

## Administrative Leadership

### Planning and Time Perspective

I am not afraid of tomorrow, for I have seen yesterday and I love today.  
William Allen White [4, p. 50]

The futility of bringing about planned change in education receives as much space in professional journals as do the techniques and theories of planned change. Pessimism about the effectiveness of planning abounds at a time when administrators identify it as a crucial management task. Planning is a necessity for colleges struggling to redefine and to realize institutional missions created two decades ago when the task of managers was to spend generous allocations.

The management role of the college administrator has been altered by external influences including budget reductions, declining enrollments, inflationary economy, and greater state control. Planning today requires allocating limited human and fiscal resources to problems threatening the future viability of postsecondary institutions. Planning advocates provide little assistance to the administrator in meeting these challenges. Vague statements about planned change, elaborate schematic drawings of the planning function, diverse planning models, and five-year plans that are in fact "shelf documents" created for evaluation agencies or for year-end reports offer minimal assistance to top-level managers as they respond to internal and external governance systems.

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To compound the problem, even potentially useful planning activities are not embedded within the scope of management. Rather, planning is a separate function performed for its own sake. Many administrators view planning as external rather than essential. Trying to demand planning from personnel lacking a planful attitude toward the future has never worked. The challenge is not to develop new planning schemata (although traditional business applications need modification for educational environments) but to develop the planful attitudes and time perspective required to analyze the past, supervise the present, and manage the future.

The future is the focus of true management. Management requires a forward-looking consciousness. The past cannot be managed, and the present requires only supervision. The challenges of college infancy were focused in the present. A "manager's" real dilemmas were to spend the annual budget, construct buildings to accommodate growth, maintain favored funding status, and hire faculty. To accomplish those tasks one needed only to supervise the present. The future, however, requires management. In college education, the next two decades may represent the first real management challenge. Never before have colleges had to choose between equally viable alternatives, account so closely for human and fiscal resources, defend their mission so openly, or protect balanced education when the pressure is for a balanced budget.

Before this "management" can occur, administrators need to understand the subjective time of their institution, of themselves, and of their administrative staffs. Temporal perspective has been ignored by educational administrators and may have contributed to the current failure of planning. If there is not a balance among tradition, today, and tomorrow, there may be a tomorrow we do not advocate.

#### *Why Manage the Temporal Perspective?*

The past is gone; the present is full of confusion; and the future scares the hell out of me!

David Lewis Stein [2, p. 386]

Time is used to orient the self in the midst of ongoing events and to coordinate interaction with others. Attitudes toward time influence how time is used. The temporal attitude that promotes planning activities is "planfulness." A planful attitude typically emerges in administrators who are future oriented. Administrators who are oriented toward the past or present have greater psychological difficulty projecting themselves and their institutions into the future. If adminis-

trators are not future oriented, institutional planfulness and planning efforts may be stymied.

As we initiated our studies of planfulness and planning, we began with the notion that a future orientation was a prerequisite to planfulness and competent planning. As our studies progressed, we learned that the personal experience of time was too complex to be understood just by determining toward which of the three time zones (past, present, future) individuals and institutions were oriented. Based upon an extensive literature review and factor analytic investigations of temporal experience,<sup>1</sup> we developed a three-factor model to conceptualize individual and institutional "subjective time." Subjective time refers to the personal experience of time in contrast to objective time such as "clock time," chronology, history, and calendars. The three factors of subjective time are "perspective," "differentiation," and "integration."

#### *Temporal Perspective*

The first factor of the subjective-time model is "temporal perspective." Perspective refers to how individuals and institutions view and orient themselves to time. Time can be viewed as an ally, enemy, harasser, or irrelevancy; this, in turn, makes it seem ascending, fast, slow, running out, and so on. Temporal orientation is determined by which time zone has primary relevance for contemporary decision making. Most institutions focus on one time zone more than on the others and, depending on the amount and intensity of the focus, that perspective influences the institution in subtle and not so subtle ways. This preferred time zone becomes the institution's modal orientation. Those institutions with a past orientation may be so tied to the past that even minor changes are resisted, external realities are ignored, and effort, optimism, and productivity pale in the light of straight-line extensions of previous history. The tradition-bound administrator offers lengthy rationales for inhibiting change and enacts a rigid leadership style. Past-oriented institutions use highly structured and ossified series of policies and procedures to thwart experimentation, innovation, and creative response. The circles in Figure 1 depict the modal orientation of those colleges in which the past has primary relevance for contemporary decisions. Preoccupation with the past is so promi-

<sup>1</sup>These activities are part of a program of research designed to investigate planfulness and planning as they relate to career maturity and vocational behavior. The program has produced over a dozen dissertations and numerous papers examining the association of temporal experience with planful attitudes and planning competencies.

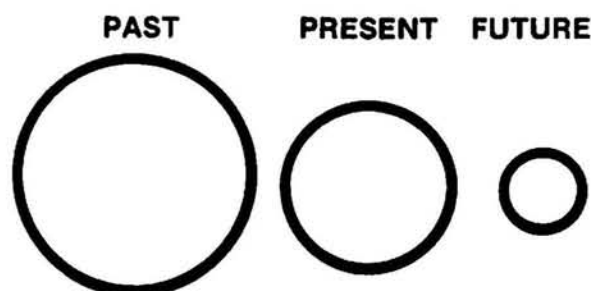


FIG. 1. Past-oriented Temporal Perspective

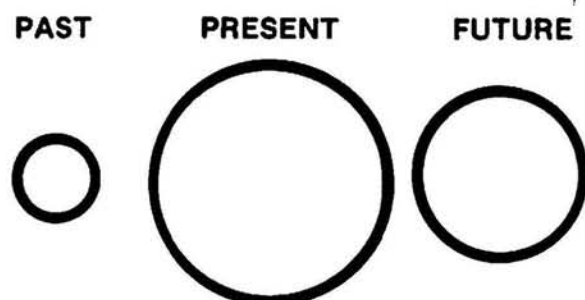


FIG. 2. Present-oriented Temporal Perspective

ment that it overshadows the present and channels attention away from the future. The institution is a projectile from the past, and the administrator's job is to protect the original trajectory.

At institutions where the perspective is present oriented, crisis management is the order of the day. Faculty morale suffers from anxiety, feelings of powerlessness, and a "skidding" feeling. The administrator is viewed as visionless and the institution as rudderless. Accountability standards and performance measures are seen as transitory. "Targets of opportunity" are pursued with unrelenting vigor but with little thought addressed to their long-range impact. Departments pursue new programs that will help them at the expense of the institution's mission. Budget meetings would lead an observer to conclude that only self-serving departments exist within an organization lacking a central purpose and philosophy. Turf management and control issues dominate the hidden agenda. In institutions where the modal orientation is the present (see Fig. 2), the passions of the moment prevent the past or the future from shaping current action. Constant preoccupation

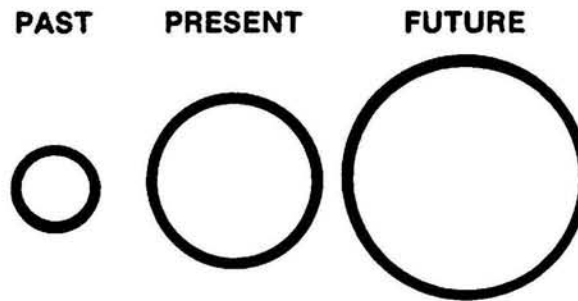


FIG. 3. Future-oriented Temporal Perspective

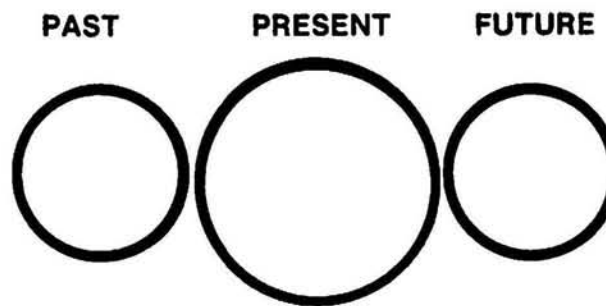


FIG. 4. Balanced Temporal Perspective

with effectively reacting in the heat of a new crisis limits proactive anticipation of the future.

When a future orientation dominates the perspective, institutions become disconnected from their past, and the present becomes unsupervised. Figure 3 illustrates a future domination. Future-oriented administrators are so busy creating a future through new programs, new buildings, and the pursuit of new populations that they often miss present opportunities or violate past traditions. Constituent groups view the institution as out of control. Administrators at the future-dominated institution are seen as having their heads in the clouds while the institution falls apart around them. Stability is sacrificed for a hoped-for future, and the faculty becomes demoralized because their present experience does not promote optimism.

The mix of remembering (analyzing), experiencing (maintaining and supervising), and anticipating (managing) greatly influences both institutional climate and leadership style. Time perspective channels planning activity. To create an ideal planning environment, the adminis-

trator should promote a balanced temporal perspective. Figure 4 depicts that balance.

### *Temporal Differentiation*

The second factor of subjective time is "temporal differentiation." Its two variables are "density" and "span." "Density" refers to the number of events within a particular time zone. Administrators vary regarding with how much detail they remember the past, analyze the present, and foresee the future. For example, administrators differ greatly in the number of events they foresee occurring at their institution during the next five years. Some administrators can predict only a few major events in their institution's future, and others foresee a host of them. With regard to the past, some are rich with anecdotes and local history, and others know little of what transpired before they arrived on the scene. A "dense" present is experienced by administrators who appreciate the endless interpretation of issues and agendas.

"Span" refers to retrospective and prospective extension. Retrospective extension refers to how far back into the history of the institution leaders remember, and prospective extension refers to how far into the future they project the institution. The present also has potential for varying length. For example, the biennium budget can define the span of the present or the furthest extension of future planning. Attention to details and seeing beyond the moment influence planning disposition. On an institutional level, the density with which constituent groups on the campus populate each time zone and how far they extend the zones impact the planning environment. For instance, a faculty with a densely populated past and long retrospective extension will generally find ways to thwart planned change. Refining the representations of temporal perspective to include differentiation results in Figure 5.

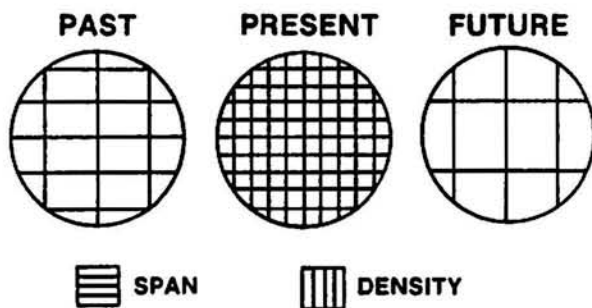


FIG. 5. The Temporal Differentiation Pattern of Many Institutions

Figure 5 represents the temporal differentiation of many institutions. The present is the most complex time zone. It is densely populated with events and has broad span. The past is also densely populated, and, although people remember the events, the span for decisional purposes is not as extended. The future has the least extension and density. Yet the college attempts to extend planning efforts well beyond those events. When this occurs, planning objectives become lists of unspecified hopes with little connection to the experience of the institution or its staff. Having presented the view and orientation of "perspective" and the density and span of "differentiation," let us consider the third factor comprising subjective time, "integration."

#### *Temporal Integration*

The "temporal integration" factor refers to the sense of connectedness among events from different time zones. Integration's two variables are "continuity" (cognitive) and "optimism" (affective). Continuity denotes the relatedness among events occurring in the past, present, and future. A sense of continuity facilitates connecting present situations with prior behavior and relating future goals to present efforts. Continuity promotes a sense of agency that enhances striving and accomplishment. A discontinuous sense of time produces a fragmented, disjointed, and frustrating experience rather than a sense of flow and momentum. Disconnected time zones thwart realistic evaluations and often result in repeated discovery of the same issues. Discontinuous experience of time causes faculty to repeat mistakes and feel trapped by circumstances beyond their control.

Optimism is highly related to continuity. It denotes the sense of confidence in the achievability of future goals. Like hope, optimism is an affective evaluation of the future. It differs from hope in that optimism connotes a positive anticipation for the future because distant goals can be connected to specific current behaviors. Hope connotes a desire for favorable outcomes, but because future goals are not clearly connected to current behavior one feels unable to influence destiny. Institutions with temporal integration display high morale because the future attainment of goals is already affectively experienced in the present as employees enact behaviors they know are the "present of things future."

Figure 6 portrays the subjective time of an institution where temporal perspective, differentiation, and integration facilitate planful attitudes and planning activities. Because the past, present, and future are integrated, zone C is truly the "zone of action." Zone C repre-



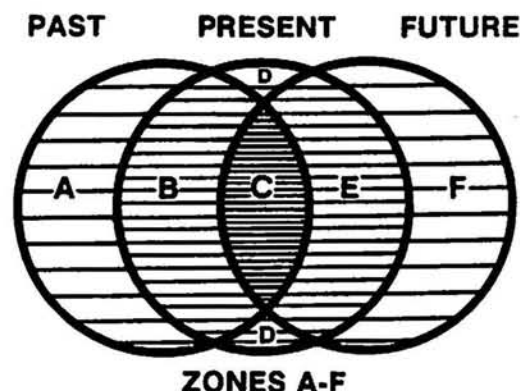


FIG. 6. The Subjective Time of an Institution Where Temporal Perspective, Differentiation, and Integration Facilitate Planful Attitudes and Planning Activities

sents the ideal climate for planning to occur. It is an environment in which planning focuses on the past and future of present decisions. In this zone of institutional functioning, the past is analyzed, the present is supervised, and the future is managed. Zone E represents the "zone of optimism" in which present actions and contemporary decisions are linked to future events but not connected to past influences. The long-range plans of most institutions are within this zone. Zone B is the "zone of security" because present activity is closely tied to the traditions of the institution. Zone F represents the "zone of fantasy" because future plans are unrelated to present actions. This zone is populated by seers and showpeople and is the area of fatuous hope. Zone A, the "zone of archives," represents that part of the institution's history that is disconnected from the present. Few individuals reside in zone A, but many use its data to impede discussions that attempt to "change" institutions. Zone D, the "zone of the nonce," defines those activities in the present that have no connection to past or future events.

The above three factors of temporal experience influence planful attitudes and planning activities. The subjective time of the organization can facilitate "planning readiness" or promote an "antiplanning posture." All areas of campus operation and decision making are influenced by the temporal perspective. If administrators find aspects of subjective time nonfacilitative to their goals, they may consider systematically changing the subjective time of the institution. It is our assertion that setting the institution's "subjective clock" is a planning competency for chief administrators. This competency includes the



skill to assess the institution's subjective experience of time and the capacity to change the institution's subjective clock.

*Assessing the Institution's Temporal Perspective*

If you want a man to keep his head when the crisis comes, you must give him some training before it comes.

Lucius Annacus Seneca [3, p. 119]

Before attempting to "set" the subjective clock of a college, the chief administrator should assess the current temporal experience. There are several methods for assessing the temporal perspective, differentiation, and integration of constituent groups within the institution. The following three examples illustrate how temporal experience can be assessed.

1. Begin by examining appointment books and meeting agendas. Is a typical day filled primarily with responses to past events, current emotional issues, or the values and philosophy of future directions? Is the agenda of the president's council balanced with reference to track record and future implication, or does it focus on only one time perspective?
2. Examine the work of curriculum committees. Do they represent extensions of the past, refining of the present, or areas of new endeavor?
3. Examine the preoccupations of campus constituencies. What is the content of the governance association? An analysis of the issues dealt with by the faculty senate, union, or other governing body can be extremely revealing. When the major issues of such groups include maintaining standards, protecting tradition, codifying regulations, revising policy manuals, and so on, the temporal orientation could be assumed to be "past." When the major issues are existing course and curricula revision, crisis resolution, contract negotiation, salary, and maintaining positions and programs, the temporal orientation could be assumed to be "present." A "future" orientation would encourage items relating to new curricula (coupled with enrollment projections), long-range planning assumptions, discussion of future implications of proposals and ideas, and so forth.

In most institutions, an assessment will require differential diagnosis on each temporal dimension. However, even without that diagnosis, the institutional clock can be "set" by the actions of college administrators.

*Setting the Temporal Perspective*

If a man takes no thought about what is distant, he will find sorrow near at hand.

Confucius [1, p. 196]

We assert that setting the institutional clock so that it can be conducive to planning is a responsibility of administrators. Illustrations of how the chief executive officer can impact the subjective temporal experience of an institution are provided below.

*Assume Prospective Responsibility*

Temporal orientation permeates the decision-making principles and practices of chief executive officers and even channels their understanding of their occupational role. An example may clarify this assertion. A frequent statement made by college presidents is "I am responsible to the board." What they mean by the word "responsible" is influenced by the orientation of their temporal perspective.

*Past oriented.* Responsibility means that one should be able to examine what has happened, explain it, and suffer the consequences. Retrospective responsibility means: "I will take the heat and try to fix things." The administrator with this orientation interprets responsibility to mean "obliged to account for or be answerable to."

*Present oriented.* Responsibility means being capable of and designated to give a response, answer, or reply to current issues. Though an administrator assuming retrospective responsibility is too busy accounting for the past to supervise the present or manage the future, the present-oriented administrator is so busy supervising that the thought of delegating supervisory authority to allow for managing the future never occurs to him or her.

*Future oriented.* Responsibility means to proclaim one's choices. The prospective meaning of responsibility is to commit oneself to some line of action. It entails taking a stand to which others can react. Prospective responsibility involves announcing an explicit and public vision of what one believes should be. If administrators do not stand for something, they can fall for every new idea in the present or bow to the pressures of tradition.

Each of the above meanings of responsibility has validity. Responsibility can be accountability, a reply, or a proclamation. We contend, however, that prospective responsibility is the unique duty of the administrator. It is the chief executive officer's role to break path and to stimulate reactions to his or her proactive efforts. The prospectively responsible administrator realizes that errors are not failures but rather are opportunities for corrective feedback. Unlike the retrospectively

responsible administrator who is busy explaining and hiding mistakes, the prospective manager is willing to make mistakes to break the logjam of confusion and anxiety that arises from an unarticulated future. The administrator with a sense of prospective responsibility has the courage to be imperfect. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, "I Have a Dream" speech and John F. Kennedy's inaugural address are examples of leadership behavior channeled by a sense of prospective responsibility.

#### *View Decisions As Questions, Not Answers*

Administrators who sparsely populate time zones deny themselves alternatives as well as opportunities for compromise and synthesis. Having a "one-track mind" makes one believe that behavior and choices are already determined by the system. Such administrators perceive their decisions to be programmed by the past or forced by contemporary pressures. Whether by tradition or pressure, their choices are effectively preempted by expectation and demand.

Administrators who densely populate time zones come to see that their behavior is an independent variable rather than a dependent one. This promotes the use of propositional logic instead of preemptive logic. Such administrators learn that their behavior and decisions are questions, not answers.

By differentiating time zones, administrators create a structured awareness of the environment and of their role. The more events they are aware of, the greater the depth of their understanding of the college and its possibilities. Heightened awareness also increases the meaningfulness of the administrator's own role. Administrators with a dense network of action pathways need to reality-test the viability of alternative visions and outlooks. Their behavior and decisions are the instruments used to explore the future. With a dense outlook, decisions are not determined by the past or present but are questions posed of the future.

#### *Create Continuity*

Events occur. Any "cause" or "connection" between one or another is strictly a function of the human interpreting them, not of the events themselves. Otherwise, everyone would interpret events exactly the same. Administrators do not deal with chemical reactions in a test tube, where static formulas accurately predict dynamic interactions. To test this assertion, ask three administrators the cause of inflation. How they explain it and to what events they link it will tell you more about them than about inflation.

The administrator creates continuity through self-connected events. The interest in wanting to connect past, present, and future, and the

wisdom to do so convincingly, is a subjective time-setting skill. A discussion of connecting a present crisis with the past and future will show what is meant by creating continuity.

A crisis is some currently experienced disequilibrium on campus, and it can be dealt with as such. However, a crisis usually can be connected with a larger problem that has a history and with an opportunity that has future meaning. Instead of exclusively dealing with the homeostatic upset, the time-competent administrator places this event into a larger context and attends to opportunities arising within the present problem. An effective leader works to turn symptoms into strength through linking crises with growth. The Chinese recognize this within their language. Their symbol for crisis is a combination of the symbols for danger and opportunity.

An administrator who operates with a disconnected sense of the present perceives a crisis as a trauma that is hard to invest with meaning and even more difficult to master. One with a disconnected sense of the past perceives a crisis as a threat to the status quo. An administrator who experiences the future as fragmented from the present perceives a crisis as a conflict with his or her dream. Any of the above perceptions of crisis tend to structure responses that leave the institution in a more fragmented and rigid state. The administrator who can encounter crises with a sense of continuity perceives them as problematic opportunities whose resolution will lead to a more stable and integrated institution. The administrator who strives to create continuity realizes that a crisis is more than a time of heightened vulnerability. It is also a time of increased potential and the source of institutional progression. By creating a sense of continuity, the administrator can help the institution deal with a crisis as a bump in the road rather than as another in a series of unexpected turning points.

The above three suggestions are representative of a wide array of strategies that we have developed to train administrators in setting the temporal perspective of their institutions. The strategies range from the conceptual to the practical and require varied commitment of interest and energy. Their application to institutional life, however, can promote both planfulness and planning and can increase the effectiveness of administrative behavior.

What follows is a sample of the more practical activities available to administrators to enable them to assume prospective responsibility, view decisions as questions and not answers, and create continuity.

1. In speeches, meetings, and memos, make a conscious effort to portray time as dynamic and moving energy that the institution is harnessing. Avoid statements indicating that time is forcing

you to do things or that time is harassing you. Emphasize repeatedly that you make your future, not find it. You actually create your institutional future by what you do today.

2. Remember that a future orientation is the *sine qua non* of institutional viability. Insist that the future implications of proposals be considered. Inform staff often about future events with as much specificity and detail as possible and ask staff to keep you informed of events they predict will happen and to extend scenarios they present beyond the original time limits they portray.
3. Be sensitive to the hidden message behind "we have always done it this way."
4. Realize that by their education and training some of the staff have been taught a temporal orientation in their original professional identity. For example, historians and accountants tend to be past oriented; business and speech faculty tend to be present oriented; economists and scientists tend to be future oriented.
5. Pay special attention to the events immediately preceding and following major discontinuities at the college. Continually balance remembering, experiencing, and anticipating to show how the past led to the present and influences the future.
6. Create future plans that are syntheses, not compromises.
7. Remember that deferring to luck, hope, or prayer portrays you as powerless to influence destiny.

We have posited that an institution's use and subjective experience of time is a primitive predicate of college administration. We have further contended that setting the institutional clock is a competency used to promote planful attitudes and planning activities. Setting the clock to a future-oriented position with underlying density and a sense of continuity is the preferred position. If administrators assume responsibility for readjusting the subjective clock, a climate and environment conducive to planning can be developed and fostered.

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