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The Fall of the Faculty and the Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters: A Book Review

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Abstract: *Benjamin Ginsberg's book, The Fall of the Faculty and the Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters, suggests that the downfall of universities lies in expansion of administrators who do not have an academic or client orientation, but rather a managerial orientation. Dr. Ginsberg, David Bernstein Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University, chronicles the disproportionate rise in the number of administrators and other professional staff at the expense of faculty and students. Few solutions are presented, but the problem is well chronicled.*

The Issue

Have you seen the number of faculty at your university diminish and nonacademic staff and academic professionals increase over time? Then you are not alone. Do you struggle with bureaucratic administrations who don't or never did deal with students or Extension clients? Does administrative staff seem more bureaucracy oriented than client oriented and provide more obstacles than they clear? Then this book may be a good read for you.

In his book, *The Fall of the Faculty and the Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why it Matters*, Ginsberg rants about the expansion of "deanlets" and

"deanlings," and how it is affecting universities today. He puts a good case that the downfall of universities lies in expansion of administrators who do not have an academic or client orientation, but rather a managerial orientation. The author proposes that this administrative blight has been occurring for decades and the vast number of "deanlets" and "deanlings" have drawn funds from faculty pursuits and that many times the administrators and staffers lack any real academic backgrounds. Ginsberg is not the first or the only writer to point this out. The quote "The principal structural operating domain of Extension—University and government—is often cited today as prime examples of bureaucracy" comes directly from Patterson (1997).

Ginsberg goes to great lengths about administrators chasing the most recent fads and attending countless meetings and retreats with a preponderance of the agendas dedicated to scheduling follow-up meetings. The prerequisite "vision statement" and "strategic plan" that every new administrator seems obligated to produce is particularly targeted and scoffed at in the book. Using data from 1975 to 2005, he makes case after case where proportionally, the number of administrators over the past 40 years has been growing far more rapidly than that of faculty members or students.

Chapter 5 deals with the history of tenure and is an interesting read. Paraphrasing, if university presidents, deanlets, and deanlings were kidnapped, their absence would have little effect on the university; it would be assumed that they were all away on a retreat. Using many anecdotes in his well-footnoted book, Ginsberg is rather harsh on administrators. There still may be administrators who perform research and teach. There still may be hard-working and dedicated administrators who strive to remove barriers to facilitate faculty efforts. Wherever they are, more are needed.

The Impact

In many university situations as outlined by Ginsburg, administrators and staffers who may be lacking any real academic backgrounds are setting the educational agenda. Extension does not differ. Patterson (1997) maintains that few Extension administrators are trained in the field of management.

Ginsberg elaborates and bemoans the change in university academics moving from full-time tenured faculty to using more and more adjunct faculty. He makes a case that that this group is underpaid and overworked and at times under qualified. In many cases, students are not getting what they paid for. While much of Extension is not involved directly with undergraduate teaching, similar parallels can be drawn.

Extension faculty in the field are not be refilled but rather are being replaced with Professionals. These Professionals may not have any program development responsibilities and rarely have the academic credentials of faculty members. Additionally, with a Professional in place, the likelihood of a faculty charged with responsibility of developing programs being hired is severely diminished. While overall Extension staff may be holding steady, the number of Professionals, Extension administrators, and administration staffers is rising, and the number of faculty is diminishing. Patterson (1998) and Astroth, Goodwin, and Hodnett (2011) both call for a paradigm shift to move ahead. While this may be what is needed, there are obstacles. The real challenge is doing more with less while coping with more.

The book does not have a pro administrator bias. It is an easy task to take the worst situations and include them as examples. Campus newspapers and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* many not be considered the most robust or least biased sources to be extensively citing. Based on the title, I read the book with great anticipation. At times, the book reads as if written by an erudite liberal arts professor and ends with only a few solutions. Most of the time, it is relevant and germane to my experience. Involvement in faculty issues may slow and may not reverse the trend of administrative growth. Nevertheless, the book offers one theory of the expansion of university administration, and the result is a fun read.

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