The Academic Leadership Framework: a Guide for Systematic Assessment and Improvement of Academic Administrative Work

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Abstract

Universities typically administer their operations through a multitude of disparate, siloed initiatives and processes (guidelines, document, trainings etc.). Approaches toward academic administrative leadership deserve more concentrated focus. We propose a simple common framework to assess and evaluate such efforts. The framework we propose orients towards the leaders themselves and their interactions with the university (domain 1: values and behavior and domain 3: decision making), their interactions with others (domain 2: developing people and domain 6: providing oversight), and their capabilities to perform expected tasks (domain 4: goal setting and domain 5: organizing the unit). The proposed framework seeks to create a structure to harmonize administrative work across the university and disciplines, provide consistency and allow for college- and unit-specific adjustments, and provide a basis for defining and measuring ongoing improvement.

Introduction

Over centuries, universities have developed as organizations from informal groups of teachers and students over academies and studium generale to the complex institutions of higher education of today (1). In addition to their core functions of research, teaching and service, universities now must address complex financial, societal and compliance requirements (2). Other large organizations like companies, schools and the military have acknowledged the need for systematic management and leadership training to be successful. Universities are faced with the challenge of balancing such organizational needs with the freedom of academic work, which forms the cornerstone in the pursuit of the generation, teaching and application of knowledge. However, recently groups such as the American Association of University Professors have developed guidance for the definition and extent of academic freedom, rules of shared governance and for recruitment and evaluation of faculty and their work (3). In a practical sense, a general structure has developed over time which describes work of faculty in categories of research (research, scholarship and creative expression), service (faculty administrative and clinical service, and outreach) and teaching (undergraduate, graduate and professional students). This structure provides the basis for formal and informal metrics commonly used to develop position descriptions, work assignments and annual reviews for faculty. These developments are based on the insight that structure is essential to academic freedom and individualized excellence. Every academic discipline thrives because it operates on an accepted framework for proof and argument, for advancing successfully; indeed, structure is implicit in the concept of a “discipline.” The existence of such structures supporting each discipline simplify collaborations between and

among disciplines, providing a common grammar that eases translation of ideas and facilitates collaboration and innovation.

As the outcomes of research and clinical service are perceived to be more easily measurable than teaching outcomes, recent efforts have led to more objective evidence-based teaching and competency-based curricula which determine domains of competency and define specific competencies which are measured based on pre-determined outcome measures (e.g (4)).

Given these efforts to develop best practices and guidance for faculty work, it is somewhat surprising that no general framework for academic administrative work exists. In the words of Ruben et al. "... the lack of a common vision and complementary commitment to addressing the challenges confronting institutions of higher education is quite often a significant source of organizational dysfunction" ((5), page 7). Obviously, structure reduces conflict by enabling an institution to build common zones of responsibility – between a leader and their unit, between the leader and their superior (dean), between the leader and their partners (e.g., administrative functions. Such potential for conflicts, and the time and stress they costs, impede both the operational side of the university as well as academic freedom and individualized excellence of faculty.

The lack of a general framework for administrative work affects not only the operational side of the university but also the academic enterprise. This absence also comprises a problem for selection and training of academic administrators and the overall development of the institutional structure of universities. Currently, academic administrators are often selected for personal qualities and expertise in their specialty as

well as familiarity with the institution, and not for their training in or display of proven administrative qualities. The analysis performed by Amanda H. Goodall (6) provides a justification for this view, as she argues that research universities with leaders who have been successful in research and are intimately familiar with the academic enterprise perform better than universities without such leadership. However, this analysis omitted the evaluation of administrative competencies of the respective research leaders, and it is unquestionable that academic administrative positions have become increasingly complex due to the extension of duties over time. The lack of a framework for assessing and improving academic administration also becomes apparent in the face of the sometimes voiced criticism about the increase in administrative positions compared to faculty position (7), (8). If no framework exists which describes at least in general terms the tasks, expectations and modes of evaluation of administrative work, then the discussion will remain very subjective (9). The lack of a framework also becomes apparent in academic leadership training, as frequently the training of supposed leadership qualities is not based on a curriculum but on personal experience or is left to the individual as part of their personal development plans.

Goal of the project: To develop a generally applicable framework for academic leadership, which includes administrative duties, we were guided by the behavioral model of leadership which postulates as the two dimensions for administrative work organizational tasks and people-related tasks. We used the approach of a competency-based curriculum to further develop and specify the domains of competence of academic leadership incorporating surveys of academic leaders and a number of applied texts from the academic leadership literature. With this framework, capabilities

can be defined and measured – and in turn improve overall institutional capabilities. Absent a consistent framework, an institution's President, Provost and Board of Trustees evaluate academic leadership anecdotally and with disparate (and possibly conflicting) objectives. A common framework enables institutional leadership to identify what needs to be improved among its leaders (including which capacities are missing), and best optimize the institution's ability to address complex challenges. This framework is also a self-actualizing model: it is dependent on the intrinsic motivation of each individual leader to improve, by giving a capacity for an institution to build common pathways to each individual leader to follow, tools to use, and measurements to reflect progress.

The resulting academic leadership framework supports university administrators as it:

- Fosters a university culture that advances ethical values, leadership development and learning as a necessary requirement for effective administrative work;
- Allows for an adaptable and flexible framework providing guidance to various disciplines and administrative positions;
- Pro-actively solves problems by consistent review and revision of administrative processes and improves the overall culture of the institution;
- Provides a common language to talk about leadership in the context of administrative work; and
- Provides a source of best practices and assistance for staff and faculty with leadership ambitions.

Development of the Academic Leadership Framework

In order to develop a framework for academic leadership, we utilized the behavioral model of leadership which is based on the leader's organizational and people-related tasks (10), (11), (12), (13). In order to provide more specificity and detail to the overall tasks of the academic administrator, we adopted models developed in the general management literature (14), (15), (16). Subsequently, we used the approach of a competency-based curriculum (4) to further develop the domains of competence and specific competencies of academic leadership.

The proposed framework defines and treats separately the broadly distinguishable "domains" of leadership competence from the individual "competencies" that collectively compose each domain. In other words, a "competency" is an observable ability of an administrative professional related to a specific activity that integrates knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. When integrated, these competencies coalesce into broad distinguishable "domains" of competence. Taken together, these domains of competencies aggregate into a general descriptive framework for academic leadership. The domains of competence are: individual and institutional values and behaviors; developing people; decision making; goal-setting; organizing processes and units; and providing oversight (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Academic Leadership Framework. The academic leadership framework is organized in six domains of competence with their respective competencies.

These domains can be defined as follows:

- 1. Values and behaviors** - the foundation of the leadership framework lies in the institution's promotion of ethical values and professional attitude as well as personal and skills development by its administrators.
- 2. People** - the systematic development of people focusses on the recruitment and development of faculty and staff.
- 3. Decision making** - the knowledge of decision-making models and processes is essential for the ability to reach well-reasoned comprehensive decisions.
- 4. Goal-setting** - strategic planning, change and crisis management appropriate for every administrative level and function serve to guide administrative work including resource allocation.

5. **Organization** - reviewing and revising the organizational structure of the units and their processes results in an agile and adaptable university.
6. **Oversight** - providing oversight for people is crucial to ensure performance in terms of productivity and professional behavior.

To evaluate whether these domains of competence appropriately capture the most important competencies required for academic administration, we extracted competencies (values, attitude, skills and knowledge) from the literature about academic administration (17), (18), (19), (20), (21), (22) and grouped them under the respective domains of competence. Our analysis demonstrates that not all authors mention competencies for all domains (Table 1). However, all competencies mentioned could be grouped under the proposed domains and in aggregate, all domains were populated with competencies. As the academic leadership framework is intended to provide guidance for the practicing academic administrator, we used surveys of academic chairs, deans, chancellors and presidents about the competencies they actually used in their daily work or which they deem important in academic leadership training (23), (24), (25), (26). We also incorporated input provided by participants in academic leadership programs and department chairs at Ohio State University. These participants were asked to provide the ten most important competencies (values, attitude, skills and knowledge) for an academic leadership training program. The participants belonged to the following groups: Food Systems Leadership Institute (77), Leadership Academy of the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (80), Leadership Program of the Big Ten Alliance (80) and Department Chairs at OSU (50). 59 out of 250 responded, thus providing 590 competencies. In aggregate, competencies from all these surveys provided

Domains	Leader Habit (Lanik)	Academic Impressions (Sidel)	Chairing an Academic Department (Gmelch, Miskin)	The Essential Department Chair (Buller)	Strengthening departmental leadership (Lucas)	IT Factor leadership (Fernandez, Fernandez)
Values and Behaviors	<u>Values</u> <u>Personal and skills development</u>	definition of personal mission, vision, values development plan, emotional intelligence, influencing up, down and across; communication and conflict management, negotiation, difficult conversations			listening skills, motivating faculty, create communication climate	Know yourself, build your EQ, shut up and listen, speak to be heard, master difficult conversations, know how to make a powerful apology, Focus on Mortar, not bricks (understand what motivates people)
Decision making	analyze information, think through solutions, make good decisions, focus on customer			decision making		
Goal-setting	Manage Priorities, plan and organize work, delegate, create urgency, sell the vision, innovate, manage risk, influence others, overcome individual resistance, negotiate well		facing the challenges	creating annual themes, strategic planning, planning a budget, fundraising, sponsored research	facilitating agreement on mutual goals	take charge of change
Organization (of unit and processes)		developing empowered cultures, managing the complexity of the whole organization, leading change	budget and resource decisions		defining roles and responsibilities	Build a culture of conversation, create thought diversity
Oversight				job descriptions, interviewing, letting someone go, oral and written evals, effective assessment, program review, post tenure review	managing conflict, addressing dysfunctional culture, evaluating performance and providing feedback	get (or get on) the right team
Developing people	empower others, mentor and coach, build team spirit	building teams that create and adapt	recruit, support, motivate faculty	promote collegial dep, resolve chronic complaints, overcoming conflict, passive-aggressive behavior, positive first year experience, professional development plan,	faculty developer, team building	build a great team, engage your employees,

TABLE 1

competencies for all domains of leadership, and all competencies listed could be classified under the Domains of Competence of the Academic Leadership Framework, thus providing confirmation of the validity and comprehensiveness of the framework (Table 2).

Subsequently, all six domains of competence were further specified by answering four questions for each domain:

1. What would the optimized state for this domain be?
2. What are the examples of existing practice which could be improved and extended to achieve this optimized state?
3. What are typical challenges for the implementation?
4. What could the next steps be?

1. Domain of competence: Values and Behaviors

1.1 Optimized state: There is general agreement amongst administrators about which ethical values and professional attitudes govern administrative work at the respective institution, and how these are communicated for use as operating principles. The adherence to professed values and professional attitudes is evaluated through an annual reverse analysis. Administrators understand the need for personal and professional (administrative) development to be effective in their roles. Administrators use the academic leadership framework to assess their administrative work, and determine the need for personal development and development of workplace skills. Resources are available to support administrative learning and development opportunities in order to integrate the individual effort into the institutional framework and requirements.

Organizational values and professional attitude as well as personal and skills development are discussed during annual reviews.

1.2 Examples of current practice: Most institutions develop lists of values for their strategic plans. However, the application of these values is not consistent across the institution and often contradictory attitudes exist within one institution. Similarly, there is often no general agreement about the qualifications necessary for an effective administrator. This makes the recruitment into administrative positions subjective, and the development of future administrators difficult. Typically, institutions make an effort to train their academic leaders through external or internal training opportunities. However, without a unifying curriculum or framework, it is difficult to decide which leadership development opportunities should be utilized and how to estimate cost-benefit.

1.3 Typical challenges: For administrative positions in academia, experience in the respective discipline, seniority and likability are often perceived as sufficient qualifications. Although it is generally accepted that developing the skills and gaining the experience in a specific discipline is crucial for becoming faculty and for faculty success, there is a lack of understanding of the need for personal and professional (administrative) development. Sometimes, no resources (e.g. time or funds) are available to support professional development of administrators. Another challenge is the misalignment between personal values and attitudes and organizational values and professional attitude. This happens typically when values and attitudes are not translated into operating principles. Often the tool of reverse analysis is not used to analyze whether the administrative actions taken are consistent with the professed values and attitudes.

1.4 Possible next steps: The values statements of the different units within the university should be aligned with university values, and these values should be incorporated into decision-making consistently across the university. This includes a discussion about the role of individual versus university goals. The Academic Leadership Framework could be used to specify unit-specific goals, assess administrative work and use this as a basis for annual reviews. Administrators could use the academic leadership framework to determine the need for personal development and of workplace skills related to the different domains. On the organizational level, the Academic Leadership Framework provides recommendations for leadership training programs and development of faculty with leadership interest.

2. Domain of competence: People – recruitment and development

2.1 Optimized state: The development of people is viewed as an administrative responsibility and an ongoing structured process with identification of specific trainings and other development opportunities, analysis of work activities, and annual review of career expectations and personal development plans. A succession plan for various positions is aligned with prospective candidates. For recruitment, a staffing plan for positions is developed. For searches, a pool of potential applicants is developed and a structured written approach for recruitment is being followed including written position descriptions, expectations and behavioral interviewing. The administrator is knowledgeable about different mentoring techniques and a written mentoring policy is being followed.

2.2 Examples of current practice: Most universities provide guidelines for faculty searches and request or expect implicit bias training of search committee members. Sometimes, the implementation is aided by a centralized approach to implement a consistent set of guidance across the university. Most universities encourage best practices in mentoring and it is left to the individual units (departments) to develop their specific approaches. Mentoring is informed by the culture of the unit, not best practices, and is focused on junior faculty. Therefore, the development of mid- to late career faculty is sporadic.

2.3 Typical challenges: The recruitment of faculty is often performed on a case by case basis without a structured process. That leads to a small candidate pool with few candidates and default selection of majority candidates. Mentoring is often not seen as a communal task of the unit but as an ad hoc process with the majority of the responsibility placed on the mentee. Sometimes it is exclusively focused on the individual needs of the mentee without integration of the mentee into the larger organizational context. Similarly, professional development of faculty is seen as an individual responsibility. Most often, no resources are provided to support specific training and other development opportunities. Leadership training is often unfocussed and the lack of succession plans lead to demotivation of participants.

2.4 Possible next steps: For recruitment, hiring should be aligned with a staffing plan and a strategic plan. A position description and a pool of candidates has to be developed. A structured approach to recruitment and hiring for the unit is codified in writing, with additional guidance for opportunity hires. Participants in the hiring are trained in behavioral interviewing techniques and respective questions are being developed for

each search. Administrators should be knowledgeable about different mentoring techniques (1 on 1, use of peer groups and mentoring committees) and develop mentoring plans for different career stages. A mentoring document has to be in place describing the mentoring process. Expectations for both mentors and mentees have to be defined for mentoring of all types of junior people (graduate students, postdocs, assistant professors) in writing and to be implemented.

3. Domain of Competence: Decision-making

3.1 Optimized state: Administrators have knowledge of and use decision-making tools and models. It is understood who makes what kind of decisions and who provides feedback/input. Alternate scenarios are developed as thought experiments and in preparation of potentially changing situations or crisis.

3.2 Examples of current practice: Both central university administrations and faculty senates have structured processes in place to evaluate whether a decision needs to be made, about the inclusion of values and the strategic plan in the decision making process and the incorporation of feedback from defined stakeholder groups/university committees. At the college and departmental level, the respective unit documents detail some decision making processes. For a number of important areas, however, the decision making process is typically not defined and decisions are often made ad hoc under perceived pressure (time, finances) without thorough evaluation and assessment of strategic planning and long term effects. Decision-making is often undervalued as an administrative competency.

3.3 Typical challenges: Administrators are not trained in decision making matrices and processes (critical thinking tools), and therefore rely on their personal experience. Ethical values and strategic direction of the unit often do not influence decisions. This can lead to ad hoc decisions which provide only short-term solutions. Often, the fear of decision-making leads to delays of necessary decisions. The absence of an understood process for input and feedback de-legitimizes the decision-making process and results in decisions which are seen as overreaching or lack authority in implementation.

3.4 Possible next steps: Administrators acquire knowledge of different decision-making models and methods and apply them systematically to major decisions. They assess and define decision making processes within their unit (when is a decision to be made, who decides what and who provides input) in writing. Scenarios are developed and used as models for future decisions.

4. Domain of competence: Goal-setting

4.1 Optimized state: At the unit level, administrators organize strategic planning and the development of action plans based on available resources including feedback from appropriate stakeholders. This results in annual themes and goals with clearly designated responsibilities and time lines for implementation. The strategic plan and its implementation are reviewed and revised annually. Change management strategies are employed to analyze the culture of the unit and address necessary changes. Crisis communication strategies are developed and applied. Crisis contingencies are anticipated and countermeasures are developed.

4.2 Examples of current practice: At the University level, strategic planning, change management and crisis management are utilized for long-term goals and decision making. At the College level, strategic planning is typically performed every few years. Often, strategic plans are not aligned with available resources, and participants in strategic planning are often not responsible for implementation. Strategic plans are often used to justify rather than to make decisions, and often lack in implementation with regular review and revision. At the department level, strategic planning is usually not done as it is seen as a college/university task. In addition, typically no annual plans (strategic “doing”) with formalized goals or action plans are developed.

4.3 Typical challenges: A common challenge for strategic planning is that the strategic plan is developed by people who are not responsible for implementation. The strategic plan is not based on available resources and therefore implementation impossible. The responsibility for action planning and implementation is not assigned during the planning process and the plan is not revised and evaluated at least annually. These procedural errors render the strategic plan useless as an administrative tool. As this happens often, faculty and staff meet proposed changes based on strategic planning with low expectations and resistance. During the strategic planning process, such potential resistance is not anticipated and potential communication and follow up strategy are not developed. In spite of the fact that crisis situations have occurred regularly over the last 20 years alone (e.g. 9/11, 2007-08 financial crisis, coronavirus pandemic), crisis situations are seen as unpredictable, rare and to be dealt with by higher administrative levels. This perception leads to a lack of preparation in terms of crisis communication, potential countermeasures and the ability to use the crisis for new opportunities.

4.4 Possible next steps: The intent of the strategic plan should be to develop a realistic scenario for the development of the unit for a specified time frame. In consequence, strategic planning is based on available resources and reviewed and revised annually. The planning team has to consist of administrators responsible for implementation and has to develop mechanisms to receive stakeholder input and feedback. For implementation of the strategic planning and change management, an assessment of the organizational culture and its subgroups is performed. Based on the analysis, steps are taken to address the contribution or detrimental effect of the organizational culture to the implementation of strategic actions. Administrators are knowledgeable in the basics of crisis communication, and make contingency plans for financial hardship, furloughs etc. during crises scenarios.

5. Domain of competence: Organization of the unit and processes

5.1 Optimized state: The administrator regularly reviews organizational processes with the aim of supporting the strategic plan and performs after-action reviews. The budget is used as a planning tool and resource allocation (finances, people and buildings) is aligned with the tasks and the organizational structure of the unit. Reverse analysis of alignment of resource allocation with strategic direction of the unit is performed and alternate financial scenarios are developed. Revenue streams (fund raising, grants, patents and contracts, clinical income) are evaluated for their respective contributions to the overall budget and how they could potentially be increased. A facility and space utilization plan informs a priority list of renovations/new buildings. Administrative procedures are in place which define positions and workload for employees. An analysis of job alignment and

workload (e.g. accumulation of multiple functions, extension of existing tasks) is performed. A succession plan is in place (see developing people).

5.2 Examples of current practice: Some universities require regular external reviews of their departments (e.g. every 10 years). Colleges and departments have to develop and regularly update “Patterns of Administration” documents which address a number of organizational structures and processes. In addition, some universities and colleges have developed formal metrics documents for faculty research and teaching, and position descriptions for administrators. Financial planning and budgeting are often guided by existing structures and expenses. The exploration of additional funding sources (e.g. fundraising) is typically dependent on the personal interest of administrators. Some colleges have developed policies for space utilization and space and renovation plans. Successions in administrative positions are typically decided ad hoc.

5.3 Typical challenges: Often administrators underestimate the contribution of structure, process and organizational management to the prevention of interpersonal conflict and resource allocation. They are sometimes unduly concerned that rules and regulations will restrict their freedom of decision making. Similarly, the definition of the roles and responsibilities of administrators and faculty is seen as infraction on academic and professional freedom.

Often, the budget (plan) is not used as a tool for unit development due to the notion that planning is not possible in a resource-constrained environment and increasing revenue streams is time and labor intensive. For the same reason, facility renovations and space are not actively managed.

5.4 Possible next steps: For every administrative position a position description and succession plan should be developed. The workload (i.e., multiple functions) of individual administrators has to be assessed regularly. Administrators should regularly review the operation and performance of the unit, e.g., during review of the strategic plan. Are expectations and strategic planning aligned with the operations and staffing within the unit? Is a staffing plan in place (adequate personnel, areas of new hiring)? Are people aligned with their supposed role in the unit? Is the workload adequate? A reverse financial analysis will demonstrate whether expenditures are consistent with programmatic priorities. The budget is used as a planning tool for the development of the unit and revenue streams (fund raising, grants, contracts, patents and licenses, clinical income) be evaluated for their respective contributions to the overall budget and how they could potentially be increased. A renovation plan, space utilization plan and policy have to be aligned with the strategic plan.

6. Domain of Competence: Oversight – productivity and professional behavior

6.1 Optimized state: A structured process setting clear expectations and timelines for performance (equating to productivity and professional behavior) is in place for faculty, staff and graduate students. Unit guidelines, documents (promotion and tenure documents, graduate student handbooks etc.), HR procedures and support structures are in place to codify expectations and address issues of non-compliance. The expectations about productivity and acceptable professional behavior are clearly communicated and deviances are addressed early on orally and in writing by the administrator and leadership

team. Supervisors (with and without administrative positions) are being trained in these management procedures.

6.2 Examples of current practice: Typically, universities have extensive documentation in place to regulate their procedures and processes. Often, documentation at the college and department level is less well organized with a lot of processes not addressed. Some colleges and departments have developed position descriptions and metrics documents for teaching and research, emeritus faculty policies or codes of conduct. These documents are often solitary documents and familiarity with these documents and translation into the college context depends on individual administrators. Typically, HR professionals are trained in HR procedures whereas administrators are not.

6.3 Typical challenges: Faculty who move into administrative roles often lack skills in conducting difficult conversations with faculty and employees and in developing documentation to address problems in behavior and productivity. This lack of knowledge of procedures is typically not improved through coaching; sometimes insufficient support from HR, the administrative superior or administrative peers further undermine the role of the administrator. These administrators are not trained to analyze and close gaps in procedures and documentation and instead handle issues ad hoc as they arise. In some units, cultural issues in respect to accountability interfere with administrative work. For the evaluation of productivity, there is the assumption that faculty work does not carry duties and responsibilities. This attitude is strengthened by the lack of defined written expectations and concerns that addressing workload issues might endanger functioning of unit. Often a lack of documented expectations combined with a lack of skill to address problems with employees and general conflict avoidance leads to a lack of accountability.

6.4 Possible next steps: An administrator should state the expectations of every faculty position clearly and provide feedback on performance. They should ensure that the workload is aligned with the position description and expectations for the position. Deviations from the expected performance has to be addressed orally and subsequently in writing. Annual review documents have to address productivity and professional behavior. Administrators need to be trained in HR procedures. Cultural norms in respect to accountability and potential gaps in college procedures and documents for the assessment of productivity and professional behavior have to be analyzed and addressed. It is important that the administrative team agrees on performance standards and possible sanctions. To provide a framework for performance evaluation it is useful to develop in addition to promotion and tenure documents additional ones like metrics documents for research and teaching, emeritus faculty policy, position descriptions for administrators, and codes of conduct with written expectations for professional behavior.

Discussion

The core function of universities is the generation, teaching and distribution of knowledge. In contrast to traditional efficiency oriented systems (like companies or the military) and in spite of their complexity, universities have been described as adaptive systems (27) which maintain components of academia such as self-organization, agility and personal commitment, thus compromising between hierarchy and heterarchy. The management structure of US universities includes the board of trustees, and various administrators at the university, college and departmental level (1). This administrative structure and culture are typically very different from the academic culture ((28), p74 to 78) and

administration is sometimes seen very critically by faculty (e.g. (29), (7)). Whereas there is a general framework to evaluate faculty work (in the areas of research, service and teaching), there are no generally agreed upon criteria for the evaluation of administrative work. Administrators underestimate the contribution of structure and process to the success of initiatives, and therefore underestimate the importance of a framework for academic leadership. Instead, academic administrators are typically being recruited from the faculty pool, and it is generally assumed that expertise in an academic field equals effective administrative skills, often without the requirement of any formal training (30), (6). These factors have several consequences: first, administrative work may focus on individual activities rather than the whole range of administrative tasks and result in incompetent and ineffective leadership. Second, the evaluation of administrative work focusses on personal qualities rather than overall administrative performance, and is therefore not fair towards individuals. Third, due to the lack of agreed upon criteria systematic leadership development is not possible.

The Academic Leadership Framework provides a structure for evaluation and improvement of administrative processes within the university. It enables e.g. chairs of Music, English and Surgery to talk about their work with a common language acknowledging at the same time unit-specific differences. It is based on the behavioral leadership model (10), (11), (12), (13) which has been used successfully in corporate settings and work from Drucker (16), (15) and Malik (14). We subsequently adapted these concepts and models to academic administrative work. The framework is based on orientation towards people (domain 2: developing people and domain 6: providing oversight), tasks (domain 4: goal setting and domain 5: organization) and the leaders

themselves and their interaction with the university (domain 1: values and behavior and domain 3: decision making). We have aggregated competencies from the academic leadership literature administration (17), (18), (19), (20), (21), (22) and surveys (23), (24), (25), (26) about the competencies required by academic administrators, and found them to be all contained within the six domains of competence. This is also true for topics which often come up in leadership training like diversity, emotional intelligence, or communication. It is important to distinguish between the knowledge about certain areas (e.g. diversity and inclusion, research, teaching) from the Academic Leadership Framework which provides guidance of how to manage the respective units effectively using knowledge and skills (of which emotional intelligence and communication skills are examples). It is also more helpful to break communication skills down into parts, e.g. writing an effective email, having a conversation with faculty about problematic behaviors or consistent methods of communicating a strategic plan and its implementation. All of these skills are part of competencies within the various domains of competence.

Another example of the application of the Academic Leadership Framework is the implementation of a diversity and inclusion program which is focused on the support and equitable treatment of minorities. To effectively address this complex issue, the academic leadership framework allows for a breakdown into manageable parts in the various domains. The principles of diversity and inclusion and implicit bias training as skills training are addressed in the “Values and Behaviors” domain. Planning of measures to address diversity and inclusion at the respective administrative level and the resulting action plans are addressed in the domain “Goal-setting”, structural inequities in “Organization (of unit and processes)”, problematic behavior by unit members under

“Oversight”, and support in career and personal development of minorities in “People (development)”. Thus, a large university program is broken down into systematic review and implementation of its various parts. At the same time diversity and inclusion is integrated into the overall management of the unit. As an example, to be effective, mentoring of minorities needs to be embedded into the effort of the larger mentoring program of the unit. In the same way, introducing measures to ensure a fair participation of minorities in the recruitment process ensures an increase in the overall quality of candidates for faculty and staff positions. Thus, the academic leadership framework allows for a comprehensive, iterative and integrated approach to programs, policy items and administrative work.

A number of sophisticated organizational models exist to assess and develop organizations (e.g. McKinsey’s 7S Model (31) or system based HR development (32)). These frameworks for organizational effectiveness require that a number of factors internal to an organization (e.g., strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, style and staff) to be aligned and mutually reinforcing in order for the framework to succeed, which makes implementation challenging. Even less complex programs like total quality management, empowerment or reengineering are often met with obstacles (33), (34). In contrast, the Academic Leadership Framework provides a simple tool for an assessment of administrative academic function which can easily be implemented without favoring specific content. Significantly, it is scalable, and can be applied at the institutional or the unit level, or by individual administrators. The Academic Leadership Framework is neutral on how much management versus leadership should be included in administrative work. It can be combined with different leadership theories (e.g.

adaptive (35), transformational (36), servant (37)) or styles (democratic, authoritarian, laissez-faire (38)). It does not require a certain management structure (centralized versus decentralized) and includes both the operational as well as the academic side of the university. In addition, it includes both leaders and followers which are crucial to the functioning of the university (39), (40), (41).

In order to evaluate, change and improve their overall administrative structures, universities have employed sophisticated evaluation tools (28) and strategic planning tools and processes of different complexities (e.g. (42), (43), (44)). Depending on the specificity and complexity of these tools, an informative snapshot analysis of a given administrative structure can be obtained. However, they require a large amount of time and effort and are often seen as additional independent projects unrelated to the day-to-day work of the institution. In contrast, the Academic Leadership Framework promises a simple implementation because a number of documents and procedures (e.g. (45)) suggested within the different domains of competence are already in place in most institutions. Thus, an assessment based on the framework helps to fill in gaps and addresses issues like transforming strategic planning into strategic doing. It allows for the comparative evaluation of administrative units over time, towards each other and for action planning. It provides a framework to determine the distribution of resources and authority between different academic units and hierarchies (46). However, it is not the case that institutions currently have “no” structure or framework for academic leadership; rather, such frameworks exist, but are informal, inconsistent, and inadequately articulated and socialized. The absence of an articulated framework on which there is consensus does not exist in a vacuum in which a common framework can be implemented easily.

Instead, should an institution choose to adopt a common framework for academic leadership along the proposed lines, it must first obtain consensus that leadership frameworks currently exist but are not properly articulated or consistent; that is, implementation requires consensus on a “problem statement” as a first step, to include both macro leadership culture (overall as an institution) and micro leadership cultures (within each college and department). Once consensus exists on the ways disparate approaches towards academic leadership impede the institution and its individual leaders, developing a plan toward adopting a common framework becomes simplified.

Universities are increasingly complex systems requiring leadership training as an essential component for effective administration. The Academic Leadership Framework postulates domains of competence with competencies, similar to modern curriculum development. It is simple to use the framework as the basis for a leadership curriculum to develop instruments such as sub-competencies, learning outcomes and assessments (4). This can be done by developing an in-house leadership training program, or utilizing external training opportunities for aspiring academic leaders based on identified needs. A number of leadership trainings focus on the self-development of leaders and suggest selected tools and theories to become a leader. The framework helps individuals to assess their overall development needs not just in personal development, but also in skill development and concept acquisition, and focuses on effective administrative work as interaction between leader, followers and organizational environment.

In summary, the academic leadership framework with its domains of competence (values and behaviors, developing people, decision making, goal-setting, organizing the unit and providing oversight) is a construct similar to the one we use to discuss faculty

work (research, teaching, service). It provides a framework to talk about administrative work. It is neutral to many aspects of the leadership discussion. It does not prescribe what leadership theory to follow, what management style to use or how to balance management and leadership. It simply provides a framework and common language for academic administration, and can be adapted according to unit-specific needs and circumstances. It could be used to evaluate and improve administrative work, for annual reviews and leadership training. As universities currently address issues within all of these domains, implementation is simple and provides a more systematic approach. Using a common framework for faculty work has been helpful for the development of the university, and the academic leadership framework promises to be a similarly useful tool on the administrative side.

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Appendix

The Academic Leadership Framework can be used for self and unit assessment, and for annual review.

In this appendix we provide the following materials:

1. **Study questions for the self-assessment** of the the work of the administrator and the unit (page 2-8). The questions focus on department chair and head positions, and may be modified for other administrative positions.
2. A more formalized assessment can be performed using the **program maturity scale** as outlined on page 9. This instrument allows for the comparative evaluation of administrative units over time, towards each other and for action planning.
3. A suggested form for an **annual review letter** based on the framework (page 11-12).

Domain 1: Values and behaviors

- the foundation of the leadership framework lies in the institution's promotion of ethical values and professional attitude as well as personal and skills development by its administrators.

Values:

Which sentence do I agree with the most?

- I serve the university in my administrative role!
- My administrative role serves my career aspirations!

What are my two key values and how do they compare with the college and university values?

Have I translated my values into operational principles?

Do I test my adherence to my values by using reverse analysis?

For my unit:

- What needs to be done?
- What is good for my organization?
- What gives my unit a competitive advantage?

Personal and professional development:

Do I set time aside for personal and professional development (reading a management/leadership book, attending a seminar, attending formalized leadership training)?

Do I have used one of the following individual development opportunities (finding a mentor, 360 assessment, executive coaching, psychometric assessment (MBTI, DISC, Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode instrument, FIRO-B or others)?

In which area of administration have I improved compared to 12 months ago?

Skills:

Personal work methodology: when is your work most productive, how do you manage your calendar and times for different work activities? Do I interact in person or in written form? What methods of written contact do I utilize?

Administrative assistant: How do I see the role of my administrative assistant and how do I utilize her/him?

Email/memos: how is the format of my emails (length, greetings, signature, time for response), how do I handle reply-to-all emails, what is my general email etiquette, does my unit agree with it; who has access to my email account, who reads and edits important emails?

Meetings: do you provide an agenda (when?), who is invited (when and why), how do you handle the meeting etiquette, how do you handle disturbances?, who provides notes, action items or next steps?

Conversation with faculty/subordinates: am I prepared for difficult conversations (see also domain 6)?, do I know the concept of in-groups and out-groups, do I have a structure for the interactions with my people (1 on 1, groups, whole unit), how often and with what purpose? Do I organize retreats and work with facilitators?

Trash removal: do I assess regularly what I should stop doing?

Personal health: sleep, exercise, nutrition, support people/network, work load?

Domain 2: People

- the systematic development of people focusses on the recruitment and development of faculty and staff.

Recruitment

Does your unit have a staffing plan?

Are you aware of the potential candidate pool for your area?

How is the recruitment process in your unit/college?

Does our unit have an agreed upon process for recruitment (in writing; position description and announcement, training of search committee, behavioral interview questions, metric for candidate assessment)?

How could it be improved?

How do I handle opportunity hires?

Development

Is mentoring dependent on individual people (mentees, mentors) or seen as a unit-wide requirement?

Do I have guidelines for mentoring of all types of junior people (graduate students, postdocs, assistant professors)? In writing? Best practice training and guidelines?

Am I familiar with mentoring processes and tools (e.g. individual development plan (IDP), 1 on 1 meetings with unit head, use of peer coaching groups and mentoring committees) for typical problems for early, midcareer and late stage career faculty?

Do I discuss career planning at annual reviews? Do you discuss job design and assignment?

How do I handle honors and awards?

Do I help people to improve their leadership skills?

Domain 3: Decision making

- *(the knowledge of decision-making models and processes is essential for the ability to reach well-reasoned comprehensive decisions)*

Do I approach problems from a deductive or inductive angle (how was I trained in my discipline)?

Am I familiar with critical thinking tools?

What models/matrix do I use for problem solving, decision making and situation analysis?

When do I apply formal problem solving tools?

Do I complete after action reviews for important decisions and subsequent actions?

How do I decide whether a problem requires a single (pragmatic) solution or general (systematic) solution?

Is decision making formalized in my unit in written form (what process for what types of decisions with contributions by whom; who has the final decision)? In which documents?

Domain 4: Goal-setting

- strategic planning, change and crisis management appropriate for every administrative level and function serve to guide administrative work including resource allocation.

Strategic planning

What level of planning do I do for my unit (strategic plan, strategic doing, annual goals)?

Is planning integrated into my administrative work or a separate activity?

Is it aligned with resources?

Are the people who make the plan the ones who have to implement (e.g. standing committees)?

Are there action plans and regular (annual) reviews?

Who oversees implementation?

Am I familiar with planning tools (futuring, visioning)?

Change management

How high is the level of resistance to change and strategic plans in my unit? Why?

Am I familiar with change management techniques (SPIN selling, adaptive leadership, influencing strategies)?

Who amongst my faculty and staff is most likely to support change?

Who amongst my faculty and staff is most likely to resist change?

Crisis management

Am I familiar with basics in crisis communication?

What would I do if I had to cut my budget by 10%?

What would I do if I had to reduce my staff and faculty by 10%?

What would I do in case of reputational problems in respect to individual faculty or my unit?

What are the 10 most likely problems my unit may encounter over the next 5 years?
?

Domain 5: Organization

- reviewing and revising the organizational structure of the units and their processes results in an agile and adaptable university

General questions

How do we support our goals and our people?

Which policies and guidelines outline organizational processes?

Do we have recurring problems? Why?

Which formal processes do I use for organizational assessment?

How do I organize the leadership team?

People

How often do I evaluate the job design and align it with actual work load (particularly in terms of “collection” of additional tasks)?

Do I plan for succession in key positions?

Do I have a staffing plan?

How do I organize committee work to be most effective? Do I have guidelines for committee work (including behaviors)?

Which instruments do I use for feedback (surveys, focus groups, 1 on 1 interviews, analysis of institutional data)

Resources

How do I utilize the budget as a planning tool for the development of the unit and revenue streams?

Are there underutilized revenue streams (fund raising, grants, contracts, patents and licenses, clinical income)?

Reverse analysis: do we spend our money on our goals?

Do I have a space utilization and renovation plan?

Domain 6: Oversight

- providing oversight for people is crucial to ensure performance in terms of productivity and professional behavior.

Do I state the expectations of every faculty position clearly and provide feedback on performance and professional behavior?

Do I address deviations from the expected performance and expected behavior orally and subsequently in writing? Do my annual review documents address productivity and professional behavior?

Which documents are in place to state the expectations in terms of performance and professional behavior (annual review forms, promotion and tenure documents, metrics documents for research and teaching, emeritus faculty policy, position descriptions, and codes of conduct with written expectations for professional behavior)?

Is there a gap between the stated expectations for performance and professional behavior and the culture in my unit which needs to be closed?

Is the leadership team (my own and the one I belong to) aligned in addressing performance and professional behavior?

Do I ensure that the workload is aligned with the position description and expectations for the position?

Do I know my HR contacts? Have I been trained in HR procedures (complaint handling guidelines, policies, difficult conversations, disciplinary procedures)?

Program maturity scale

Rating	Leadership oversight	Evaluation	Repeatability
Optimized	Proactive	Process and metrics evaluated regularly	Strategies routinely deployed to improve processes
Managed	Active	Process in place, ad hoc evaluation of metrics	Regular evaluation and updating of process
Repeatable	Continuous	Process in place, no evaluation or metrics	Uniform and repeatable process
Developing	Sporadic	Some process elements formalized, no metrics	Highly dependent on action of individuals
Initial	reactive	No formal process or established metrics	Ad hoc

To develop a more formal assessment, and to be able to compare units over time, a unit-specific framework based on the questionnaire could be developed, and assessed annually. The program maturity scale is a straightforward instrument based on leadership oversight over the unit, process and program evaluation and consistent application on the agreed upon processes.

Annual review form (information in red has to be modified)

Date

Address

Dear Dr. Name,

As supervisor, it is my responsibility to conduct annual reviews and provide feedback regarding performance during the past year. This review is designed to assess how we are individually and collectively fulfilling and advancing the unit/college etc mission. Further, each of us plays a role in establishing an ethos for unit/college etc. that supports, recognizes and rewards collegial, civil, professional and ethical behavior.

Materials received for review: forms to be developed by supervisor

Annual review meeting: Date

Assessment of Performance for Calendar Year XXXX

Assessment Scoring Scale based on the expectations for appointment:

Unit/college specific assessment score (e.g. below, meets, exceeds, greatly exceeds expectations)

Domain 1: Values and Professional Behavior

Assessment:

Domain 2: Recruitment and Development of People

Assessment:

Domain 3: Decision making

Assessment:

Domain 4: Goal setting

Assessment:

Domain 5: Organizational Processes

Assessment:

Domain 6: Providing Oversight: Productivity and Professional behavior

Assessment:

Goals and Objectives for next year

In summary, your overall performance assessment in XXXX fill in expectations. Thank you for your dedication, commitment, and contributions, which have a positive impact on Unit.

Sincerely,

Signature

Supervisor's name

Supervisor's position

I have reviewed my annual evaluation and have had an opportunity to meet with my supervisor.

Faculty/staff signature