PEOPLE IN AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

State academic institutions exist to fulfill the need of good education and the pursuit of education excellence, primarily for the community it serves. Academic institution is both hierarchical and committee-based in structure. It is hierarchical for the Administration including staff, similar to any organization in business industry or government. It is committee-based for the Faculty body in a fashion similar to US Congress. It can exploit the best of both models for better governance and rightfully democratic decisions. The key component is the colleges it houses. Academic management is exercised via the decisions by the people based on policy and process they create. It can be good or bad. It has a dipole scale. The bad side as the opposite is labeled the other side in this paper. This article examines the other side of management exploiting the collaboration between the people, which could foster self-interest and power building. This collaboration takes advantage of flaw policy and/or missing process permitting aberrant decisions by Administration and Committees by the people at the college level and below. The paper proposes a management measurement model for a continuously improved academic environment.

Also part of this grand organization is the California Faculty Association (CFA) as a union organization. Each CSU campus has a CFA Chapter which works closely with the university administration for the protection of faculty rights and other matters.

Check and balance between administration and faculty body is somewhat similar to the US government (executive branch) and US Congress (legislative branch). Check and balance are almost everywhere in a public university, except at the department level. In fact, at the university level, one has the Academic Senate, at the college level, the Faculty Council. But there is no organization unit equivalent to either Faculty Council or Academic Senate, at the department level.

The following gives a brief description of the key People entity of a college: faculty, chair and dean. We include the discussion on staff and student representatives in this paper only when necessary although they do participate in ballot concerning college-level decision making.

Faculty Appointment

Faculty appointment, tenure-track (T/T) and tenure (T), is done via a national search process. An appointment is recommended by the Department Search Committee and the Dean office. Full-time and part-time lecturers however have a different process. They are appointed by the Department Chair.

A newly appointed faculty is given a Faculty Handbook which describes three major activities: teaching, research and service, to be evaluated in future Retention Tenure and Promotion (RTP) filing. The teaching is practically
in the capable hands of individual faculty member (T, T/T, and full-time and part-time lecturers). The research is commonly conducted either individually as sole-author or in collaborative group. The service, however, is all committee-driven or council-driven. The decisions of the committee or council are primarily based on existing policy and process.

Chair Appointment

When a current department Chair finishes his or her term and s/he is not subject to re-election, a new Chair is needed. Department Chairs are commonly appointed from within, at the discretion of the Dean after the ballot recommended by a Department Chair Election Commit­tee created for that purpose.

What the above means is that the Dean has the right to appoint the one s/he sees fit from the result of the ballot. It is specifically written in the college policy. Exercising the discretion policy, the Dean can appoint whoever s/he wants. A candidate with winning vote might not be selected by the Dean. This makes sense, however, since the Dean has to work with the department Chairs.

The Chairpersonship term is 3 years. In some department, the term can be extended one more time. In other departments, it can be more than two terms. This inconsistency can be problematic.

Dean Appointment

A College Dean is appointed after a national search at the recommendation of a College Search Committee. Candidates can be from within (IRT) or from outside. A newly elected Dean commonly has the support of most existing Chairs, they are from the outside. A newly elected Dean commonly assumingly has the support of most existing Chairs, at least from the ones of the Search committee. After all, these are the people who recommended the dean appointment. The deanship term is 6 years.

A MATTER OF POLICY AND PROCESS

From the perspective of information management “Strat­egy-Capability-Value” (Applegate, 2008), a university can be considered as an information model for student knowledge development. The university and all its components are driven by policy and processes for the definition and development of university strategies, capabilities in different colleges, and values to the students.

The university, college and department policy and association processes supposedly exist for supposedly every aspect of university governance and operations. The policy and the process are supposedly carefully drafted, fully de­liberated, approved and posted in the university website. Academic policy and processes are assessable to all personnel and students.

It is assumed there is a process for anything and every­thing. It appears that nothing could go wrong. However, flawed policy exists, and processes can be flaky, incom­plete or non-existent.

The institution as a whole is moved from a point A to a point B by the mesh of decisions over space (cross organiza­tion units) and over time (past, present, future) made by the administration, councils and committees at all three levels of organization: university, college and department.

Most activities of the committees and council are transparent via minutes of meetings and reports, except faculty evaluation such as RTP and/or a couple of others such as Finance Review.

The committees and councils meet a couple of times during a semester. Each meeting would last between one to two hours. Once in a while in a semester but not every sem­ester, a department-wide or college-wide faculty retreat occurs to discuss issues raised by the Administration, by the AACSB accreditation organization or others. Issues normally raised in one meeting would be resolved during the next meetings by the committees and councils in observing a prior defined policy and process. As such, one can expect the concerned issues in question are slow to be resolved, except RTP filings which have to be timely executed.

Decisions recommended by Councils and Committees should be rational or logical, as one might expect. They might be based on studies, statistical analyses, trends, per­formance, etc.

But there are also irrational decisions. These are the results of what Daniel Kahneman called Thinking fast (or Sys­tem I) as opposed to Thinking slow (or System II) exer­cised in the human mind (Kahneman, 2011). As reported in Antonio Damasio’s Descartes’ Error (Damasio, 2005), many irrational decisions are influenced by the mammali­an brain portion of the three brains in one (reptilian brain, mammalian brain and neocortex) or Paul Maclean’s tri­une system (Newman & Harris, 2009). These are identi­fied as emotion-driven decisions which practically everyone one exercises consciously.

In business environment, the irrational decisions are quite often driven by monetary incentives, greed, etc. They can lead to fraudulent activities, corporate fiascos, and subse­quently to bankruptcy. We have witnessed these aberrant decisions as covered by news media and research articles when they happened. Examples are (1) Nicholas Lescion of Barings Bank (Hogen, 1996; Leeson,1995; Rawn­ley, 1995), (2) Jeff Skilling and Andrew Fastow of Enron (Dharan & Rapoport, 2006; Eschenwald, 2005; Fox, 2003; Healy & Palepu, 2003), and most recently (3) Rich­ard Fuld of Lehman Brothers (Azadnianmin, 2012). The latter initiated an economic meltdown which still exists in some shapes or form (Sheil, 2015).

There have been new regulations e.g. Sarbanes-Oxley Act in 2002, reforms in accounting, finance, corporate govern­ance, etc. (Higgs, 2003; Powers, 2002). For the most part, there were only isolated solutions. There were no integrated solutions. Apparently, the solutions were question­able since newer bankruptcies kept occurring.

Academic institutions are not different from corporate in­stitutions from this decision perspective. There are good decisions and bad decisions, rational or irrational. There are right decisions and wrong ones. Some good decisions which are not timely or due to other reasons turn bad (Campbell, Whitehead & Finkelstein, 2009). The ratio­nal (calculated) and irrational (emotion-driven) decisions happen every day in the academic environment especially at the college level and below, without being truly moni­tored and accounted for. These decisions form a sequence or series which affect faculty and staff life and student life.

One possible difference is in the participation of individ­ual members in numerous committees and councils since it is the committee’s discretion. No individual member is accounted for any of the allegedly faulty decisions and nobody is at fault. Outsiders do not know what has been discussed or who vote what, except maybe in RTP filing, members have to sign their own recommendation: posi­tive or negative. Injustice, double standard, favoritism, etc. can be exercised due to flaws in the college policy and process.

To get a feel on or to measure the teaching part in the col­lege of interest as a whole (Table 1), one could examine the number of T’s and T/T’s in a particular department versus the number of lecturers. In some cases such as IS and CBA in Table 1, there are fewer T’s and T/T’s than lecturers by a relatively large difference (e.g. row IS, information systems and IB, International Business). This situ­ation should be looked into and explained. It should be handled if it was a problem.

Another example is FTES indicator in the IS department. It measures faculty effectiveness with respect to enroll­ments (Table 3). For example, in Information Systems, it

<table>
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An Example Practice of Appointment of Faculty, Chair and Dean

National search or not, a candidate can enter the competition via networking with a chair and his/her close friends via past acquaintance at the same graduate school or of the same origin. Networking is not a bad scheme. Prior acquaintance is not bad. Same origin (country, state, prior employment, etc.) is not bad. One should bring in good candidates to the department. It should be encouraged but it has to be done right. It should end after the appointment.

Networking scheme will turn bad, however, after the candidate is appointed. s/he feels obligated and grateful to the department Chair who brings in the candidate. These obligations happen. The candidate allegedly repays the favor by positive vote in numerous department activities which serve the chair’s self-interest.

One might ask how a department chair can strengthen his/her position. It’s not too tough. S/he can start bringing in people s/he knows as exemplified earlier. Appointment is normally based on the list of recommended candidates, but the Administration would go with the one who accepts the lowest salary. That’s how the “favored” candidates commonly get in: being in the recommended list and accepting the lowest offer. There have been cases where the newly appointed “favored” T/T’s have been groomed from the start by the department chair and his/her close friends in the department at the expenses of other new hires who might have been misled in their preparation for RTP or received no proper guidance and/or assistance. Some degree of favoritism exists.

These will eventually serve in the future search committees for recommendation of other friends of the same graduate schools, same origin or not. No one would know or can blame the fact that behind the scene these newly hired people would get the undivided attention and/or support to be quickly tenured or promoted as this has already happened in this college.

Again, as in the case of faculty appointment recommended by the department search committee and by the chair, loyalty of a chair to the dean after being selected is a good thing. But it would not serve the purpose of the education if loyalty is misplaced or exercised for the self-interest or power seeking of the Dean or of the leadership team the Dean is building.

It is allegedly possible for self-interest and power seeking chair or dean to recruit senior faculty and T/T faculty and place them in strategically important committees and councils such as Faculty Council, Finance Review, RTP (Retention Tenure and Promotion), Faculty Development programs, and serve their purpose. The irony is that the revised policy and the democratic process via committees and counci

People, Policy and Process in College-level Academic Management

During the last 15 years, the college of interest has witnessed three deans. The first one left abruptly before his term, and resumed his teaching position at the department he came from. The second one left at the end of his term, and he did not have another job waiting. He went back to his former college elsewhere before he landed a deanship at another private university. In both cases, no reasons were given on why they have left. The current dean has reached, supposedly, the end date of his term more than a year ago but no dean evaluation is yet seen.

Commonly, college deans come and go. Chairs do not. For the most part, the chairs return to their department as faculty members, after the appointment expires. Some deans return to their original college. Other deans might go on to other things or retire. Tenured full professors stay where they belong. The latter keep the minimum participation when they don’t care.

But, T/T faculty is a different story. The T/T’s invest five to six years of their life, trying to get tenured and promoted. Contrary to some fast track T/T’s, others receive no mentoring, no guidance from the department or college except the seminars offered at the university level during their first year. They have to work on their own, no advice and at times no respect. Also, at times they are lured into activities which interfere and jeopardize their plan for RTP. They are commonly under a lot of pressure in three areas of activities: teaching, research and service.

For the college in this study, the faculty attrition rate is sort of high. Some, of course, left after they were recommended by the Dean to be offered a terminal year after RTP filings. There was the case of an Assistant Professor who worked his way to finish his doctorate program. He was then appointed as an assistant professor. He was misguided since he was not among the “favored.” He was late in producing the number of articles as required in RTP policy. He was let go. Of course it was his fault.

For some cases of negative recommendation, the RTP candidates did not take no for an answer. They followed up with their deans, and the Provost office overturned the Dean and all RTP committees’ recommendations.
But the damage left a scar so deep that the tenure and promotion would not heal properly. Nevertheless, life goes on in the college. New candidates are appointed to replace the departed ones. The new T/Ts would be productive for their upcoming RTP filings, therefore the department college performance indicators would stay in the acceptable range of AACSIR while some of the senior ones remain inactive in publication. A quick look into the college website will reveal the contributions of all these members. Is it time that someone should voice proper governance and control process to the department and college activities?

**ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT AND DECISIONS AT COLLEGE LEVEL: HIDDEN ISSUES AND EXAMPLES**

Besides the observable from the institutional research and assessment unit which provides data and statistics, we examine issues which can be hidden at the college and its departments. These issues are primarily the results of Dean’s power building and some department chairs who take advantage of the less structured or missing process at the department level, where the adherence to policy is less than expected. These might cause the loss of faculty and faculty confidence, degrading performance, and once in a while some turmoil and other situations which could involve CFA. The followings exemplify the signs and symptoms of the hidden issues.

**Issue 1: Dean’s Power Building Rather than Leadership**

Every newly appointed Dean initially wants something good for the college portrayed in his/her vision made known to the entire college during his/her candidacy. A new dean is motivated to perform well while many faculty members are in a wait-and-see position. The newly appointed Dean already has the undisputable support of his/her Associate Deans and Assistant Deans and his/her staff in organization unit such as Business Development, etc. While good leadership should be the main task of a new dean, some dean could pursue self-interest. A power-seeking dean can structure or restructure easily his organization by manipulating some organization units in his/her dean office. The dean might need more people to support him or her outside of the dean’s office. Over the term of the deanship, there might be more than one new Chair selected by the dean to replace the ones whose terms are expired or who stepped down for some valid reasons. This is the opportunity for the dean to strengthen his support.

It was not unusual that the Dean would seek the support of some senior or T/T faculty members. It is a matter of negotiations. It’s sort of “You scratch my back, I do yours”. The new Dean can influence membership to various committees and councils. The senior members would be members or chairs of some important committees or councils. Some important most ones are the Faculty Council (Policy and Process), RTP Committee (Retention, Tenure, Promotion), Finance Review Committee (Finance and Accounting), and Faculty Development Committee (Awards). Membership to important College Committees can be easily placed, via democratic process (ballot, etc.), in three-year, two-year or one-year term, based on the influence of college administrators and other supporting senior faculty members. The dean would be able to control every aspect that deems important to the dean.

**Issue 2: College Governance**

The Department and/or College committees and councils, now under the control of the Dean, can make changes to policy and relevant process. It is highly possible in this situation at this point to run the college to the liking of the dean.

Resistance to the power building in the college is scarce. Part-time lecturers mostly are not involved. Staff and full-time lecturers made only small sense in the vision and concerns of some senior or T/T faculty members. It is a matter of interest. These members mind their own business. Tenure-track faculty members try to be productive for retention and promotion in due time since they would face the potential offer of a terminal year, if they are not. Tenured associate professors can speak out but they also are subject to promotion as well.

Aberrant college decisions start to grow and invade the system much like cancerous cells which grow and invade nearby tissues, and proliferate to other organs. Aberrant decisions for some self-interest groups can be exercised at the expense of everyone in the College.

To object or remove a chairpersonship, the department needs strong, productive, caring and compassionate faculty members. While there are a few, they are outnumbered by the others “favored” voting members. The removal or recall won’t happen.

To object or remove deanship, the college needs strong chairs. These won’t happen either when the college leadership is controlled by the dean, especially in the case where the majority of chairs are appointed by the Dean.

Signs and symptoms of problematic issues start to surface, as indicated by many RTP filings which are overturned by the Provost office with or without the help of CFA. Other indicators to problematic issues can be detected by looking at student declining success rate or attrition rate, declined or non-existence of outside grants, college culture, increasing number of part-time lecturers, no activities or reports from Finance Review Committee.

We present in this section a number of example cases, namely: Example 1 on Assigned time; Example 2 on Election procedure; Example 3 on policy change; Example 4 on Faculty evaluation, and past RTP overturned examples.

**Example 1: Assigned Time Award Handling**

The Business Development unit of the Dean office is supposed to work on grants for the college. We haven’t seen any sizable grants. The faculty on their own brought in some small grants and stipends for their research, unlike other colleges of the university who brought in millions and millions of dollars in research.

The college relies on assigned time awards set aside by the university. Everyone in the college competes for a piece of the funding, worth some $5,000-6,000 to hire part-time lecturers to teach in the faculty’s place.

In a particular year of the past, there was an announcement of assigned time awards for research activities. Faculty was to submit research proposals. The proposals were to be evaluated and ranked by the College Committee, formerly called Faculty Development Committee. There were 5 members. Each represented one department of the college. One of them was elected chair. The task described in the Faculty handbook was to provide the Dean with a recommended list. There was no written policy or procedure on how to do the task.

In this example case, one Committee member named X recused himself according to the policy, because he submitted a proposal for award consideration. There was no other member for him. As suggested by a senior member, the Committee executed an ad hoc process: read all submitted proposals, use a numerical scheme to rank them, and combine all ranked values of all individuals for final discussion on overall ranking. The Committee completed the recommendation with X’s proposal ranked last. It sent the recommended list to the Dean office.

When the department Chair (the same chair for decades) of member X found out, he protested on the reason that there was no input from a representative of his department. The Committee Chair who was a T/T faculty replied that the said department sent no alternate before the meeting, despite the request. The department Chair argued that he would have been the alternate by default, and he had sent his ranked list which was placed in the Committee Chair mailbox. There was no list received. It was not submitted.

The department Chair bypassed the Committee, escalated the issue to the Dean office. The Dean altered the list of assigned time awards recommended by the Faculty Development Committee and sent the revised list which now included faculty with high ranked value to the University administrators for the award. Such arbitrary violations of policy, process and protocols have been commonly practiced. The email exchange and reports on the case should be still in the system as proof.

**Example 2: Missing Election Procedure**

There was a ballot to be counted by a department Election Committee on an important issue. There was no voting procedure defined at this department level.

To manipulate the result for unknown reasons, the Chair of the Election Committee changed the date of meeting to an earlier date so that one of its members could not attend. This member raised the issue to the Faculty Council (FC). There was an investigation by a sub-committee of FC. The sub-committee found violations of process. Original ballot records were apparently tampered with. The report was submitted to FC. It was buried in subsequent meetings as there were more important issues to be dealt with.

**Example 3: Policy Change**

Under the pretext of improving faculty research and raising faculty qualification standards, a former Dean placed an item on a change to RTP policy to the Faculty Council which s/he was controlling. The change required that all new RTP filings for promotion must have at least three journal articles on an approved list of journals. The new policy went into effect.

As a result, there were two RTP policies: an old one and the new one. New RTP filings were allowed to select one of the two RTP policies for some arbitrary period of time. At an arbitrarily selected time, the new one completely replaced the old one.

The issue was that the new RTP policies were flawed due to omission. It did not count research manuscript or textbook as research, scholarly, and creative activities. A simple reason for this omission: no faculty of the college has published any research manuscript (not book chapters)
The irony was that even students entering the school would have enjoyed the criteria set forth in the Catalog. Their job is to produce a measurement report to the Provost office. It could be a final report. They have data access to anything and everything in the college. Confidences among faculty members would be degraded. 

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The irony was that even students entering the school would have enjoyed the criteria set forth in the Catalog. At times, three or four authors, each work on an article, resulting in three or four different articles, each faculty member would be counted on the number of articles published in journals not in the approved list. Thang N. Nguyen

The oversight measurement committee is funded by the College. The oversight measurement committee should be of primary concern. It could be a final report. They have data access to anything and everything in the college.

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It is not fair however to the students during the term of deanship.

Power building under the pretext of education excellence is common, at least in the environment cited as example in this paper. Integrity and ethics of leadership team in the college should be of primary concern.

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