

The Roles and Responsibilities of Middle Management (Chairs and Deans) in Canadian Universities

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1. INTRODUCTION

Major shifts have taken place in the relationship between Canada's universities and the state over the last decade. Interest is growing in policy approaches that stimulate market-like competition within the university sector (Jones & Young, 2004), and substantial changes in research support encourage private sector partnerships, recognize institutional overhead costs, and invest in human resources and research infrastructure. Canadian universities are increasingly subjected to new government accountability requirements, and there are rising public expectations related to the universities' contributions to regional and national economic development. Given this environment, one may assume that the management of Canadian universities has become more demanding and complex, especially at the level of middle-management. Academic middle-managers face the challenge of functioning at the interface between the university's central administration and the faculties and departments where the rubber of the new marketized and strategic research environment meets the road of daily academic life. Are the roles of middle-managers in Canadian universities changing?

Our objective in this paper is to examine the roles and responsibilities of middle management in Canadian universities, specifically, the department "chair" (also referred to as "head") and the faculty "dean", in order to ascertain whether these functions have changed – in rhetoric or in fact – as a function of a "new public management" or "new managerialist" paradigm that seems to be penetrating higher education systems and institutions worldwide. Our objective is to understand how Canadian universities describe and define these positions through an analysis of institutional documents and collective agreements with respect to the appointment process, terms of office, depiction of duties and other conditions of employment.

We begin the paper by describing the Canadian university sector, including its institutional governance and administrative structures. We provide a brief retrospective on the development of the position of the chair and the office of the dean and then present the findings of our empirical study of current arrangements.

2. CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES: ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

Canada is a federation of 10 provinces and three territories. The responsibility for education is constitutionally assigned to the provinces. There is no national ministry of education or higher education. The federal government provides indirect support to postsecondary education through fiscal transfers to the provinces and territories, and direct support in policy areas such as research and development and student financial assistance. (Fisher, Rubenson, et al, 2006)

The vast majority of university students attend publicly-supported institutions; a small number are enrolled in a handful of small private institutions established in recent years. The more traditional public university sector comprises 45 institutions that offer primarily undergraduate programs, 15 universities classified as comprehensive, and another 15 identified as medical/research (Jones, 2006).¹

Canada's public universities are legally chartered as private not-for-profit corporations. With a few exceptions, each of these universities has been established by a unique legislative charter with substantial differences among them in the structure, composition, powers and responsibilities of their respective governing bodies (Jones, 2002). Universities are largely self-governing, with considerable flexibility in the management of their financial affairs and program offerings. Most Canadian universities have a bicameral system of governance specified under their corporate charter involving an administrative board of governors and an academic senate. Boards are assigned responsibility under the charter for financial and administrative policy. Senates are responsible for academic policy, including approving programs of study, courses and curricula, and admission requirements. The boards are superior to the senates in the nature and scope of their authority.

At most Canadian universities, a chancellor is the titular head of the institution in a largely ceremonial role. The senior executive officer of the university is the president (also

¹ There is some ambiguity over the classification of universities in Canada since they are counted in different ways by different organizations. For example, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) specifies 91 Canadian public and private not-for-profit universities and university-degree level colleges within its membership, including affiliates of institutions. In the AUCC records, the University of Toronto is listed separately from three colleges that are commonly regarded as constituent components of the federated University: University of Trinity College, Victoria University and University of St. Michael's College. The number reflected in this paper follows the recent Statistics Canada approach to classification (Orton, 2003), where affiliates are not considered individually.

referred to as “principal” or “rector”) who is appointed by the board on the recommendation of a search committee. The president is appointed for a finite time period, subject to renewal, and reports to and can potentially be dismissed by the board. While the administrative structures vary among universities, typically, two vice-presidents play a leading executive management role in each institution: an academic vice-president (sometimes called a “provost”) responsible for academic policy; and an administrative vice-president focusing on financial and operational policy issues (Jones, 2002). Other vice-president-level positions may also be created for specialized areas such as human resources, external relations, research and technological innovation. As a rule, universities are organized into faculties, lead by a dean, and departments, headed by a chair.

The vast majority of the 34,000 full-time faculty members at the public universities (CAUT, 2007) are members of unionized faculty associations. Collective agreements are negotiated locally between the central administration of the university, on behalf of the corporate board, and the institution-level faculty union. These agreements deal with a wide range of faculty human resource issues, including specifying the specific procedures for academic appointments, tenure and promotion. These agreements have important implications for the work of chairs and deans since the agreements describe the responsibilities of these academic administrators in these important processes. In addition to faculty, chairs and deans may also be directly involved in day-to-day management issues of workers represented by other unions, including, for example, support staff, part-time faculty, sessional instructors and teaching assistants.

CHAIRS AND DEANS: CHANGE OVER TIME

In Canada, department chairs and faculty deans have received little attention in the research literature of higher education, and there are surprisingly few references to these positions in works focusing on the history of higher education in this country. The earliest references to chairs and deans, distinct from the professoriate, appear as isolated references in compendia chronicling the expansive and fragmented evolution of Canada’s higher education network of structures, systems and governance models – a reflection of the heterogeneity in the establishment of our postsecondary institutions, most of which have grown organically over the span of close to 175 years. By and large, university chairs have been profiled as “faculty”,

specifically, members of teaching and research staff of a unit. University deans have been characterized as “senior management” and discussed in the company of senior academic administrators such as the vice-president (academic) and research, and directors of schools and divisions.

Given that most institutions were extremely small during the mid-to-late 1800s, the university president usually fulfilled the functions that we would now associate with a dean (Harris, 1976). A department often consisted of a single instructor specializing in a given subject. By 1860, at the University of Toronto, four new departments had been established with associate chairs: for math and natural philosophy, chemistry, natural history, and mineralogy and geology. Effectively, the title of chair mattered little as the scientist in charge of each area had been generally, not specifically, trained. The Faculty of Arts, which also embraced adult education and graduate instruction and included professors with cross-appointments to the Faculties of Theology and Engineering, was dominated by the president (Harris, 1976). Indeed, the president’s power and influence over his institution appeared pervasive in certain universities into the 1930s. Chairs and deans were considered senior faculty expected to support all executive policies; those who dared to question any related decisions could be threatened with termination (Horn, 1999). During the Depression, for cost-saving reasons, only deans who had teaching responsibilities were typically kept on; other deans were let go due to the extremely difficult economic conditions at some institutions. This unfortunate circumstance led to a trend of university boards assuming increasing decision-making authority on staff-associated matters, particularly in recruitment and retention. Job security and tenure were not part of common parlance and seemed severed from the academic concept of “freedom” until the emergence of representative faculty associations and the movement toward unionization in the 1960s and 1970s.

Before the period of rapid university expansion in the 1960s, the roles of the chair and the dean appeared rather straightforward, with a focus on academic affairs, notably, maintaining relationships with faculty and students. Administration was hierarchical but relatively flat. Department chairs reported to deans, who had only vice-presidents and the president above them (Tudiver, 1999). Deans were appointed by the president without formal input from members of the teaching staff and usually came from inside the university. The dean, often in consultation

with the vice-president, to whom he or she reported, recommended salary amounts and benefits, developed budgets, put forward candidates for promotion, hired new faculty, ruled on requests for sabbaticals, arranged workload and implemented disciplinary procedures.

Accountability and the “more scholar for the dollar” dictum of the 1970s came with more stringent demands by governments to show evidence of efficiency and cost-effectiveness as they reduced monies flowing to the institutions (Vickers, 1979), increasing scepticism within the broader public community over the role and relevance of the “ivory tower”, concomitant with concerns over barriers to accessibility. Senior academics-turned-amateur administrators are said to have earned ulcers or heart attacks as a reward for their service, and at the price of academic career progress (Macdonald, 1979).

The academy was being described as a big university business (Macdonald, 1966). The student population more than tripled between the early 1950s and 1960s, from 63,000 to 200,000 students in the postsecondary system, accommodating post-World War II veterans, immigrants and the beginning of the baby-boom bulge. The responsibilities of the university administration were becoming more complex as the “multiversity” took shape. The “head” was compared to “a foreman in industry” (Brann, 1972, in Watson, 1979, p. 21), at the lowest rung of the university’s structure (Watson, 1979), at times experiencing “severe cost pressures” if department colleagues and higher administrators held different expectations of the head’s position responsibilities. The work was described as an “unrewarding experience” (Watson, 1979, p. 21).

Departments were expanding, and the power structure and relations among faculty were shifting in favour of more participatory decision-making arrangements. Many junior faculty were hired before they had completed their doctorate, and they struggled to secure both higher education degrees and a say in decision-making (Watson, 1979). The thrust toward democratization required a redefinition of the role of the department; the change in title from “head” to “chairman” is said to have indicated the different status of a department’s academic administrators in more democratic institutions (Moses & Roe, 1990).

In a study conducted in 1984 at one university in Western Canada, Watson (1986) found that some department members believed the primary role of a department administrator was to provide academic leadership and wanted a “head” who would hold office long enough “to make an impression” (p. 18) with sufficient freedom to do so. However, the majority of respondents

approved of chairs who operated within a broadly participatory form of administration; they wanted a chair who would coordinate the affairs of the department and represent the department in institutional decision-making structures. In particular, Watson noted that faculty saw the functions of a chair in narrow terms such as preparing and administering annual budgets, seeking funds for the area, course scheduling, allocating space and securing other facilities. Authority over academic policies, programs and standards; faculty selection, tenure, promotion and reappointment; and student admission and graduate assistantship assignments were all considered to be rightfully within the purview of the entire department – either through an elected committee or a department council including all faculty members. Decisions pertaining to research funding were deemed to be an individual faculty member’s responsibility. Fundamentally, the chair was, first and foremost, viewed as a “coordinator/administrator”; “academic leadership” scored low on the priority scale (Watson, 1986, p. 21).

These perceptions were in line with the changes in university administration in Canada that had been taking place since the mid-1960s, notably, the decentralization of decision-making and the increase in faculty influence on academic policy. Universities had been growing rapidly in number and enrolment. For some faculty, institutional growth led to new administrative structures and arrangements that felt increasingly bureaucratic, and there was a sense of alienation in the face of what some perceived to be “hard-nosed administrative responses to faculty concerns” (Penner, 1978-79, p. 72). In response to faculty and student pressure, institutional governance structures were reformed to become more transparent and democratic. Faculty unionization became a mechanism to increase job security in the context of stable or declining government grants in the 1970s, but it also served to shift the power relationships within the university in order to limit administrative discretion by creating detailed procedures for academic tenure and promotion decisions and formalizing the contractual conditions of academic work. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) provided a national forum for the exchange of information among faculty associations and developed model policies and contract language to support institution-level bargaining.

This direct faculty involvement in administrative matters marked a dramatic change in the university’s power structure and fostered a more democratic administration, as the longstanding dominance of dean’s councils and the “old boys’ network”, where senior professors

and administrators served as power brokers for their own interest, was significantly weakened (Penner, 1978-79, p. 82). Faculty and administrators “met as legal equals at the bargaining table, no longer as beggars and supplicants” (Savage, 1994, p. 58). At the same time, collective agreements weakened the role and influence of senates (Penner, 1994), limited administrative discretion, were time-consuming to negotiate and administer, and reinforced the division between management and non-management staff. Even faculty associations that did not seek union status entered into university agreements focusing on personnel issues such as job security, grievances, professional development, and the procedures for determining salaries and benefits (Anderson & Jones, 1998).

In the 1970s, a study was conducted to gather baseline data about deans in Canadian universities, with a focus on their background, career patterns, role characteristics and professional development needs (Konrad, 1978). The majority of deans were found to be male, middle-aged, tenured faculty members. Three-quarters of the surveyed population held a doctoral degree, half of which were earned in the United States. Appointment terms varied slightly across faculties, averaging five years. Power and leadership activities were viewed as priority responsibilities; staff development, planning and external relations were ranked lowest. Pre-service and in-service administrative training and development were determined to be inadequate. Greater interaction of deans across faculties and institutions was recommended.

Findings of a comparative study of academic decision-making in eight major Canadian and British universities (Lawless, 1981) conducted in the early 1980s advanced the notion of department heads in Canada being “clearly identified as administrators” (p. 6), with limited power and direct access to the executive level that included the university principal or president. Based on input from department faculty members, Canadian heads were frequently selected through a formal process for a limited term of about five years. These appointments did not necessarily go to the senior professor in the department. In Britain, heads appeared to hold more power, with guaranteed direct access to the vice-chancellor. The study also determined that the Canadian dean was “clearly an administrator with considerable power” (p. 5), enjoying a substantive budget. Canadian deans were selected through a highly formalized process for a minimum five-year term, with possibility of renewal. They were found to exercise “considerable influence both within their faculty and the university community” (p. 5). Lawless argued that an

insistence on the democratic process in Canadian universities skewed the selection of department heads toward outspoken individuals who were “popular” and, therefore, “more readily identifiable by other academics” or “less resistant or reluctant to accept the position” (p. 27). Fears that there had been an increase in “bureaucratized academic administration, or the so-called corporate model of government” (p. 26), were not substantiated in the study. Participants viewed “bureaucratization” as providing “continuity and direction in times of difficulty” (p. 26), as long as appropriate checks were in place, notably, performance reviews and service renewal ceilings.

While academic administration had not evolved to become entirely corporate in orientation, Canadian universities had clearly advanced into complex, frequently large, organizations. They were administratively intricate, autonomous institutions that were self-governing and self-administering. Collective bargaining had concretized the division between management and labour. In the early stages of collective bargaining, some university administrations had sought to exclude department chairs from the bargaining unit on the grounds that these were management positions, while faculty associations argued that chairs were “academic team leaders” and proposed that deans also be included in the bargaining unit for the same reasons. This issue was eventually resolved through labour board decisions across the country, which positioned department chairs inside the faculty bargaining units (Penner, 1978-79). Under current collective agreements, department chairs are typically defined as members of the bargaining unit, while faculty deans are viewed as management and are excluded from the union.

The notions of chairs as team leaders allied closely with faculty, and deans as administrators allied closely with senior management – reinforced by collective agreements – have given credence to the traditional view of two fronts within the academy. Brown (2001) cites studies conducted in North America and Australia showing that chairs in particular find personnel problems the most difficult to handle and their succession planning needs to be improved. Most chairs see themselves as peers with fellow faculty members and are reluctant to go into the role, which they do not view as being part of their university career paths. For example, at the University of Saskatchewan, the Department Head Leadership Program was instituted several years ago to address concerns expressed and demonstrated by its chairs and to

foster “creative change” (Brown, 2001, p. 313). Chairs have been encouraged to use personal experience and expertise to nurture their colleagues and to maintain their unit’s effectiveness and cost-efficiency. Evidence of this model for chair leadership is not documented widely, although leadership development initiatives as part of broader organizational learning and development are increasingly common. For example, the University of Manitoba has in place a Leadership and Supervisory Support network of staff programs such as coaching and best practices assessment, recognizing that individuals in both academic and administrative functions who lead work units and teams are often in leadership roles because of their excellence in the technical area of focus, not necessarily for their management experience or skills (University of Manitoba, 2007). Manitoba’s academic management programs are available across Canada and can be custom-tailored to the needs of specific institutions. Conferences featuring subjects such as the challenges facing department chairs and women administrators in the academy are also organized. McGill University offers a wide array of leadership courses as part of an institution-wide staff development program, anchored in skills and techniques such as delegating and empowering others, coaching, time and project management, supervisory roles and accountability (McGill University, 2007). The University of Ottawa runs a Centre for Academic Leadership to support deans, chairs and other individuals in their role as managers, aiming to “capture the interest of future academic leaders and prepare the next generation”. Through a series of structured job-related professional development programs, other learning resources and mentoring initiatives, the Centre aims to facilitate networking among colleagues holding academic-unit management positions and offers to all professors the opportunity to explore alternative career paths (University of Ottawa, 2007).

3. INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES ON CHAIRS AND DEANS

In the preceding section, we discussed the development of the role of chairs and deans in Canadian universities. In this section, we review the results of a study² of current institutional documents that illuminate the nature of these positions. We selected a representative sample of 30 of the 76 degree-granting public universities in Canada³ on the basis of their size, institutional

² The study was conducted over a six-month period: December 2006 through April 2007.

³ This number aligns with Statistics Canada classification information (Orton, 2003).

classification, programs, language and geographic location. In the Canadian context, “public” universities are defined as institutions that receive government operating support. Our study excluded private, denominational and other special-interest institutions. Universities from all 10 provinces are represented. The sample included universities that are English, French and bilingual; small, mid-sized and large. The sample also represented a balance of universities categorized as comprehensive, medical/research and primarily undergraduate, based on the emerging Statistics Canada classification system (Orton, 2003).

We explored the website of each selected university (and faculty association) to obtain relevant policy documents that describe the positions of chair and dean⁴, including appointment policies, memoranda of understanding and collective agreements. We also looked at position descriptions in advertisements for chairs and deans and any other institutional documents or resources that would help us understand the role and work of these academic administrators. Finally, in order to determine how these administrators are remunerated, we obtained customized national salary data from Statistics Canada that allowed us to compare the salaries of full professors, chairs and deans by analyzing data from a representative sample of 50 universities.

Of the 30 universities included in our web-based sample, 26 have faculty unions representing full-time faculty. In the four remaining institutions, a memorandum of agreement between the board and the faculty association is in place, which specifies policies and procedures related to academic appointments, promotion and other conditions of faculty work.

Our emphasis in this study was on how these positions are constructed within university policy. An important limitation of the study is that we did not secure data from individuals holding these positions. The present study, anchored in content and text analysis, serves as a baseline for further empirical research on how these positions are actually perceived and understood by academic chairs, deans and others within the organization, and how they are played out in day-to-day operations.

⁴ We focused on the chair as the head of an academic unit. This study excludes endowed research chairs, librarians and directors of Continuing Education departments. At some institutions, modest distinctions are made in the roles of chairs and deans of professional schools (e.g., Law, Medicine, Business), and we note these differences where relevant. At many Canadian universities, the Faculty of Graduate Studies coordinates graduate programming across the institution, and the position of dean of this unit is often described differently than other deans.

FINDINGS

For most of the institutions in the sample, the primary documents for our analysis included the collective agreement complemented by institutional policy documents that describe the role and appointment of chairs and deans. Eight of the 30 universities examined have updated their internal human resource policy manuals, guidelines and/or procedures in the past five years (that is, since 2002). One university is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of its human resource policies. The majority (14) of the other 21 universities last amended their respective policies in the mid-1990s.

Department Chairs

Chairs are academics – that is, they are professors, typically tenured, with teaching and research backgrounds in a university setting – who temporarily step into this administrative role. In all 16 collective agreements where this issue is explicitly addressed, chairs are members of the bargaining unit.

Terms of office:

Three-to-five-year appointment terms are the norm at 23 of the 25 universities that specify term length for appointments. The other two universities stipulate a two-year and a seven-year term maximum, respectively. More than 75 per cent (19 of the 25) of the universities allow the incumbent to seek re-appointment for a second term of the same length or less.

Initial appointment process:

Our analysis of institutional documents suggests that chairs are appointed through one of three processes:

1. Direct faculty election (one person, one vote). This is the process used at seven of the 30 universities.
2. Decision by a department committee elected by the faculty. This is the process at more than half (16) of the 30 universities.
3. Decision by a dean following consultation with the faculty. This is the situation at three of the 30 universities.

While no direct relationship appears to exist between institutional size and appointment processes, it is our sense that smaller, primarily undergraduate universities are more likely to use

departmental elections as a mechanism for selecting a chair, while larger institutions utilize departmental committees. However, it is important to note that there are substantive variations in procedures even within each of these three broad groups, perhaps reflecting what are clearly unique institutional histories and organizational arrangements. Several examples illustrate the immense variability:

1. At one small undergraduate university in Eastern Canada, the vice-president (academic) determines whether the search will be internal, external, or both. On internal searches, the dean calls for nominations, holds an election among department members, and casts the deciding vote on a tie. When the search is open to both internal and external candidates (inside and outside the university), a majority vote within the department is required. Without a majority, the dean convenes and chairs a search committee comprised of two departmental professors elected by the department; a professor from another department in the faculty selected by that other department; “a person distinguished in the discipline from another institution” chosen by the dean and the other committee members; and a senior or graduate student elected by the student council. Short-listed candidates present a public lecture and meet faculty members, whose preferences are given full consideration and are forwarded to the vice-president (academic).
2. At another small Maritime university, the process is simpler and more centralized. The selection committee consists of the department’s incumbent chair, the dean, all department faculty members, including those on leave at the time of the election, and student representatives. The president and vice-presidents are not members. The registrar conducts the secret ballot vote. The president can veto the committee’s recommendation.
3. At one large university in Western Canada, the president convenes an advisory committee because of the large diversity in size and complexity among academic units. The committee’s size and composition are at the president’s discretion.
4. At another large university in Western Canada, chairs are appointed through an Academic Appointment Review Committee comprised of the provost and vice-president (academic) as chair, four tenured faculty (one from outside the faculty, all selected by a faculty council), two provost-appointed members, one non-voting faculty association-chosen member, one non-voting student, and one relevant external professional.

Generally speaking, department chairs are constructed as internal appointments involving the selection of an individual from within the department or other areas of the university, although procedures also allow for the possibility that the university will move toward an external search where no internal candidate can be identified. Procedures for publicizing open positions internally and externally are usually noted in the faculty association collective agreements and/or university policy statements. Of the 30 universities we reviewed, about a quarter of the institutions have explicit statements on how positions should be advertised.

Re-appointment:

Chairs can seek a second term of office, although the process for re-appointment is usually not described in the same detail as initial appointments. In two cases, the policies stipulate that renewal requires input of the selection committee (that is, the same mechanism set up for initial appointments), and a faculty ratification vote.

Reporting and relationships (internal and external networks):

The chair reports to the dean. In terms of descriptions of responsibilities, the chair is usually described in terms of internal (inside the university) responsibilities and relationships. These internal relationships include references to participating in academic unit search committees for other chairs and deans (five of the 30 universities), review committees for promotion and tenure of faculty (three institutions), “Councils of Chairs” for review of institutional policies and procedures (two of the 30) and for review of programs and courses (one of the 30). Four other universities note a general, unspecified, involvement with institutional “bodies”. The majority, 53 per cent (16 of the 30), are silent on this aspect of the role and responsibilities of a chair.

An external role for the chair in the community outside the institution is mentioned by only four universities reviewed, in terms of liaisons with inter-university committees within the respective disciplines, granting and licensing agencies, professional organizations and research institutes. One university, for the Health Sciences area chair in particular, mentions the work of a department chair as “supporting applications for industry research contracts”. None of the policy documents or position descriptions makes any explicit reference to fundraising or revenue generation from external sources.

Position descriptors/titles:

The most frequently used position descriptor – at more than three-quarters of the universities where we found explicit descriptors (14 of 17) – refers to providing and/or demonstrating “leadership”, with a third of the total specifically indicating “academic leadership”. “Research” is the next most prevalent descriptor, followed by “initiative”, which are both referenced by four institutions. Representation and communication – that is, serving as the “voice” for the department, are also common to four of the institutions. “Scholar” is referenced in three cases. The position itself is most commonly referred to as “the CEO of the area” (six of 22) and “a first among equals” (three of 22). One university highlights the chair as a “model” for other faculty, with the overarching goal of fostering an “ambience where education, scholarship, service can flourish”.

The general tenor of the title is that of a senior officer, responsible for leading and administering the human resource and financial aspects of a department within a faculty, facilitating research and teaching, and representing the department and its interests within the institution.

Position responsibilities:

The vast majority (23) of the 30 universities reviewed provide some form of detail about position responsibilities in their respective human resource policies and/or faculty association memoranda/agreements on chair duties.

Management of staff (recruitment, work load assignments and teaching allocations, career development, performance reviews, tenure and promotion recommendations) and a focus on scholarly activity and budget preparation are common to all 23 of the 30 universities with job descriptions for chairs.

Administration of university policies is the next most prevalent feature of a chair’s job (seven of 23), followed by program development and curriculum planning (five of 23) and liaison with students (four of 23). In one case, coordination of web page and external publication content in university documents is mentioned among priority functions.

Remuneration:

The most common approach for remunerating the chairs is to provide an administrative stipend, above the academic salary. Amounts between \$1,200 and \$7,500⁵, per annum, appear to be the norm based on provisions in collective agreements/memoranda of understanding and from federal government academic compensation data. In some cases, the level of stipend depends on the size of the department (in terms of students or faculty).

Faculty Deans

Deans are commonly referred to as “senior officers” of the university and participate as members of executive standing committees reporting to the board on matters of program and academic planning and implementation but do not typically appear on the executive team organization charts and do not report directly to the president. Where faculty unions exist, deans are explicitly excluded from the bargaining unit but are permitted entry/re-entry into the bargaining unit upon completion of their term of office as dean (some with a conditional salary review)⁶.

Deans are presumed to be academics, although the emphasis on and requirement for scholarship as a criterion for the position during the selection process is not clearly prescribed in all the university documentation we reviewed. Recruitment from within the immediate university appears to be given priority over external hires based on the wording in the majority of policy documents accessed and the amount of detail provided on internal procedures. However, most universities appear to advertise for both internal and external candidates as part of the search process, and the use of external consultants in the search process is not unusual.

Terms of office:

In the vast majority of universities (19 of the 21 universities where there is an explicit statement), the term of office for a dean is five-to-six years. One university describes a five-to-seven year term of office, and one other indicates a seven-year maximum. Deans can be re-appointed at

⁵ All dollar amounts are expressed in Canadian currency.

⁶ Some collective agreements note that deans are permitted to continue paying union dues during the time they are not part of the bargaining unit. They may be managers, but they are managers who might voluntarily pay union dues.

least once following their initial term. One university stipulates that the second term must be no less than three years to an eight-year maximum.

Initial appointment process:

In comparison with the chair appointment process, selecting a dean involves greater involvement by the senior administration, such as the vice-president (academic) and the president⁷, and always requires final ratification by the board. The faculty dean is selected in one of four ways:

1. A search committee comprised of both elected and named members, reflecting faculty consultation for the committee membership. This approach is followed at more than half (17) of the 30 universities we surveyed that specify the process in policy documentation.
2. Same as the first but, at two of the 30 universities, faculty also evaluate and provide input on recommended candidates.
3. Direct elections among tenured faculty and full-time administrative staff for the preferred candidates. This is the case at three of the 30 universities.
4. Directly by the president with faculty input. This is the process at three of the 30 universities.

At each of the 25 universities that have an explicit process, the vice-president to whom the dean reports (typically the vice-president [academic]) convenes and chairs the search committee. The competition for the dean's position is open to both internal and external candidates. Similar to the situation with chairs, the actual procedures differ by institution, generally irrespective of institutional characteristics. The following examples illustrate some of the specific procedures described in institutional policy documents:

1. At one mid-sized medical/research university in Central Canada, the vice-president (academic) and provost, convenes and chairs a nominating committee, the membership of which is mandated to maintain "a reasonable gender balance" and the majority of which is made up of seven of the immediate faculty's "regular faculty members"; one senior faculty member from another faculty, selected by the committee chair; and one graduate student from the faculty appointed by the graduate student association. The list of

⁷ The vast majority of deans (at 22 of 28 universities providing this information) report to the vice-president (academic) and/or provost. At one university, the dean reports directly to the president.

candidates is sent to the faculty's eligible members for input and secret ballot voting. In the event of a tie or a non-conclusive outcome, the committee selects and recommends a candidate to the president. This appears to be a highly democratic process, with extensive faculty input.

2. At one small, primarily undergraduate university in Eastern Canada, faculty consultation is strong, with direct influence on the final choice. The vice-president (academic) convenes and chairs a search committee comprised of one dean who is appointed by the president and represents another part of the university; one department chair chosen by the chairs of the immediate faculty; one full professor and one associate or assistant professor chosen by the immediate faculty's professoriate; one student chosen by the student council; one president-appointed member of the senior academic support staff; and two board-appointed board members. The committee draws up a short list of at least two candidates, who present a public lecture and meet the faculty, students and senior administrators from the faculty. Faculty members from the immediate faculty are asked to submit confidential written opinions on the candidates. The committee submits this information to the president with a recommendation.
3. At one large research university in Central Canada, the president directs the selection process, placing notices, naming the advisory committee chair and inviting input of faculty members for questions to be posed to candidates, either in confidence or in open meetings. The president, who can appoint him/herself as committee chair, has sole discretion on the committee size. Specific titles and types of representation on the committee (that is, as to job or community constituency such as students, faculty, alumni and others) are not indicated in the documentation at our disposal. However, the requirements for ranks and disciplines are provided, in addition to the provisos that the majority of members must be from the immediate faculty and from departments and faculties that are closely related (e.g., medicine, psychiatry) and a specific number of female faculty must be members.

Re-appointment:

The process for re-appointment of a dean is generally not described in the same detail as initial appointments. At one institution, if the incumbent wants to serve another term, the vice-president (academic) and research, obtains a confidential assessment of the incumbent's performance from faculty and chairs in the immediate faculty, other deans and administrative personnel, and discusses the findings with the president. At another institution, the review committee established for the initial appointment re-convenes and consults with faculty members in the immediate faculty, other deans and senior administrative officers about the individual's performance in this role to date. Findings and conclusions are forwarded to the board, the senate steering committee, the president and the incumbent. The board makes the final decision. In the event a search is required, the review committee becomes the search committee.

Position descriptors/titles:

At two-thirds of the universities (13 of 19) that describe the position of dean, the word "leadership" is the prevalent position descriptor. The qualifier "academic" appears five times, while each of "professional", "intellectual" and "administrative" appears three times. Other individual descriptors include "visionary", "dynamic", "collaborative" and "distinguished scholar". The most common titles are "senior administrative and academic officer" (six of 19) and "CEO of the faculty" (four of 19).

Position responsibilities:

While the form and extent of involvement vary, at all 24 (of 30) universities where we have obtained job descriptions, the dean is responsible for making recommendations to senior management and the board on a wide array of human resource decisions (hiring, promotion, tenure, disciplinary, dismissal and compensation matters), planning and control of finances and budget administration within the faculty. Strategic planning for the faculty, in the context of the university's overall plan, and implementation of university policies are mentioned by a third of the universities reviewed (eight of 24).

Internal and external networks:

About a third (seven of 24) mention *ex-officio* membership in all faculty committees and the faculty council, and representation on university-wide committees. Liaison with professional and

educational bodies outside the institution and serving as spokesperson to raise its profile (in addition to his/her immediate faculty) are noted as key responsibilities at close to half (11) of the 24 universities reviewed. A priority at two institutions is establishing partnerships within and outside the university to promote its educational, research, and innovation agenda; and to contribute to the immediate community and region. Reference to fundraising is specifically highlighted in the position descriptions at two universities. One university also specifies the importance of developing innovative solutions to maximize revenue generation and new distinctive programs to meet professional needs in various disciplines. Fundraising activity for a dean of Arts is implied at one university in the hiring of an individual on the strength of her revenue generation success in another institution and knowledge of international economies. At one university, the reference to securing “necessary resources” through external sources is explicit for the dean of Business.

Serving as a “communication channel” and demonstrating commitment to “academic excellence”, “teaching”, “program development” and “research” are also indicated by a third (eight of 24) of the universities canvassed. Attention to students – notably, faculty allocation to graduate students, student counselling, review of student course evaluations, fellowships and scholarship decisions – is specified by more than a quarter (five of 24) of the universities. “Consensus building” within the faculty is noted by one institution. One explicitly states “no teaching requirements” for the dean as an academic while in this administrative role. “Teaching” responsibility is not noted directly in any of the documents we reviewed; reference to “teaching abilities” is mentioned twice.

Remuneration:

Based on analysis of 2004-05 salary data from a sample of 50 universities⁸ (Statistics Canada, 2007), deans are paid substantially more than full professors or department chairs. These data indicate that the dean’s salary is markedly higher in each category of university than the salary of the chair and the full professor who has no administrative responsibilities. The average salary difference, in the aggregate, between a dean and a chair is close to \$34,000, or about 24 per cent.

⁸ We began by attempting to analyze salary data from our initial sample of 30 institutions but decided to expand to 50 since relevant data were missing from some institutions, and the respondent populations in chair/dean categories were statistically insignificant at smaller institutions.

The greatest difference is in the primarily undergraduate category, where the difference is closer to \$38,000, or 30 per cent. The highest salaries for deans (as well as chairs and full professors) where these data are reported are in the medical/research universities, while the lowest are in the primarily undergraduate institutions.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Canadian universities are established as independent, autonomous corporations. Most are created by distinct acts of incorporation. Given this legal foundation, it should come as no surprise that there are substantive variations in the decisions that individual institutions have made in terms of their governance and administrative structure. They have unique administrative structures and budget and planning processes, and different institution-specific collective agreements that govern the conditions of employment of university faculty. It is clear from this study, however, that there are common elements in terms of how universities have constructed the positions of chair and dean within institutional policy documents and agreements.

Most notable, from the data collected, is our conclusion that the formal roles and responsibilities of chairs and deans have not changed dramatically in recent years. Most universities have policy documents that describe these positions and the appointment process, and while most universities in our sample revised these documents during the last decade, there is little evidence of any substantive changes in the nature of these positions or the mechanisms for appointment. Both positions focus on internal management of financial and human resources – in particular, concern with development and administration of budgets and with staff matters such as hiring, promotion and tenure, career development and compensation decisions.

Activities related to establishment, monitoring and modification of programs and curricula, and student affairs, are also key preoccupations of chairs and deans. This does not necessarily mean that deans and chairs are not experiencing changes in the nature of their work, but it does suggest that universities are not racing to reform or to reconstruct these positions.

Whether by way of a search committee or directly, the selection of chairs is not moving away from democratic collegial elections toward appointed executive functions. This shift, which has received some attention in studies of other jurisdictions, is not supported by our study for Canada. Chairs continue to be selected locally and to be positioned as members of faculty

unions. However, the selection of deans is less grassroots oriented, with greater input and control by senior management and the board in the final decision.

There is little evidence to suggest the position of chair is becoming professionalized. These are largely internal appointments for short terms of office, and the assumption continues that, at the conclusion of the appointment, the department chair will return to his/her role as a faculty member. The level of remuneration for chairs is quite modest. There is no sense of the department chair as a distinct career track. In fact, while reappointment is possible, institutional policy assumes that chairs should not be permanent appointments.

The situation of the dean is somewhat less clear. There is little indication that there have been major changes to the formal role of these positions as described in institutional policy, but then again deans have long been regarded as senior executive positions and central administrators have long played a key role in these appointments. Decanal searches are generally broader in scope, and universities frequently employ professional consultants in the search process. Decanal salaries are now substantively higher than their senior academic peers. These salary levels imply more authority/responsibility relative to a senior professor who has been willing to take on a few additional administrative chores. At the same time, universities continue to establish limits on the appointment terms of deans based on the assumption that it is not in the best interests of the university for these positions to be held on a continuous or permanent basis.

Does this mean the market mind-set and mechanisms are less prevalent in middle-management ranks in Canada's public universities than in other jurisdictions? Ten years ago, Slaughter and Leslie argued that Canada had not yet caught up to the profit-motive movement, relative to Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (1997). More recent studies have indicated a growth in competition and market-like activity within Canadian higher education (Fisher, et al, 2006; Jones & Young, 2004; Shanahan & Jones, 2007) , and there is every reason to believe deans and chairs are experiencing mounting pressure to become increasingly entrepreneurial and to seek out new sources of revenue while restraining costs. At the same time, it is interesting to note that these objectives have not become part of the vocabulary used to describe these positions and their role within the university. A small number of universities describe an "external" role for chairs and deans, and there are few references to position objectives that might somehow correspond to fundraising, generating new resources, or

commercialization activity. Once again, these activities may well form a developing component of the work of chairs and deans, but these roles have not been incorporated into institutional policy documents.

One key factor that may be playing a role in discouraging large-scale change in the roles of chairs and deans in Canadian universities is faculty unionization. Academic human resource decisions are, perhaps, the most important decisions universities make, and in the Canadian context, the procedures utilized to make these decisions are frequently prescribed by collective agreements. University administrators cannot unilaterally change these procedures, and the role of chairs and deans in key faculty personnel decisions are largely defined within these contracts. In the agreements we reviewed for this study, the chair is generally described as a faculty member who is a union member, while the dean is termed “a first among equals” and presumed to come from faculty ranks but who is outside the association during the term of office.

We have also observed recruitment notices for newly-created functions at the executive level, with titles such as “vice-president, advancement” and “vice-president, external relations”, for the specific jobs of seeking out potential money-making ventures and sources, and building the institutions’ profile in Canada and abroad, with students, business interests and government bodies. Are these positions, which generally do not require academic experience, responding to market forces in a way that is not possible for chairs and deans, given their faculty affiliations?

At the same time, there seems to be an increasing sense of a need to provide chairs and deans with specialized professional development given the increasing complexity of their working environment and the growing skill set required of these positions. A number of universities have recently initiated new professional development programs. Further studies may also look at the level of institutional support provided to these positions within the university. Has the level of administrative support for these positions increased – notably, in terms of financial, planning and fundraising expertise?

Ultimately, in a broad business sense, based on our analysis, the dean could be considered the strategist and the conduit between his/her faculty and other faculties within and outside the university; and between the president/executive management and external constituents (professional and licensing bodies, community groups, potential donors and research partners) as a spokesperson to generate goodwill and to attract monies for his/her faculty and the

university as a whole. The chair could be called the tactician and the conduit between faculty and the dean. Whether the work of the strategist and the tactician is increasingly a function of market motives and embedded in a “new managerialist” paradigm is not substantiated by our study and merits further research. Nonetheless, the policy documentation and collective agreements/memoranda of understanding vary among institutions, and many formal statements and contract provisions are silent on specifics of roles and responsibilities, leaving the door open to possible flexibility in the execution of duties, latitude of decision-making, and scope of relationships within and outside the academy. Further research to determine whether the findings in this study are borne out in the daily practice of chairs and deans, in different disciplines, is the next critical step to inform our understanding of and insights into middle management in Canada’s universities.

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