



ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP - SUCCESS OR ASSASSINATION?

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Abstract

This paper describes a real story that took place in a small private University in San Francisco. In this story the impact of good and bad leadership becomes profoundly apparent. What leaders will do to hold onto their power is also radically illustrated.

During the first year in which the described events took place, I managed as a change agent to alter the collective consciousness of the members of the institution both as a group and as individuals. Just as the group was moving into the “acceptance of change” phase, the President (who had employed me explicitly as the facilitator of change) did a radical about turn and revoked all change initiatives and change processes then underway. The story ends with the institution regressing by at least five years from a consciousness, cultural, emotional, motivational, not to mention, a financial perspective.

This paper is divided into three parts. Part 1 describes the group dynamics present in the Institution at the time the case study takes place. Here I describe the culture of the organization, the leadership and authority issues, and the system dynamics. I also describe my appointment and my role.

Part 2 describes the Adaptive Leadership Model and Part 3 describes how I applied the Adaptive Leadership Model to the management of change process, and the successes and failures I experienced. I also analyze how and why those successes and failures came about.

Part 1

The Case Study

Introduction

This case study took place during the period of October 2000 to September 2002. The events of September 11th occurred exactly at the halfway mark. The President’s

doing a one hundred and eighty degree turn regarding the changes he had initiated coincided with the tragic September event.

From a macro viewpoint, the case study begins during the height of the investment mania in Silicon Valley and its dramatic stock market performance and ends one year after September 11th amid the stock market freefall.

The university under discussion is a private graduate institution providing postgraduate degrees in psychology and the humanities. This Institution has a distinctive claim in its mission: to educate by integrating mind, body, and spirit.

The climate for contemporary spirituality throughout the time, and especially post September 11th, was very positive. Even so, the University had a declining student body.

It had recently appointed a new President. The previous President had held the position for a nine-year period. Three years prior to the events to be discussed the institution had faced near bankruptcy. At that time, 40% of the then staff contingency of seventy-five core faculty were laid off. Morale amongst faculty dropped and remained low. The new President, previously a dean of academic affairs at another university, was intensely focused on two goals: increasing faculty morale, and turning the institution's financial affairs around. I was appointed to address the latter of these goals.

History of the Institution

Mind, Body, and Spirit University (MBSU) founded in San Francisco in the 1960s was a part of the tide of the 1960s' pursuit of spirituality which included freedom, peace, hippies, hashish, trips to India, ashrams, and gurus. The San Francisco Bay Area provided the perfect home for a private graduate institution focused on integrating mind, body, and spirit and Eastern and Western spirituality.

The University began modestly as a small commune of like-minded people interested in the integration of Eastern and Western spiritual thought, and especially determined to infuse spirituality into all disciplines of learning.

The original founder hoped that this small university would help to counter the paranoia and xenophobia of the MacArthur years, and to elevate the minds of young people who wanted to be educated through embracing difference. Those engaged in this small graduate institution aspired to teach their students that while the West has many

strengths they would gain spiritual transformation by integrating Eastern wisdom traditions into the disciplines they studied.

Since inception, MBSU was plagued by administrative disasters not the least of which were extreme financial woes. Once the original founder died, the institution experienced repeated leadership struggles as it lurched between modest survival and abject poverty. The series of Presidents and senior administrators appointed throughout the University's three-decade history were chosen largely for the enthusiasms they expressed about the philosophy and spirit of the School rather than their expertise in administration. The Board, responsible for selecting these senior administrators, persisted in failing to grasp that enthusiasm does not compensate for ignorance or incompetence. Given the lack of leadership the University endured over the years, it is somewhat miraculous it has weathered so many storms.

During the latter part of the nineties, MBSU nearly met its demise. Due to radical mismanagement, the squandering of scarce resources and reckless stewardship, the doors of bankruptcy yawned wide open as the institution failed to meet salaries or suppliers' bills. In the nick of time pleas to donors and key benefactors prevented the predictable fate. A flood of desperately needed cash flowed into MBSU's coffers, staving off bankruptcy for another day. At this time, the Board and the Finance Committee of the Board decided to embark on a radical restructuring of the University. Colleges were consolidated and thirty-five faculty out of a total of seventy were laid off. Administrative positions were closed. The President, who was also a teaching professor at the institution, chose to resign his presidency. The Board found a new President only after a full two years' search. Once replaced, the Board guaranteed the President Emeritus a position for life at MBSU, agreeing to his stipulation that he earn the highest faculty salary.

Over the three-year period prior to, and during the two-year period of this case study, the number of students at MBSU continued to decline.

MBSU took pride in its history of offering hundreds of classes each semester. Friends of the faculty were encouraged to generate new offerings. The ineffective administration rarely rejected any of these class proposals, even where only two students had signed up. Class sizes varied from two or three students to twenty-five or thirty. In general, faculty received minimum leadership or guidance, and certainly minimal

supervision. Many of those not laid off had been at MBSU for fifteen to twenty years. This group, adept at working only the minimum hours required (although some did not even do that much) manipulated extra pay or benefits for whatever they considered extra work. Student satisfaction, with the exception of a few degree programs, was generally low.

Organization Structure

At the time I arrived at MBSU it was organized into three Colleges, the College of Psychology, the College of Liberal Education, and the College of Eastern Studies. The College of Psychology issued graduate degrees in psychology and prepared doctoral students for the licensing examinations. The College Liberal Education and the College of Eastern Studies issued masters and doctoral degrees in the humanities. All programs throughout both Colleges included some teaching in the Eastern traditions.

A Dean, voted into the position by the faculty, headed each College. The deans were old timers and deeply invested in preserving the status quo. Each College had five programs or departments, and the department head reported to the appropriate Dean. MBSU did not employ a Chief Academic Officer, Vice-President of Academic Affairs or a Provost. This was tried in earlier years and did not prove effective.

The Deans reported directly to the President, as did the Vice-President of Finance and Planning, the Vice-President of Advancement, the Director of Continuing Education, the Director of Marketing, the Director of Admissions, the Dean of Students, and the Director of Library Services. The registrar reported to the Dean of Students. The Director of Financial Aid reported to the Vice-President of Finance.

External Environment at the time of this Case Study

The new millennium has ushered in a renewed interest in “spirituality.” Many people who have previously eschewed formal religions have found a new spiritual home in the host of contemporary spirituality movements that claim to honor the spirituality that resides in us all. The new millennium has also raised many people’s concern for values. Increased attention to the environment, focus on better eating habits, heightened

attention to health and fitness, and the burgeoning growth of the not-for-profit sector provides some evidence of a shift in values.

The September 2000 run-up to Presidential elections, and the Bush/Gore count and recount in the months that followed reflected the ambivalence that prevails in so many corners of society in the United States. At this time election politics and ethics came under new scrutiny, but failed to result in transparent values.

During the latter part of 2000. Silicon valley was still experiencing its heady days. The proliferation of young millionaires with soaring incomes based on hurried calculations and speculations often performed on the back of lunchtime napkins continued unabated. Property rental in San Francisco had sky-rocketed, as had the general cost of living.

Over the previous two years the usual ebullience that anything is possible in the American dream had acquired new definitions. California, plagued by unusually high temperatures and caught up in political incompetence and the greedy spirit of the times experienced roving blackouts and horrific electric bills. The atmosphere of laissez-faire for which the Bay Area is particularly famous prevailed. After all, the economy was booming, many were making money, jobs were in plentiful supply, the sky was blue and the Golden Gate bridge stood tall and proud. The idea of a Republican President, and one from Texas no less, seemed absurd! The highways to San Jose and San Francisco were packed from 6am in the morning in both directions – so the entrepreneurial machine of the west coast of America was in full gear.

The homeless population of San Francisco, always larger than many other states of the U.S. due to the warm weather, boomed as the cost of living, especially housing soared. Clusters of recently turned homeless people of all ages opened for “business” at nearly every major intersection – and due to the sense of general well-being of those in real jobs - these entrepreneurs’ take home pay soared too.

Spiraling prices and spiraling hopes jettisoned any concept of limits that might otherwise have prevailed. In the middle of this cosmic madness, I moved into my exorbitantly priced tiny one roomed apartment in central San Francisco.

From MBSU’s perspective this was also a time of promise. Spirituality was now recognized as a mainstream endeavor and more and more people wanted to begin their

spiritual quest. Due to the soaring stock market grant money, donations, and private donors were plentiful and generous. A general sense of plenty prevailed. If MBSU could get its act together opportunities stood waiting to be grasped.

Internal Environment at the time of this Case Study

As I mentioned earlier the University's history reflected an ongoing narrative of lurching perilously close to failure. Time and again the University could (or should) have closed its doors, but then, at what seemed the final hour, a benefactor rescued it from the brink of collapse. The repetitive nature of these parlous times had left the faculty, mostly old timers, somewhat impervious to reality. Every time the ship nearly hit the rocks again they would shrug, smile, and say they had seen it all before. At some deep gut level they believed in MBSU's invincibility and along with it, their own. The layoffs served as a severe shock to all of those who survived the "barbarous cuts," as they called them.

Poor leadership, too few students, lack of resources, lack of care, greed, and resistance to boundaries and limits describe MBSU's internal profile.

Faculty turnover, except during the layoff period was exceedingly low, while that of administrative staff was exceedingly high. Further, many of the faculty had been with the Institution for over fifteen years while several had been there since MBSU's inception nearly thirty years ago.

The faculty culture dominated. Deep divisions existed between the faculty and administrative staff. Both parties held the other in contempt. The faculty believed administrative work to be beneath them and those who partook in that kind of work an inferior sort of person. The staff despised the faculty for their better salaries and, as the staff perceived it, the faculty's appalling work ethic. Added to this, the faculty blatantly refused to comply with many administrative procedures, instead insisting on doing things their own way. This feud between the two cultures goes some way to explaining the difficulty in implementing administrative control systems. To sustain any systems at all the academic programs hired their own staff to do "their administration" and by the time I arrived, MBSU was operating on two systems – the formal administration systems designed by the registrar, the business office, and the office of the VP of Finance, and the shadow systems run by the academic departments.

So let us take a look at the internal environment of the MBSU from a system's perspective. As a collective those employed at the MBSU, and who stayed for any period of time saw the world from a viewpoint of perpetual victims. "Things were done to them," and they clung to the belief their own agency was always severely curtailed. Now, who were their perpetrators? For one, it was the outside world with its focus on results, materialism, performance, and accountability. For another, it was the Senior Administration. It was the Senior Administration that caused MBSU to struggle in such an environment of scarcity. It was the Senior Administration who did not really understand the spirit of the University and thus focused on the wrong things such as costs, work responsibilities, and revenue targets. It was the Senior Administration who laid off their friends through drastic and barbarous cuts. It was the Senior Administration who was responsible for their low salaries and their non-existent annual increases. The attitude "MBSU owes me big" prevailed.

In reality, the Senior Administration had poorly served MBSU in the past. As I mentioned, earlier many of those previously appointed to those positions were not trained in administration. They were for the most part academics caught up in their own ambivalence of what it meant to be an administrator. Many of their stewardship failures resulted from ignorance; however, regrettably, several notable examples existed where the Senior Administration had behaved carelessly and unprofessionally. This fact provided the MBSU's employees, faculty and staff, with both the motive and the fuel for distrusting anyone in Senior Administration.

Another part to the victim perspective was the collective's issues around power and authority. As a large group, in smaller sub-groups, or as individuals, whatever combination one came into contact with, everyone appeared to have an issue about power and authority. Rebellion and divisiveness occurred at every level and in every circumstance. Passive-aggressive strategies were used in attempts to both undercut anyone who had a position of power or authority, and to sabotage their initiatives.

Distrust pervaded the system resulting in a them-versus-us duality in almost every discussion, process, or procedure. In order to deal with the continuous negative onslaught those holding positions of power and authority needed to become inured in order to preserve their sanity. This hardening on their part led them to reject any opposition at all

from faculty and staff, thus creating a cycle that reinforced the collective's distrust of them. While as a group or as individuals, both faculty and staff despised others having power and authority. They refused to take up their own authority other than in covert or passive-aggressive ways.

Both faculty and administrative staff participated in a series of committees that formed the governance structure of the MBSU. Belonging to a group was important. Group membership provided solidarity and reinforcement in the experience of victimhood as well as providing "protection" from the Senior Administration. Groups "fought" valiantly for their members whom they perceived to be "persecuted" by those in power.

Group membership demanded loyalty to the collective in opposition to Senior Management. Group involvement also implied support for the senior members of faculty or staff who acted as opinion leaders and who led the charge against the Senior Administration when necessary. Group involvement rarely meant loss of the individual's identity. Each group and the collective as a whole exhibited a high tolerance for the uniqueness of each individual, frequently demonstrating great patience and understanding for one another. Amongst the faculty, especially, most of them knew one another well and they managed to provide healthy space for differences. This tolerance, patience, and understanding did not exist when it came to outsiders or to Senior Management. In these instances, the opposite proved true.

To the employees of the MBSU, group process was considered all important. Hours of discussion around process issues, how people were feeling, who felt excluded and why, assumed so much time and energy that attention to task was minimal.

The three Colleges battled one another for attention, resources and support from the Senior Administration. The Colleges all felt superior in relation to the other. They argued vociferously as to which College was more valuable to the University, and whose departments executed a larger workload. The three Deans would often engage in acrimonious fights at meetings, thereby paralyzing the rest of the group and the proceedings. Faculty in the three Colleges did not intermingle with one another, except when they were engaged in defending themselves against the Administration.

Despite the expectation of loyalty to the group as a collective, infighting was rife between departments and sub-groups. Departments maligned one another, reported one

another's transgressions to Senior Management, and seldom co-operated constructively. Further, many individual traitors existed who would make an end-run to the President or one of the Vice Presidents in the hopes of securing something to his or her personal advantage. The collective was aware of this behavior, which they implicitly condoned. As a group they claimed that everyone has a right to get the best they could for themselves. If they sanctioned this behavior then this would sanction their own behavior and they did not appreciate personal sanctions of that nature. Disloyal opportunism was part of the system. Suspicion, mistrust, and backroom conspiracies gave the place a French Revolutionary type atmosphere where intrigue and deception lurked at every corner.

Meanwhile, the general attitude of the faculty was that they were in this world, but not of it. They believed that MBSU was akin to a helium balloon that could float above the world impervious and immune to its affairs. Ensnared in this hot-aired vehicle drifting slowly and unhurriedly above reality, they were engaged in loftier issues than others. After all, they were engaged in spirituality – something that in their minds was beyond the world and its clamor for practicalities and materialism. Both individually and collectively they seemed indifferent to world events, showing only passionate attachment to their narrow academic focus.

The culture of MBSU meant avoiding any form of confrontation at all costs. Anger, annoyance, and direct talking were eschewed. Either people practiced avoidance or engaged in a pretense that everything was ok. The real issues surfaced either through discussions overheard in the corridors, or through passive aggressive behaviors. Maintaining appearances that all relationships were in order held high importance.

This review of the many apparently dysfunctional activities at MBSU raises the question as to how these served the system and its stakeholders. What did these patterns of behavior indicate about the collective as a whole and the groups and individuals that formed the collective?

I have come up with my own list of how these behaviors served the system and the stakeholders. Doubtless the reader will have some ideas as well.

My ideas include the following:

- The dysfunctional activities served to keep everyone divided so that work centered on negotiating and mitigating the divisions.
- Dysfunctional behavior kept people pre-occupied with settling issues between factions, so little new or different work could be initiated. Most of those at MBSU abhorred the idea of change.
- Continuous resistance, infighting, deviousness, and divisive behavior took up so much space and energy that the University could not engage in its adaptive work. (Below, in Part 2, I discuss what I mean by adaptive work in great detail.)
- The dysfunctional and devious behavior kept the Senior Administration so busy and created so much noise and activity that they could not get down to their job of leading, managing, organizing, and controlling. They focused on avoiding anarchy and insubordination, allowing little time and energy for the strategic work that was so desperately required.
- The level of activity manifest in the resistance and infighting cluttered the scoreboard. As a result, it was very difficult to assess which departments were doing well and which needed attention. Obfuscation helped keep the Senior Administration hopping from one issue to the next, unable make any real progress on, or to even identify the important issues.
- All this activity kept people engaged and committed to MBSU. Fighting, resistance, challenge means engagement. Ironically, these activities bonded people together, providing opportunities for them to fight or argue about a project they had in common –MBSU. This engagement created a fierce loyalty toward the University, and probably explains how it managed to survive year after year in spite of itself.
- Despite the infighting the stakeholders agreed implicitly to take care of the collective. Those competent and hard-working covered up for the less engaged and less hard-working, and in return were given enormous informal authority in the system.

So far I have dwelt largely on the shadow of MBSU. And as we know, where there is shadow there is light. In the shadow system, we saw how people who felt victimized and

misunderstood came to manipulating and using the system to their own ends. The spiritual insights they brought to the system were vitiated by their anger, disappointment, and need for a form of revenge. They feared both life and death and fought vigorously to end both.

So let us take a look at the light in the system. MBSU was undoubtedly an interesting institution. The portfolio of course offerings was exceptional. People were attracted from near and far to sample some of the unique and cutting edge programs. Many of the faculty were highly knowledgeable in their areas of discipline, and some have been accredited as being the founders of their fields.

From an academic perspective, originality and creativity flourished. New ideas flooded academic discussions and new initiatives were forever forthcoming. From an academic and programmatic standpoint, an entrepreneurial culture prevailed. The downside to this creative energy was that many ideas were academically extremely interesting, yet impractical from an economic point of view. Nevertheless, this creative atmosphere could be quite exhilarating, and served to counter the negativity associated with the continuous infighting and devious behaviors.

Another interesting insight into the people of MBSU is that on an individual basis they were very interesting people. Many of them had traveled extensively, were conversant in more than one discipline, and for the most part, were personable. On a one to one basis they would agree with the “dysfunctionality” of MBSU as a whole, and they would talk quite candidly about how MBSU’s internal actions served to vitiate any possible attempts at progress. They would admit to their own disloyalties and attempts at intrigue with great humor. They would openly acknowledge the University’s ferocious resistance to change; and they would volunteer how this resistance suited their own purposes. This candor, mixed with self-awareness and humor would be refreshing. Once these same people with whom one had shared a candid discussion were caught up in the group however, their entire behavior and rhetoric would change. Their openness would disappear; their anger would emerge, and they would go into resistance and denial. Engaging with them as part of group left one questioning whether these were the same people with whom one had had an interesting and refreshing discussion in another forum.

This behavior had Jeckell and Hyde similarities which, to the unwitting, could be quite crazy making.

Appointment of the New President

MBSU appointed a new president one year before I took up my position. A new level of optimism met his appointment. The “ah, this is the man” syndrome prevailed. Right from the beginning, powerful projections rained down on him. He was to be the new savior of MBSU. At last, a Senior Administrative person had been found who would understand the community and would look after them. From now on things would all be well, and previous grievances would be redressed. Senior management might not be so bad after all and maybe they could do some good. Here at last was someone who was affable and who cared.

The President had some knowledge of MBSU, in that he had been a board member for several years. He did not realize, however, the complicated dynamics of the system. A man who is very relational, he did not realize that it might be to his advantage to manage the projections aimed at him because of his position. Instead, he glorified in his role as the savior and the good and benevolent father. Little did he realize what his intelligent and manipulative children had in store.

Right off the bat, the President decided his key challenge at MBSU was to raise the low morale, particularly that of the faculty. He paid certain lip service to his concern for the staff, but he was really only concerned with the faculty as he claimed they were MBSU. The President himself had been faculty all his life and had moved from that position into a vice-presidency of Academic Affairs, before taking this, his first presidency. His faculty bias was thus deeply ingrained.

Within the first three months of his appointment, the President took several key steps to enhance his standing with the faculty and to address the morale problem.

- He committed MBSU to increase faculty and staff salaries by a significant amount each year for the next five years.
- He elevated several faculty from 1 year appointments to multiple year contracts.
- He committed to getting MBSU off the accreditation warning status it had been on for the past ten years. This he would do by using his skills in accreditation, and

through his very strong contacts with the accreditation organization with which he had worked for over ten years.

- He agreed to the possible re-appointment of several faculty who had been laid off in the previous down-sizing.

The President as Leader

The newly appointed President of the MBSU had a strong patriarchal leadership style. His prime value was loyalty. When he lined up his moral ducks it was evident that loyalty assumed first position. He would punish disloyalty quickly and directly and was always on his guard as to who might be disloyal. In turn, once someone demonstrated loyalty, he would be loyal in return.

His patriarchal style became more transparent as the community looked to him as a father who would make things right and make the hard times go away. The University came to be run along the lines of a father trying to deal with his dysfunctional and wayward children.

The President had an outwardly apparent collegial and participatory style. In reality, in most instances he made up his mind as to what he wanted and then behind the scenes convinced people why his way was the best way. He was quite artful at persuading others how their way happened to coincide with his own.

To his credit the President realized that MBSU needed to undergo some profound change. In the beginning of his tenure he seemed to have the energy to take this on. He knew and understood the market for higher education exceedingly well and understood the academic issues that drive most universities. He exhibited great vision in appointing a “different” kind of Vice-President of Finance who would get the organization to think strategically and get out of its cost cutting mindset. There is no question that he was committed to the organization.

My Appointment and Role

On October 1, 2000 I took up my position as the Vice-President of Finance and Planning (CFO) at MBSU. The President had actively pursued me to take this position for well over nine months. I was the seventh CFO within a ten-year period. I was the first

qualified accountant ever hired into the position. Previous CFOs had essentially been budget officers whose prime concerns were cutting costs. My business background provided me with a different main focus other than costs. My emphasis was on revenue generation and I sought to encourage everyone to provide ideas for increased revenue generation. I expressly intended to counter the focus on fear and scarcity that prevailed. I recognized another important reason for the need for a different focus. Costs had been so tightly pared back that further cost cutting would only serve to harm the core activities of the Institution and further add to the prevailing victim culture.

The President assigned me a most specific mandate. He charged me to develop a zero-based budget, and to devise and implement a strategic plan. It was also my responsibility to generate ideas regarding non-tuition revenue projects to alleviate the high degree of tuition dependence on balancing the budget.

The President claimed that I needed to fulfil several roles: that of teacher, change agent, and planner. He believed emphatically that the two of us working together as a tight team could take MBSU to new places and new glories.

Experience of Taking up my Role

Discussing the experience of taking up my role brings back some painful memories. In the University's history the CFO had always been the primary scapegoat when things went wrong. In all the Senior Administration, the CFO had been the one least trusted. It was the CFO who had kept everyone in scarcity, who had closed departments, and who had initiated barbarous cuts. It was the CFO who had least understood the culture of spirituality of MBSU and who had sought to bring in materialistic values.

Against this culture, I fought my way through the first six months at MBSU. The community was highly resistant to the new realities (see below under the Adaptive Leadership model) and it had no preparation for adaptive work.

At meetings I was treated with great suspicion and rarely directly addressed or approached. At budget meetings I was accused of trying to enact further cuts. Complaints reached the President's ears that I was destroying the faculty morale that he was so carefully trying to shore up. At one particular meeting, one of the Deans accused me

outright of “importing Wall Street’s heinous values” into MBSU and “corrupting the spirit of the organization with my materialism.” To them whatever represented Wall Street and its wealth, including wealthy people was to be despised. The business world was viewed as hell on earth. The projections that rained on me all had to do with filthy lucre, materialism, the hangman, and the Gestapo. There was no honeymoon period for me – I had to work on changing the projections right from the get-go. I had to inspire this angry, depressed, yet somehow, still hopeful community with a new understanding of the meaning and benefits of responsibility, transparency, rigor, and critical thinking. It turned out to be a long, long road.

I turned to my Adaptive Leadership Model to help me out.

Part 2

The Adaptive Leadership Model

Introduction

My approach to leadership and change embraces what I call the “Adaptive Leadership” model. This model of leadership incorporates the thinking of Ron Heifetz of the J.F. Kennedy School of Government, the Tavistock (AKRI) Approach to group relations, and my own experiences of, and research into effective and ineffective leadership. This integrative approach to leadership includes several explicit assumptions, namely: (1) Leadership and authority are two different and distinct concepts, neither one automatically subsuming the other. (2) The notion “leadership” refers to initiating, managing, and mobilizing others in the change process. Leadership is considered an activity as in “exercising leadership” rather than a trait possessed by, or ascribed to a few as in “he” or “she is a leader.” (3) Exercising leadership enhances the adaptive capacities of others, thereby empowering them to deal with change as co-creators rather than as bystanders or victims. One of the byproducts of someone exercising leadership according to the adaptive leadership model is the creation of opportunities for others to exercise leadership. (4) Formal authority is not required in order to exercise leadership; however, elements of informal authority are essential. (5) The key role of those exercising leadership lies in helping others face new realities present in their world, and mobilizing them to deal with the value tensions that these new realities invariably create.

New Realities and Value Tensions

Let us begin with the value tensions created by new realities. Some new reality examples might be a switch from a Democratic to a Republican government in office; bankruptcy of one's employer; giving birth to twins, or global warming. Value tensions arise due to the challenge these new realities present to the individual's and/or the collective's existing values.

Let us take the example cited concerning a new government in office. This event will likely lead to new political policies such as new legislation regarding immigration; new economic priorities such as doubling defense spending; and new or different social values such as switching budget aid from healthcare for the elderly to aid for schools. A new government in office also usually results in new power structures, and the new assignment of bureaucratic roles. For the individual and the collective dealing with these changes, first and foremost a psychological and emotional shift is required. This will allow for a re-ordering, reframing, adjustment, or in some cases, a radical compromise of existing values. To illustrate what I mean let us take the new legislation regarding immigration. Here the values likely to be tested will relate to how people feel about immigrants entering America and benefiting from its wealth. Maybe there will be fear or relief about more or fewer people trying to get jobs to the detriment of born-and-raised Americans.

Doubling defense spending triggered values around war and the necessity of building up America's fighting capacity at the expense of other needs like research, health, and education will also face challenge. Simply trying to identify with a Republican president, as the country's leader will generate either a new hope and faith in the future or a disbelief and despair.

Let us take another example of a new reality – bankruptcy of one's employer. The value tension for those affected is likely to be intense and very personal. Bankruptcy invariably leads to layoffs and unemployment. Employees usually have some pride (status) and feel competent, empowered and somewhat in control of their own self-determination. If they dislike a particular employer they usually rationalize that when the time is right they can quit and go elsewhere. Obviously an employer's bankruptcy would

radically challenge these values. Value tensions would lie in questions such as: Can one be proud of oneself in the face of a layoff? What about control of one's life or the sense of self-determination – did losing one's job mean one lost these too? Why did this happen to me – I don't deserve this. From once being in control have I now become yet another victim to circumstance or a victim to the vagaries of the economic system? Does value of the self lie in being employed or does it lie elsewhere? Once again the manner in which the individual or the collective deals with this new reality will depend on their capacity to adapt.

The “problem” with new realities is that by definition they are real. Realities are actual, factual, and true. There is no point in denying their existence. Exercising leadership concerns dealing with the *reality* of new realities and the value tensions they imply. Now, not all new realities represent negative or unwelcome value tensions. A switch to a new government may be welcomed or even longed for. However, both positive and negative value tensions call on the individual and the collective's adaptive capacities. Adaptation requires awareness of the environment, self-awareness around one's own values, and active engagement with the change process. Good, or bad, adaptation is work – hard work.

The Adaptive Challenge

Exercising leadership means helping others identify the value tensions – known as the adaptive challenge - provoked by new realities. Identifying the adaptive challenge, means recognizing the discordance between the values that flow from new realities and the values currently held by the individual or collective. The activity of identifying the adaptive challenge is crucial to the exercise of leadership. This is a tough task. Firstly, awakening to the new values a new reality implies requires leaders to exhibit real thoughtfulness and a kind of perspicacity associated with being actively engaged in a dynamic and changing world. It requires a certain amount of wisdom, intuitiveness, and attentiveness to how change influences systems. Secondly, actually naming the new values that attach to new realities is also challenging especially as they may not be immediately apparent. Thirdly, naming the values held by the individual and the group

requires perceptiveness as not everyone at all times wears their values on their sleeve. Sometimes deeply held values are deeply concealed.

Those exercising leadership manage to identify the adaptive challenge usually through sustained dialogue with those affected by the new reality. The dialogue will doubtless go back and forth as a better understanding is reached of both new and currently held values. For leaders to articulate the adaptive challenge with clarity they will need to reality test the value tensions they have identified.

Adaptive Work

The next stage in the adaptive leadership process is the work needed by those exercising leadership and those affected by the new reality to reorient their existing values to coincide more closely with the values demanded by the new reality. This stage in the process of exercising leadership is known as adaptive work.

At this point I must dwell on the extreme challenges inherent in the adaptive leadership model. I mentioned that adaptation is hard work. It is also unpleasant work in that it tests our psychological, emotional, spiritual, and sometimes our physical capabilities. In dealing with these capabilities we are often confronted with our strengths as well as our shortcomings. Confronting our shortcomings can prove particularly unpleasant and hard to accept.

Adaptation requires looking at who we are and what is meaningful in our lives. Sometimes adaptation will mean having to alter our identity or finding new ways of making meaning. Adaptation may mean acquiring new roles, associating with new and different types of people, or having to do different types of unfamiliar work. It may call for new loyalties, different priorities, and new ways of engaging in the world. I repeat adaptation is difficult – ask the dinosaurs!

One more word about adaptation: Adapting to change as I mean it here is not simply about survival, or coping, or submission, but holds the promise of a great deal more. Adaptation in the exercising leadership sense is about being actively engaged in creating the future. Adaptation means recognizing that the future with its new realities is being continuously created all around us and that we need to change our values, attitudes, and ways of doing things if we are to actively participate in the world. Adaptive work

involves proactively responding to the future that is forever in the making. It is about surviving well. It is about thriving and having and making choices.

Resistance

Because adaptation is difficult, those exercising leadership will often meet enormous resistance from others when either identifying the adaptive challenge and/or in doing the adaptive work. Where does this resistance stem from? People resist change out of fear as to what it means to them and their deeply held values. They also resist talking about their deeply held values as it renders them vulnerable. They prefer to deny the existence of value tensions as they hope “the problem” as they see it, will (eventually) go away and they will not have to do the difficult work of adapting. In the face of their fears it is common for people to deny the need for change and to engage in activities that serve to resist change. Resistance may be conscious or unconscious and may result in overt and covert behaviors. The degree of denial and resistance to change reflects the level of disequilibrium that the individual or collective are experiencing. It also provides an indication of the individual’s or collective’s capacity for adaptation.

Work Avoidance and Technical Work

Individuals or groups who wish to avoid doing the adaptive work invariably embark on work avoidance techniques. This usually takes the form of fixating on technical solutions and being preoccupied with technical work. Technical work focuses on doing rather than being. Technical work lends itself to routine problems that focus on tangible goals, explicit tasks, roles, and responsibilities. Technical work is procedural and can be readily delegated.

I have highlighted repeatedly how changing one’s values is difficult. Most of us would far rather create new procedures, work with new machines, or solve technical problems than wrestle with our set of personal or collective values – hard learned and long gained. In the face of distress, technical work appears far more appealing than adaptive work. Getting buried in technical work can provide a welcome rush of activities that can readily drown out the noise of the much-needed adaptive work. Those exercising

leadership will find keeping those facing change from focusing on doing technical rather than adaptive work their greatest and most enduring challenge.

Distress and Moderating the Heat

Those exercising leadership will benefit greatly by adopting systems thinking when identifying the adaptive challenge, and in reading and interpreting the distress of the individual or the collective as they engage in their dance of denial.¹ This “dance” as I call it usually follows a cycle that begins with apparent or real ignorance of the value tensions presented by the new realities followed by denial - followed by anger - followed by strong resistance, often including splitting, scapegoating, and all kinds of transference on others – followed by deeper denial and intense flight into technical work. Levels of distress will escalate as leaders persist in challenging others to face the value tensions and embark on the required adaptive work. Leaders will need to hold steady in the face of resistance, yet ensure that they moderate the heat by keeping it at acceptable levels so that the group is mobilized to do its adaptive work. If they turn up the heat too high or too fast this might lead to those in distress de-authorizing them or ultimately assassinating them. Walking the tightrope between turning up the heat, moderating it, and holding steady in the face of resistance will call on the leader’s/’s’ own adaptive capacities.

Mobilizing the Group to do its Adaptive Work

An important aspect of the adaptive leadership model is that the leader does not attempt to do the adaptive work for others. Obviously in reality this would be an impossible task. People’s values are personal, and the very persons whose values are at stake must do the required values reorientation. Unfortunately, in most other leadership models leaders feign to take on the adaptive work of others by making all kinds of promises as to how they can and will fix the group’s problems. This explains why so many leaders fail in the eyes of their constituents. Adaptive leadership by contrast “gives the work back” to the people to whom it belongs. As we have discussed many do not

¹ Discussed by Annabel Beerel in *Leadership Through Strategic Planning*, International Thomson Business Press, London 1998, 123 – 134.

want to assume this work and prefer to believe in the empty promises of the leaders with easy answers.

In order for those exercising leadership to mobilize others to actually embrace their adaptive work they need to achieve the following:

1. They need to establish which stakeholders are affected by the new realities and the new value tensions, and identify those inter-relationships. This will provide them with a sense of the groups affected and the potential group dynamics that might occur during the dance of denial.
2. They need to understand and then communicate to the stakeholders what they have to learn from the new situation and what they have to give up. The learning is the gain from the new situation that will counteract the loss of giving something up. Of course, many will initially not see the learning as sufficient compensation for the loss. In these cases the leader will be challenged to illustrate how the learning has value and importance and enhances the stakeholders' adaptive capacities. I believe it self-evident that strong adaptive capacities are to everyone's benefit even if those experiencing the growing process do not feel that to be the case at the time.
3. The leader will have to help the group see which behaviors need to be unlearned and which behaviors need to be changed. This means that certain behaviors are no longer valid or helpful in the new world, i.e., they have to cease. It also means that certain behaviors will require adjustment or new attunement to be strategically effective in the new world.

Leaders help us see that we live in a world of possibilities. They help us change our consciousness enabling us to move with the rhythm and flow of life. Life and being alive means change and responding to change. Leaders also help us to distinguish reality from fantasy. They ground us in what is real as opposed to what is illusion.

The measure of the effectiveness of the adaptive leader is whether as a consequence of the leader/s' interventions some kind of "work" is going on. Dealing with adaptive challenges requires first and foremost internal work. Exercising leadership mobilizes people to do this internal work so that the external work can follow. As I have

emphasized, mobilizing people to do this work is difficult, partly because it is difficult work and partly because its progress is not easily apparent. It is difficult to measure internal work. Exercising leadership requires being in tune with the extent to which this internal work is going on and knowing when to turn up the heat if and when this is required.

Alliances

Leaders need to form strategic alliances. They need to have support in the face of the group's dance of distress and they need to ensure that they are not the unappreciated heroes or heroines ultimately blamed for the distress of the group. The intensity of the distress and the need to scapegoat someone during the adaptive process can often lead to the leader/s losing support, losing their influence and authority, and in dire circumstances even being "assassinated."

Leaders need to actively select members from the group on whom they can rely during the times of deep group distress. These alliances need to be continually fostered throughout the adaptive work process. Those selected need to be ones who understand the necessity for change and seem prepared to do the adaptive work. They will also need encouragement and support but at a less intense level than the other members of the group. It is not necessary that those in alliance entirely agree with direction of the change or with the new values articulated by the leader. It is far more important they are engaged with the change process than they agree with any particular direction that change takes. What is needed is positive energy that will combat the resistance and/or the inertia of the group. An important strategy of the leader is to form alliances with representatives of all stakeholder groups so that all the voices, both of support and resistance, can be heard.

Finding suitable alliances is another difficult part of exercising leadership. Inevitably some of those selected will let the leaders down by going into fear and backing down, changing their mind, or not showing up at that all-important meeting. The importance of having strong allies in the change process cannot be over-estimated, as the analysis of the case study will indicate.

Part 3

Analysis of the Case Using the Adaptive Leadership Model

New Realities and Value Tensions -The Adaptive Challenge

Consonant with the Adaptive Leadership model, soon after my arrival at the University, I sought to identify the new realities for MBSU and the value tensions those new realities presented. After discussions with many of the faculty, I realized they did not engage in the notion of keeping up-to-date with what was happening in the broader market of Higher Education. Each department had some understanding of their main competitors, but few were aware of the general trends in higher education. These included:

- A Radical increase in the number of graduate schools focusing on spirituality and the integration of Eastern and Western thought
- A growing number of corporate universities being established around the nation with a full curriculum including topics on religion and spirituality, with highly paid qualified staff
- The growth in Women Studies programs
- The nationwide decline in enrolment in psychology programs
- The renewed interest in the humanities for professional services education
- The emphasis of the Republican government on religious and Church related activities

Some of these trends presented opportunities and some threats. However, the community at MBSU obviously unaware of these new trends persisted in marketing to the same people in 2001 they had in 1970. They used the same marketing slogans; the same pictures, and in many cases the same text. My role was to shake them out of their intellectual lethargy, and to re-engage them in the world. To this end I initiated a series of strategic planning workshops. Initially these were met with extreme skepticism and disdain. Many claimed they had done all this “strategic planning stuff before and it had all come to naught.” They questioned why they were wasting their time again.

The entire community was invited to participate in the workshops – faculty, staff, students, and board members. Each workshop had a specific theme, and the community received background handouts relevant to the theme well in advance of each meetings. The goal of the initial workshops was to discuss the new realities – i.e. what was happening in the world, in the United States of America, and in Higher Education and how this might be relevant to MBSU – either positively or negatively.

After a great deal of discussion several critical factors emerged, and the community then had to wrestle with the value tensions these represented. The community did not as a whole agree to the identification of the new realities, and the different world-views existent within the collective came to light. These contributed to the tensions at the workshops, especially the earlier ones, where a high degree of resistance was evident.

Adaptive Work²

It was with reluctance that the community at MBSU had to explicitly acknowledge the world had changed since the 60s and 70s. The first reality the community had to grasp was that they were no longer special or exceptional simply because they emphasized spirituality and integrated Eastern and Western thinking. Other organizations were doing this too and had been doing it for some time. On inspection of the competitors' admissions and marketing material, not to mention their websites – they seemed to be doing every bit as good a job. Not only that, they used the same language, the same phrases, and the same icons as MBSU to convey their message. MBSU, who had once been standing out on its own as a lonely beacon to spiritual seekers was now right in the mainstream of humanities and liberal arts education. The rising interest in religion, especially comparative religious studies, over the recent decade, had brought even staid and conservative Universities into the East and West spiritually business.

Another new reality – although in some sense it was not new – was the intense pressure on the University to grow its student body (or credit hours). Over the past few years the student body had been declining with no attempt made to stem the tide. Simultaneously, infrastructural costs had been on the rise. The President's commitment to

²I have chosen to focus only on three new realities. The strategic planning exercise revealed many more.

raise salaries had also made an enormous impact on the fixed cost base. In the face of these realities the University had to start concentrating on generating revenue. They desperately needed new initiatives, new programs, and new ways of generating revenue. This meant they could no longer claim to simply be scholars committed to teach either two or twenty in their classes, but had to become actively engaged in filling the classroom. Fierce resistance met this reality. After all, they were academics and thusly, not supposed to be concerned with the financial aspects of the organization. In their view, the financial viability of the University was the responsibility of the Senior Administration especially the President and the Vice-President of Finance and Planning.

The third reality was the one around academic quality and rigor. MBSU had just squeaked through its recent accreditation review. This was due largely to the charisma of the President and his connections, rather than the strength of the organization. The community came to realize the competition was emphasizing academic quality and care for the student – both things MBSU had neglected for some time. Now there were plenty of universities in the mind, body, spirit business and students could readily pick and choose presented them with this new reality. Academic rigor no longer meant you taught Rumi's poetry, but rather, how well you taught it. Along with academic rigor came organizational effectiveness, and a seamless interaction from the admissions office to the registrar to financial aid to the business office on into the classroom. The administrative systems situation at MBSU had been a nightmare for students, staff, and faculty for years. All past attempts to address the problem had been sabotaged. In light of the new world, this would have to change.

So let me summarize the three new realities and the value tensions they presented:

Reality 1 –MBSU was no longer a special or “different” University. Many other organizations were integrating mind, body, and spirit, and infusing Eastern and Western thinking into their disciplines. MBSU had become a fairly mainstream liberal arts university with a few unique programs. The value tension lay in no longer being able to claim special precedence, difference, uniqueness, and the entitlement that usually comes with those appellations. How does one deal with not being special anymore – besides denying it is not true? That is a hard reality to swallow!

Reality 2 –MBSU was under enormous financial pressure to grow in order to break-even and survive. Another unwelcome reality check: sitting back and thinking they were unique, and nothing could threaten that uniqueness was no longer possible despite their history of survival in the past. Further, achieving growth required the entire community to get active and to work together to make it happen. Responsibility had to be shared and owned by all.

The value tensions arose in that many at MBSU claimed that by focusing on growth and revenues they were being made to think like a business. This was a horrendous thought, and simply intolerable. The faculty felt once again betrayed by the administration at the thought of being placed in this position. Thinking like business people was way beneath them and would tarnish their ideals and eventually their souls.

Reality 3 - Academic quality was essential for survival in the now competitive market place. This included organizational effectiveness, rigor, and tidy operations. The value tension here lay in the idea that the University needed academic and organizational controls and limits, something it had shunned for years. Academic quality would be measured by rules and regulations, reports and reporting – all things that the community despised.

Resistance

During the first few workshops I faced enormous resistance. Few people attended and those who did were challenging, negative, angry and outright disparaging. I was accused of introducing false research data to manufacture realities that were not true but served my agenda. I was called “a liar,” “a devil from the business world,” and “a fraud.” Someone left a piece of paper in one of the meeting rooms on which was written, “the Gestapo has returned.” Several at the meeting claimed I was “wasting their time since they knew their world better than I would ever know it and so why should they invest in this redundant process.” Others claimed that I was using the workshops as an opportunity to spy on them so that I could identify which programs were underperforming and which should be closed. I was accused of using all the information at the sessions to strengthen my own power base.

I found notes in my mailbox asserting that I had no idea about research, or planning, or spirituality. Other notes asked why I expected people to read articles from business magazines such as the Economist or Newsweek. I received emails stating that the afternoons I had chosen for the workshops were the ones that least suited the faculty of this or that department, or the dean or someone else and why was I so thoughtless?

The tirade of abuse continued for the first three months. The President attended every workshop as a silent observer, never showing his hand or choosing sides. He rarely made a comment and then only to correct a statement of fact. When I held private discussions with him in order to discuss the resistance and lean into his support, he would claim that I was overreacting and that the resistance was not that bad.

Work Avoidance and Technical Work

The initial resistance was intense. Some of those who showed up at the workshops told others not to come, yet surprisingly, every week the number who attended the workshops increased.

Besides resistance, many became engaged in technical work. I received a flood of new budget requests for all types of new expenditures, new systems, and new positions.

The space committee of the University also assumed new importance. New and mounting arguments arose over space, the size and position of offices and who should or shouldn't have a window. Endless meetings took place around allocating space according to the full time equivalent in departments. Complex calculations were devised to equate full-time equivalent with usable square feet of space. And so it went on. Meetings seemed to take longer and longer. All kinds of new committees were formed to discuss overhead allocation, classroom allocation, security issues, parking – you name it – the work avoidance dance had begun!

Distress and Moderating the Heat (The Dance of Distress)

The community's level of distress became quite palpable. People felt confused and angry. They claimed that they were under-appreciated and under-valued. The three Colleges and their respective Deans attacked one another with renewed vigor. An endless stream of faculty collected outside the President's door prepared to report on the distress

they were experiencing and the CFO who was “off her rocker.” The President told me not to take heed of their fears, that I was doing a very important job and encouraged me to hold steady.

The newly appointed Vice-President of Advancement was one of those who complained bitterly to the President about the strategic planning process. The University had always struggled to raise money from Advancement activities. The new incumbent to the Advancement position was experiencing real difficulty in generating donor leads and was highly frustrated. He refused to attend the planning workshops and instead complained to the President that the strategic planning workshops were taking on too much importance, and that I was usurping the President’s power. Unfortunately I did not pay sufficient attention to the concerns of my erstwhile colleague – much to my later chagrin.

So the dance of distress took its usual form: ignorance of the value tensions presented by the new realities: denial – anger – strong resistance – splitting, scapegoating, and transference on others – stronger resistance, and the flight to technical work. In the face of all this commotion I held steady trying to moderate the heat as best I could.

Mobilizing the Group to do Adaptive Work

I found the first five workshop sessions to be the most difficult. As I mentioned, people were angry and accusative and some tried to sabotage the process. Somehow, however, my holding steady seemed to have an affect. True to the nature of the system, on an individual basis people responded quite differently as to when they were part of the collective. Faculty and staff came to see me individually, to discuss how the new realities affected them personally. I received them with enthusiasm and relief. Slowly, on this one-to-one basis they came to see that I was not the ogre the group projected onto me. I did care. I did know what I was doing. My motives were sincere.

More and more people came to the meetings. Staff and faculty started to ask for more readings around Higher Education, the market, the competition, marketing strategies and so on. I now started to receive calls and emails where people apologized for their absence from workshops they had to miss.

The workshops started to be fun. People expressed that they were learning new things. Faculty had to work in small groups with staff people, thus breaking down some of the faculty-staff barriers. People started to create groups around new initiatives. One of the Deans agreed to work on a new manual for academic processes and procedures. Groups started scheduling their appointments around planned workshop times.

A new spirit of engagement was evident. New opportunities presented themselves for the community to engage with one another in a non-combative mode, in a spirit of learning and mutual commitment to enlivening the University. The humor of the individuals now flowed into the groups and open dislike for one another was ameliorated by teasing and genuine attempts to bridge the gaps in values and world views. Staff and faculty learned about one another's activities and interests in new ways. A genuine spirit of optimism started to permeate the halls of MBSU and a renewed sense of commitment emerged. Most people started to feel energized by the thought of change or at least entertained the possibility of change.

Alliances

As I mentioned in the section on the Adaptive Leadership model, one of the most important activities for those exercising leadership is to create strategic alliances. Regrettably, I failed to follow my own advice. While I did form alliances with certain faculty and directors and heads of administrative departments I failed to form sufficiently strong alliances with the Deans, the Vice-President of Advancement, and even the President himself.

During that time the workshops were beginning to demonstrate success, the Vice-President of Advancement escalated his complaints to the President, claiming that due to the fact I had so much power in the University through the strategic planning process, he was unable to formulate an effective Advancement strategy. He apparently implored the President to clip my wings and to take the strategic plan back into the President's office. The President informed me of the complaint, and articulated his own concern that I had gained too much power at MBSU.

Failure

The shattering event of September 11, 2001 had a profound affect on the world and naturally on MBSU. Within one week of that dreadful event, the President did a radical about turn. He called me into his office and demanded that all strategic planning activities cease. I was instructed to cancel the workshop schedule, to write up some strategic plan that he could give the Board, and to move onto new things.

At the same time he froze all change initiatives, and he ordered that I no longer engage with the faculty without his participation. I was debarred from all Academic aspects of the University, and the President decided to assume all financial and budgetary responsibility for the Academic Programs. Besides infrastructure costs, the Academic Programs amounted to eighty percent of the overall University budget.

In a series of meetings that followed his reversal of the change processes, he stated that faculty were no longer to be held responsible for the revenue generation or the profitability of their departments. Things would revert to the old order. He canceled the development of all Institutional Research systems.³ He removed certain administrative controls from my department, assigning them over to the Academic Programs. The President announced that academic departments have no understanding of marketing and thus they should no longer be consulted on marketing material. Their sole responsibility, he claimed, was to teach and he personally would take responsibility for how many students were in the classrooms.

After another series of attempts to work with the system I finally let go and chose to leave MBSU. For some things – life is too short!

Reflection – Lessons I have Learned

On reflection, I have wondered at length about the external and internal factors that led to this enormous about turn. The President had brought me in especially to effect the change that was starting to happen. How did the tumbling down of the Twin Towers symbolically reflect the tumbling down of our own pride and self-aggrandizement? Did

³Institutional research in the academic world is akin to management accounting and report systems in the for-profit world.

the fear and retraction that the U.S. community experienced after that dreadful event have anything to do with the President's move into fear and retraction?

I have also thought long and hard from an internal systemic perspective about why things went so wrong. The system was starting to change, new realities were being embraced, a new energy and enthusiasm was emerging, and for once the University might have made a psychological paradigm shift. What a tragedy that this never came to fruition.

My reflections have resulted in the following conclusions:

- I misread the power of the power dynamics and the culture of fear the system had soaked in for years.
- The President as leader of MBSU, and therefore the barometer of the group, led with fear. The system was a fear-based one and therefore, someone had to carry the fear. Once the fear was diminished and eventually eliminated in the community someone would still need to hold the position of fear. When one turns on the light the shadows move, they do not disappear. The President took on the fear and I neglected to be in tune with that reality.
- While the President had great intentions and some great insights, fear of losing his power was far more frightening than the fear of the demise of the organization. Power and fear are a dreadful combination as history tells us repeatedly.
- I had failed to form a strategic alliance with my peer, the Vice-President of Advancement, who also took on the mantle of fear. I should have allied with him, and helped remove his fears around his impotence as a fundraiser. Instead, as he perceived it, I showed him up with my successes and my new power.
- The President and the Vice-President of Advancement had now become the victims and in their view I was the perpetrator.
- I did not heed the President's cry for help when he told me about the Vice-President of Advancement's complaints about my power and his own concerns in that regard. By telling me this, he was essentially asking for reassurance that I failed to give him.
- I did not realize that I was gaining too much power and that even my supporters would have to cut me at the knees for that. In the MBSU system a paradox around

power and strength existed. The community admired me for my strength, yet they also hated it and thus had to cut me down. I failed to remain sufficiently alert to the unconscious collective mind of MBSU, that was always ready to destroy Senior Administrators, especially CFOs.

- The competition for power between the President and myself also placed stress on the community. They were confronted with a choice between “Daddy” who had promised to look after them and the unknown future with me. They had to face the choice of being looked after or being empowered to look after themselves. The community, steeped in the victim culture for so long chose disempowerment because it was a known. The new world that I offered them was still too fragile.
- My role as CFO made me vulnerable, no CFO had survived the MBSU’s dynamics in the past – why and how should I?

The MBSU community was shocked by my departure. Not much has changed since then. Programs are closing down, the University remains in a financially parlous state and academic quality is still questionable. Shortly after I left, the Vice-President of Advancement left, symbolizing the end of “advancement” in that department as well. Fear and its victims once more prowl the corridors of the MBSU.

End acb 9/18/03