

# Editor's Desk

Through the set of articles gathered by Adrianna Kezar, our guest editor from the University of Maryland, this issue of *Metropolitan Universities* reflects on the many dimensions of leadership in higher education. Our urban and metropolitan universities present special challenges for leaders because of the complex and interactive relationships between the institution and the metropolitan region. In addition to the usual issues of academic and campus culture, faculty and student perspectives, and governing board relationships, urban and metropolitan universities also must actively attend to community context and culture. Campus neighbors, local government, business and community leaders, other educational institutions are only a few of the many different external forces that have an active and sometimes conflicted interest in the role of the urban or metropolitan university in the region.

Campus leadership in such a complex environment of diverse interests and expectations is assumed to be primarily the responsibility of the president or chancellor, and certainly the person in that role is expected to set the tone for town-gown relationships as well as for internal academic culture. However, when one looks over time, it is obvious that individual presidents come and go (the average tenure of a public university president continues to hover around 5 years) and the importance of other, natural leaders scattered throughout the institution is revealed. Thus, the exploration of “leadership” issues in our academic institutions must consider both those individuals in official leadership roles, and those who provide leadership across the organization, with or without formal leadership duties. Dr. Kezar has gathered a powerful and useful set of articles that explore these different aspects of leadership and the impact of different leadership models and strategies. I thank her and the authors for giving us rich material that you will certainly find useful in your own institution’s context.

Reading these articles reminds me of the work of another faculty member from the University of Maryland, now retired, who is also a well-known scholar of leadership issues – Robert Birnbaum. I met Bob during my doctoral studies at College Park and, like many other graduate students, I enjoyed frequent debates with him about the nature of leadership and organizations. He had a way of sparking truly lively discussions by taking an extreme position himself (at least we students saw his ideas as extreme), and defending his views with compelling arguments, strong conceptual frameworks, institutional examples, and clever humor! His 1988 book, *How Colleges Work*, summarized Bob’s strongly held belief that “leadership doesn’t matter” because academic organizations have powerful “core tendencies” that are maintained by cultural traditions and behavioral norms that leaders can’t really change. In the book, he describes four models of academic organizations, each with its own set of typical behaviors and decision-making cultures that require leaders to adapt their style to fit those behaviors and core traditions. If you haven’t ever read *How Colleges Work* or you read it years ago, I recommend it highly to you. It delivers a powerful and challenging message in a

format that is enjoyable to read. (See also the Marx Brothers movie “Horsefeathers” to learn the source of the mythical “Huxley College” Bob uses in the book to illustrate his different organizational models.)

I have never shared Bob’s perspective that leadership doesn’t matter or that leaders can’t make a difference in the transformation and evolution of organizational culture, but he does have a point that academic organizations are incredibly difficult to change. Reflecting on the evolution and maturation of many member institutions of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, it is easy to see examples of extraordinary presidents and chancellors who were the right leaders at the right moment to move those institutions forward. What these leaders seemed to have had in common was the ability to inspire their boards, faculty and students to take risks on new directions and ideas. In other words, these leaders inspired trust and confidence across the organization – a sense of optimism and possibility.

The Coalition itself has been the beneficiary of dedicated leadership exerted by those who founded the organization in 1988-89, and by those who have played leadership roles throughout the Coalition’s young history. There are many individuals who have contributed to the formation and management of the Coalition, but three in particular are retiring from their campus roles and the Coalition, and deserve special recognition. Since the mid-1990s, Al Hurley of the University of North Texas, Hoke Smith of Towson University, and Don Langenberg of the University of Maryland were among the core officers of the Executive Committee of the Coalition. Smith and Langenberg have retired within the last year, and Hurley will soon follow with his retirement from UNT in August. For their dedication to the mission of the urban and metropolitan university, we owe them tremendous gratitude. The Coalition’s influence, strong financial condition and membership base can be attributed to the work of these individuals and their other colleagues on the Executive Committee.

In particular, I want to express appreciation to Al Hurley who was the Chair of the Coalition Executive Committee for the last eight years, and was a gracious leader in every respect. During his tenure as the Coalition’s Chair, membership grew to an all-time high, the Coalition’s conferences were put on a regular calendar and were enhanced in both participation and quality, and the journal has grown and prospered. While building the Coalition, he was also leading the University of North Texas through a time of extraordinary expansion and development. In defiance of the low national average for presidential tenure, he served UNT as president and chancellor for 20 years! During those two decades, enrollment grew from 18,000 to more than 27,000, and the endowment grew from \$850,000 to more than \$45,000,000. UNT has become a major hub of postsecondary education in the Dallas-Fort Worth and North Texas regions.

From personal observation, I can attest that Al Hurley’s positive impact on the Coalition, as well as on UNT, came in large part from his strong commitment to courtesy and respect for everyone, a generous ability to give credit to others, and an extraordinary

sense of optimism. I hope you will join me in extending sincere thanks and appreciation to Chancellor Hurley, and his wife Joanna, for service to the Coalition during its critical formative years, and in wishing them happiness in future endeavors. Transitional leadership of the Coalition Executive committee, until new elections are held, is being provided by Sam Kirkpatrick of Eastern Michigan University, John Hitt of the University of Central Florida, and Jim Votruba of Northern Kentucky University.

Please also mark your calendars for the next Conference of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities which will be hosted by Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, October 4-6, 2002. An exciting program with international dimensions is planned, and the venue will certainly be wonderful as well.

My own leadership responsibilities have changed recently also. My time as the Visiting Director of the Office of University Partnerships for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has come to an end after a wonderful 18-month experience. The HUD grants for university-community partnerships are a vital resource for expanding the civic mission of our urban-serving institutions, and I encourage all Coalition members to consider applying for these grant funds. Because of their historic commitment to their metropolitan regions, urban and metropolitan universities tend to be successful in competing for these HUD grants. The 2002 grant competition is currently underway, and full information about the preparation of proposals is available at [www.oup.org](http://www.oup.org).

As I left the visiting role at HUD, I began service as the Director of the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, which is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service and administered by ETR Associates. Happily, this new position allows me to continue to encourage national interest in service and service-learning, and to explore the nature of community partnerships. The Clearinghouse has a broad mission to expand service-learning programs especially across our schools, colleges and universities, community-based organizations and the Tribal Nations. Check out the Clearinghouse website at [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org) and discover a vast reservoir of information resources to expand and strengthen service activities. I am also pleased and honored to continue to serve Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis as a Senior Scholar, and as Executive Editor of this journal, *Metropolitan Universities*, which is based at IUPUI under the leadership of Harriett Bennett, Managing Editor, and her team in University College. Thanks to all my Coalition and IUPUI colleagues for their support and friendship, and for the opportunity to collaborate with all of you in the important work of building our urban and metropolitan universities as the leading models of engaged institutions.

Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How Colleges Work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.