freedom and differ from their institution's position on a controversial matter is expected, but an administrator cannot do the same, as they are expected to stay in line with the institution and, as mentioned earlier, work under the guidance of boards comprised of mainly non-academics.

The nature of an institution's day-to-day work does not readily lend itself to faculty and administrators working together in unison. Our experiences concur with the testimonies of the participants, that often conflict is what brings the two sides to the table and, as such, both are in a defensive position from the start. Therefore, negative perceptions of one another are further fueled, with both sides feeling the other is wrong and not fully understanding the issues. With limited communication and transparency and the rise of managerialism identified as factors contributing to the uneasiness between the two sides, it is no surprise that the distrust for one another can overshadow opportunities for more positive working relationships. Bess and Dee (2014) focus on the gap between administration and faculty and suggest that the difference in paradigms between the two stakeholder groups is at the root of their divide. When the personal values, beliefs, and sense making of one individual do not align with another's, then conflict emerges. The business, operation-oriented work of administrators aligns with what we know to be a positivist paradigm, and the creative, critical, and knowledge-seeking work of faculty aligns more with the social constructivist and post-modernist paradigms. The clash of paradigms inevitably is problematic and places the sides at fundamentally opposite ends of the paradigm spectrum. Is there any wonder then, that administrators and faculty are often not in sync?

Summary

Our metaphoric use of the phrase "crossing over to the dark side" was to draw attention to the understood division between faculty and administration, a division we both have witnessed. Our experiences proved to be consistent with many of those shared by the participants. While the experience may not actually be "dark" in terms of being scary or unsafe, it is a career change that requires an administrator to understand the other side of the institution—one that they previously may have felt they understood, but may soon discover that there are nuances specific to faculty life that can only be understood through experience.

Moving from an administrative role, where your days are consumed with meetings, engaged in decision-making processes, reacting to conflict or crisis, and being one in a collective is a striking contrast to the autonomy, self-direction, and isolation of a faculty position, where you are removed from firsthand knowledge of the inner workings of the institution. The time once regulated by meetings as an administrator must be reshaped into teaching time slots, research, reading, writing, and engaged peer review practice.

The mandates of the two sides are certainly intertwined, and yet contribute to the divide, with administration's focus on operational aspects, financial controls, and accountability, and faculty being the cornerstone of the institution's ability to deliver on academic programming and research goals, all the while being removed from decision making that will ultimately affect both areas.

So how do we bridge this divide? Is it even realistic to think we can, or should? Are there opportunities for the two sides to deeply listen to and learn from one another? The degree to which the divide impacts an institution's work environment and success is worthy of further study. Those of us who have experience as both an administrator and faculty are well positioned to share knowledge and to address misconceptions.

Like the participants, we both benefited from the support offered by other faculty during our respective transition. The absence of any formal training or support for our transition from the administration side of our institutions was consistent with the study's findings. Additional research into the value of mentorship, not only for becoming a faculty member, but also in letting go of being an administrator, would be most valuable.

As former student affairs administrators we were also taken with the similarity of our backgrounds with all the participants, and we can't help but wonder: Is there a correlation between the type of background one has and the transition from one side to the other? This is another topic certainly worthy of further research.

By identifying the experiences of administrators turned faculty we have drawn attention to the differences between the roles and responsibilities. The differences are such that we conclude that there will always be a divide between administration and faculty. The different and competing mandates between the two may even create more distance than closeness. These differences are legitimate and should not be trivialized to accepted disrespectful views of one another based on misconceptions, bias, or egos. A divide, however, does not need to be conflictual, or cast in a negative light. Both sides are essential to the success of the institution—the debate as to which side is more important is not useful. Opportunities for administrators and faculty to recognize their differences, have open dialogue about the external pressures each side faces, understand the realities of the other, and to collaborate in the interest of their institution's continued success exist and need to be sought out by both factions.

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