Getting Started Well: The President's First 100 Days

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1. Engage With the Board Around Mission Alignment and Expectations

- Get to know the board.
    - Honor their role as the college's stewards.
    - Suggestions:
        - Schedule one-on-one conversations with each trustee.
        - Keep them in the loop between meetings.
- Clarify expectations with the board.
    - The board oversees mission, identity, and larger policies.
    - The president and administration implement and execute.
    - Suggestions:
        - Begin clarifying expectations during the interview process.
        - Don't think of managing the board but engaging the board.
        - Over communicate rather than under communicate.
- Align with the board (and others!) around your mission.
    - The key to alignment is to align around mission.
    - Talk about mission every time you talk.

2. Clarify Roles of Institutional Executive Team

- Anatomy of a Healthy Team
    - Healthy teams require clear authority, shared trust, and defined responsibility.
    - Suggestions:
        - Establish regular meetings with the executive team.
        - Ensure everyone values the university above their departments.
- Role Clarity
    - "Here's what I own. Here's what you own. Here's what we decide together."
    - Suggestions:
        - Review job descriptions.
        - Two meetings with each in the first 100 days: how does your department function? SWOT analysis of your department.
- The President As Quarterback
    - Each player knows their part; the quarterback knows how the parts work together.
    - Suggestions:
        - Only get into the weeds when you're invited.
        - Don't be the smartest in the room, but have the most level head.
        - Don't lead from positional authority except as last resort.

3. Cultivate Relationships and Culture With Faculty, Staff, Donors, and Influencers

- Building Trust: You can only lead people if they trust you.
    - Suggestions:
        - Leave your office at least once a day.
        - With sensitive issues, prefer conversations to emails.

- Listen First: Trust grows when people feel seen, heard, and valued.
    - Suggestion: Do a listening tour; listen for recurring themes.
- Communicate as openly as you can.
    - Listen first, but people do need to get to know you.
    - Early on, you may be able to communicate values more than specific plans.
    - Suggestions:
        - Hold town halls.
        - Consider cascading communication.
- Consider your various constituents.
    - Suggestions:
        - Include student groups in your listening tour (also, teach a class?).
        - Visit alumni and donors when you're in their areas.
        - Treat alumni and donors as partners in relationship, not dollar signs.

4. Evaluate the Institutional Business Model for Sustainability

- What surprised me *and* what's most difficult are the daily financial decisions.
- Examine the numbers, models, and assumptions.
    - Examine key numbers: enrollment, fundraising, debt, deferred maintenance.
    - What aligns with mission? What sustains us financially? What are we subsidizing and why? What drains our resources? What must change for our long-term health?
    - Suggestions:
        - You sometimes have to say no to good ideas.
        - Remember: No margin, no mission.
        - Incremental progress if possible. If not possible, make hard decisions.
- Communicate with your people.
    - Help people see big picture.
    - Suggestions:
        - Devote a town hall each year to a financial update.
        - Balance optimism and realism.

5. Establish a Healthy Leadership Culture And Personal Rhythms

- Develop healthy personal rhythms.
    - Health is more about daily rhythms than about vacations.
    - "I learned to treat rest as obedience, not reward."
    - Suggestions
        - Take an extra day when you travel for business.
        - Commit to enjoying the job. Take advantage of the unique opportunities.
- Develop a healthy leadership culture.
    - Decide slowly when possible: the value of pondering.
    - Everyone has their bad days, don't overreact: I have my bad days too!
    - Learn where the anxiety lives (Steve Cuss).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *The College Administrator's Survival Guide*, by C. K. Gunsalus
- *Budgets & Financial Management in Higher Ed.,* by Margaret Barr and George McClellan
- *Managing Leadership Anxiety*, by Steve Cuss