

EMBEDDED LEADERSHIP

Taken together, these comments on strategic change suggest that a set of basic conditions must be fulfilled for it to be successful and continuous. Significant and persistent attention has to be given to creating leadership and decision-making systems for colleges and universities that are far more resilient and responsive to change than is currently the case.

Leadership for change requires institutions of higher learning to embed and distribute responsive and responsible processes of strategic decision making among committees, teams, and communities throughout the organization. This task is indispensable for mending the worn patchwork of decision-making patterns that characterize today's institutions. For this to occur, a new sense of shared responsibility for effective leadership and governance must take hold and shape the enterprise's culture of collaborative governance. In such a context, obligations are felt by all parties in the process (Tierney 2000). Leaders empower and respond to the needs of their followers, but followers have the responsibility to do the same for leaders, so that at times their roles become interchangeable. It will require the commitment of the faculty, administration, students, and the governing board to answer to one another for the quality of their shared leadership and followership in collaborative systems of decision making. Participants in the process grant designated leaders, whether the head of a committee or the president, a chance to be heard and recognize a legitimate role for authority, creating a sense of mutual responsibility sometimes lacking in academic communities (cf. Burns 2003). In discussing leadership and the distress that usually comes with the adaptation to change, Heifetz notes: "The long-term challenge of

leadership is to develop people's adaptive capacity for tackling an ongoing stream of hard problems" (1994, 247).

Out of better and more responsive ways to make decisions will spring more effective and responsible decisions. Ultimately, according to Burns, it happens that in such a pattern of embedded leadership, "Instead of identifying individual actors simply as leaders or simply as followers, we see the whole process as a *system* in which the function of leadership is palpable and central but the actors move in and out of leader and follower roles" (2003, 185).

Leadership and change are difficult and complex issues in all organizations, but they are especially so in institutions of higher learning. The deep commitment of academic professionals to the power of learning as their center of value must be made organizationally resilient for it to flourish in the future. Without new approaches to governance, to leadership, and to management, that future will be more frustrating and traumatic than it needs to be, with the encroachment of managerial and commercial models of decision making ever more in evidence. Much is at stake in safeguarding the vitality of academic work and in retaining its sense of calling, as Clark reminds us. As a calling, it "constitutes a practical ideal of activity and character that makes a person's work morally inseparable from his or her life. It subsumes the self into a community of disciplined practice and sound judgment whose activity has meaning and value in itself, not just in the output or profit that results from it" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton quoted in B. R. Clark 1987, 274). The academy requires effective and widely distributed leadership to sustain the power and vitality of this vision.