

# Essays in Education

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Volume 12

Article 9

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Winter 1-1-2005

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### Recommended Citation

Ward, Cynthia V. L. (2005) "Leadership by the Book: Case Study of Creating a Doctoral Program in Education," *Essays in Education*: Vol. 12 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://openriver.winona.edu/eie/vol12/iss1/9>

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**Leadership by the Book:  
Case Study of Creating a Doctoral Program in Education**

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**Abstract**

Playing against type, by initiating of a doctoral program in education leadership at a respected career university is the conundrum underlying this case study in higher education leadership. Using a historical approach, the strategies used and the techniques employed to initiate a major change in an unlikely environment are discussed and linked to what the literature has to say about implementing academic change. In this particular case, what was done not only was consistent with recommendations found in the literature, but also worked to implement and sustain the doctoral program during its formative years.

**Background**

In fall 1996, Johnson & Wales University initiated a doctoral program in educational leadership, a seeming departure from its established focus on undergraduate career and technical programs. Examining why this decision was made and how it was accomplished is the purpose of this case study. It is a study of higher education leadership and academic change.

**Leadership for Change in Higher Education**

Significant effort has been expended to characterize quality leadership in higher education and to define the traits of successful leaders. Paul Ramsden (1998) suggested that although the requirements for leadership are remarkably similar to those needed elsewhere, colleges and universities require an *academically-inclined version* of leadership. As Robert Birnbaum (1992) noted, academic leaders are subjected to "internal and external constraints that limit their effectiveness and may make their roles highly symbolic rather than instrumental" (p. 29). Higher education leaders usually operate in a more open environment than do leaders in most other enterprises. As a result, each action taken is subject to debate, and the feedback can, and often is, public and all but instantaneous (Petersen, Dill, & Mets, 1997). Accelerating change exacerbates the difficulties of academic leaders.

All eras are marked by change, but current times have been especially unsettling for higher education. No longer immune behind ivy covered walls, the demand is compelling for leaders who can identify and promote constructive change for their

colleges and universities, and for their communities. As Peter Drucker noted in *Managing in a Time of Great Change* (1995):

. . . it is a safe prediction that in the next fifty years, schools and universities will change more and more drastically than they have since they assumed their present form more than three hundred years ago, when they reorganized themselves around the printed book. What will force these changes is in part technology . . . ; in part the demands of a knowledge-based society . . . ; and in part new theory about how humans learn. (p. 79)

Significant changes are occurring in higher education worldwide. Madeleine Greene and Fred Hayward (1997) identified many, such as the continual movement towards mass education, the emergence of distance education, the emphasis on lifetime learning, the redefinition of the roles of teacher and learner, and the reach to embrace more external partners, all of which mark departures from past patterns. Change, however, presents a dilemma for higher education. While one of its missions is to preserve knowledge and experience, another is to engage in the process of discovery and reinterpretation of knowledge, the very basis for creating change. Higher education must simultaneously look forward without losing sight of the past; it must be a Cyclops with an eye cocked ahead and another in the reverse direction.

While looking both backward and forward are important, present circumstances cannot be ignored. Higher education must increasingly deal with shrinking resources and with greater competition for available funds. Although shortages are not novel, as David Breneman pointed out:

Every decade since 1970 has opened with a recession. However, as we work our way through yet another one, we should not complacently view it as just one more turn of the cycle. What distinguishes the recession of the early 2000s from previous downturns is that it is posing much more serious questions about the values of our society and the strength of our commitment to educational opportunity (2002, June 14, B7).

The dual pressures of trying to make significant changes and attempting to do so with declining resources places a substantial burden on those seeking to shape the future of higher education. This dilemma illustrates another paradox for leaders, which was described by Warren Bennis and Robert Townsend (1995) as having both patience and a sense of urgency. Academic leaders must know when to exercise the one and to forego the other.

In the rapidly changing, resource-scare environment that marks higher education today, there is considerable interest in recognizing and describing the qualities that characterize successful educational leaders. But, these attributes cannot be described in a vacuum, because it is the interaction between the leader and the setting that brings about change. This study chronicles a significant programmatic change at a university with the intent of identifying the conditions and actions that brought it about.

## **History of Johnson & Wales University**

Johnson & Wales University is not a typical university, either in origin or in development. The initial and continuing focus of the institution has been on career education. This emphasis is succinctly stated in the university's mission statement:

The mission of Johnson & Wales University is to empower its diverse student body to succeed in today's dynamic world by integrating general education, professional skills and career-focused education. To this end, the University employs its faculty, services, curricula, and facilities to equip students with the conceptual and practical tools required to become contributing members of society and to achieve success in employment fields with high-growth potential.

(J & W University Catalog, 2003-04, p. 13)

This purpose is reflected in the offering of associate, baccalaureate, and master's degrees in applied fields, such as culinary arts, business, hospitality, and technology, to approximately 10, 000 undergraduate and 700 graduate students. Johnson & Wales University is chartered by the State of Rhode Island as a nonprofit, degree-granting institution of higher learning.

Johnson & Wales, which still bears the names of its founders, has grown in size and diversity. During the course of this growth, the institution has not strayed far from its original concept, which, in the words of Gertrude I. Johnson, was to "teach a thing not for its own sake, but as preparation for what lies beyond" (D'Amato & Tarantino, 1998, p. 13). The school, though small, remained a viable, enterprise with little change from its opening just before World War I until after World War II, at which time the enrollment stood at 125 students.

Two returning naval veterans and good friends, Edward T. Triangolo and Morris J. W. Gaebe, purchased the school in 1947 and became its co-directors. Under their guidance, the institution began a steady transformation from a small secretarial school into a university. Accreditation was secured as a junior college of business in 1960 from the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS). In 1963, the state granted the school a charter to operate as a nonprofit, associate degree-granting institution with the name, Johnson & Wales Junior College. Less than a decade later, the charter was revised to permit the granting of the bachelor's degree and the name was changed to Johnson & Wales College. Approval to provide education beyond the baccalaureate level was secured from the state in the early 1980s. Graduate courses were initiated in late 1985 and the graduate school was formally established in July 1986. In 1989, the institution's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, the name was changed to Johnson & Wales University.

In the early 1980s, the school opened its first branch campus, and in 2002 announced its latest branch, Charlotte, NC, opening in 2004. In addition to its main campus in Providence, there are currently four others: Charleston, SC; Denver CO; North

Miami, FL; and Norfolk, VI. Throughout its expansion, Johnson & Wales has held fast to its basic beliefs, which are to provide first-class career-oriented education, to put the student first, and to keep in close contact with employers (D'Amato & Tarantino, 1998).

### **Overview of the J & W Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership**

Discussions about the possibility of a doctoral program began almost as soon as the J & W University graduate school was formally established. By the end of the 1980s, the graduate school was offering the M.B.A. in several areas of business and in hospitality administration, and the M.A. in teacher education. The dean of the graduate school selected as his assistant, Clifton J. Boyle, who adopted as his cause celebre the initiation of a doctoral program in education.

Serious discussions about the possibility of offering a doctorate in education at Johnson & Wales University were initiated in October 1990. A pilot study was launched in 1992. By 1995-96, students were recruited for the first full entering class in fall 1996. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges granted initial approval to the program in 1999. The first Ed. D. recipients were hooded in 1999. By fall 2002, the total number of first-time registrants in the program stood at 159 students of whom 101 were still enrolled, 44 had earned degrees, and 14 had left the program.

### **Research Design**

Because the questions to be answered in this study were of a why and how nature, the case study approach, focusing on critical incidents and major events, was selected as the most appropriate research method (Yin, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). The study was structured as a chronological report of the significant happenings that heralded the formulation, development, and maturation of the doctoral program. It is a historical case that describes and analyzes the actual phenomenon of putting a new program into place (Merriam, 1998). In conjunction with telling this story, the study presents a comprehensive picture of leadership and decision-making surrounding the initiation and maintenance of a new higher education program. The strength of this approach is that it provides a concrete example of how university leaders function when trying to institute a significant change. The case study was designed to examine these questions:

Why did an essentially career-oriented, undergraduate institution with strengths in the areas of culinary arts, hospitality, and business, decide to initiate and to support a doctoral program in educational leadership?

What strategies and techniques did the original advocates of the doctoral program use to move the concept expeditiously from an idea to implementation?

### **Data Collection**

Four basic data collection methods were used in constructing the case:

- Interviews with 20 persons, some of whom play dual roles - -  
Initiator of the program (1)

Participants in the development of the idea	(9)
Primary institutional decision makers	(5)
Founding faculty and staff	(4)
First students and graduates	(4)
Observers who watched the process unfold	(2)

- Review of source documents - -
  - Original plans and memoranda concerning program initiation
  - Materials prepared for accreditation purposes
  - Catalogues for the program and for the university
  - Communications to doctoral faculty and staff
- Questionnaire for university personnel, sent to 108 randomly selected administrators, faculty, and staff.
- Personal observations by the researcher, a current but not founding faculty member in the program

*The Interviews.* All those purposefully selected for interviews agreed to participate, and many were enthusiastic about prospect. The interviews were based on six semi-structured questions, tailored to the relationship of respondent to program, but with sufficient overlap to allow comparisons of responses. The interview sessions varied in length from 45 minutes to over two hours.

These interviews provided a rich source of useful and colorful information about the program. Recollections, which might have been forgotten with time, were captured. The interviews were audio taped so that the handwritten notes could be supplemented and corrected, as necessary. The tapes were placed in the doctoral program archives, to make them available to others interested in the genesis of the program. Data saturation occurred early in the interview process. But in order to secure broader, more detailed account, all the interviews were completed. The interview responses were analyzed for prevalent issues, patterns, and themes, which were compared across respondent groups (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995).

*The Questionnaire.* In addition to determining the reactions to the program of those directly involved, a university-wide perspective was needed to round out the picture. To collect this information, a short questionnaire was designed, piloted, slightly revised, and distributed in May 2002 with a follow-up mailing to a cross-section of 108 active university employees. The sample was selected at random from the listing in the 2001-02 J & W University telephone book. In all, 73 useable questionnaires were returned for return rate of 68%. The questionnaire addressed employees' level of familiarity with the doctoral program, when and how they had learned about the program, and their assessment as to the fit between the mission of the program and that of the university.

*The Written Materials.* From the pre-program period onward, there has been a flow of inter-office memoranda, meeting notes, and proposals concerning the doctoral program.

As many of these documents as possible were located and reviewed for insights into the initial thinking, original constructs, and further developments in the program.

As part of the regional accreditation process, documents were prepared for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). These materials included descriptions of past accomplishments and future plans. The initial documents for NEASC were prepared as part of the 1997 request by Johnson & Wales University that the institutional accreditation be extended to include the doctoral program. Other materials were prepared for the NEASC site visit in 1998 and in 2000 as a response to the recommendations resulting from that review. In preparation for the 2003 interim report to NEASC, additional materials were prepared. These documents, both drafts and final versions, were made available for the study.

*Personal Recollections.* The time lapse between the decision to undertake this study, the data collection and analysis, and actual writing the report, has provided ample opportunity to observe, to record, and to clarify personal perspectives concerning the program. The slow development of the case has resulted in the generation of more information and greater insights.

## **Telling the Story**

### **The Initiator**

A life-long resident of Rhode Island, Clifton J. Boyle is the child of working-class parents, who grew up in the three-family tenement, attended public and parochial schools, and graduated from Rhode Island College. After obtaining his teaching certificate, he began his career in education as a high school teacher, while simultaneously plying his trade as a licensed electrician. Still in his early 20s, he joined the staff of the Rhode Island Department of Education in the vocational education division. Supported by the commissioner of education, he was appointed director of a newly created regional vocation school. He went on to become a school superintendent and to teach part-time at several colleges and universities, including Johnson & Wales. In 1989, after retiring from 30 years in public education, he was asked by dean to become the director of academic affairs for the J & W graduate school. In 1996, he was appointed dean of the graduate school and in 2001 became the vice president for academic affairs of the J & W University Providence Campus. Gliding along at sunset at the helm of his beautiful 36-foot Catalina sailboat, on a perfect summer evening in 2002, Dr. Boyle exclaimed, "It doesn't get any better than this."

Gary Yukl (1994) identified qualities that describe strong, charismatic leaders. Dr. Boyle possesses his fair share of those mentioned. Although not specifically asked to describe his leadership qualities, those interviewed for the study spoke of Dr. Boyle in glowing terms, including that he was innovative, magnetic, perceptive, visionary, and wonderful.

Dale Zand (1997) listed three forces as essential for effective leadership: knowledge, trust, and power. Because he is a generator of ideas and wants to see those ideas implemented, Dr. Boyle understands the importance of having necessary information; he either possesses the knowledge or knows where to get it. He relies to a great extent on the people he knows and can trust and who, in turn, trust him. His network of friends and acquaintances provided the backbone for the pre-planning and eventual staffing of the doctoral program. In terms of power, his political antennae are well developed from his many years of practical, first-hand experience with the political process. He is good at knowing when to delegate responsibility and when to retain oversight. He is the first to admit that he does not know everything, but that he is smart enough to know what he does not know. Always known as an idea man, one of his first bosses suggested to him that while he was destined to get ahead he should be leery of ever hiring another person such as himself, because “one Clif Boyle is enough” for any organization.

The definition of leadership offered by Marvin Peterson, David Dill, and Lisa Mets (1997) is indicative of the way in which Dr. Boyle goes about his work:

Leadership is the creation of ways to knowing and thinking about problems, issues, questions, concerns, places and people; leaders induce people to expand narrow perspectives of the work . . . and take few aspects of institutional life for granted. (p. 192)

One particular Johnson & Wales policy Dr. Boyle did not take for granted was limiting graduate education to the master’s level. Early in his J & W tenure, he completed his doctorate in education. He was among the many Rhode Islanders who made the trek to Massachusetts or Connecticut or further because there was no in-state doctoral program in education. Offering the degree in Rhode Island had long been under consideration in the public sector, but the competition between the single public university and the single public college had for many years stalled development of the idea. There was also an implicit belief that because so many teachers employed in the state held both undergraduate and master’s degrees from Rhode Island institutions, those seeking the doctorate should broaden their perspectives by going out-of-state. Many did, but in addition to assuming the academic work associated with obtaining the terminal degree, the commute was an extra burden.

Dr. Boyle took his degree at a large, what he described as an “impersonal,” private university in Boston, where the doctoral program was primarily designed to fit the needs of faculty. While earning his degree, he had ample opportunity to evaluate the programmatic structure and delivery system of the program. He graduated fully convinced that he could build a better program and he wanted the opportunity to try.

### **The Idea**

When Dr. Boyle began mentally to structure a new doctoral program, he formed very definite ideas about what was missing in his own recently completed program. He



cited as primary problems overlooking the basic precepts for adult education and not involving practitioners as faculty. Barbara Lovitts (2001) offered a series of recommendations for improving the retention and completion rates for doctoral students. Her major policy recommendations for doctoral granting institutions were these: enhance students' academic and social integration; improve the advising processes from entrance through the dissertation; deal with the realities of attrition; and celebrate success. Although Lovitts completed her work after the J & W doctoral program was implemented, the basic tenets of the program are closely aligned with her recommendations.

Discovering that the J & W director of graduate school admissions was not only in favor of an educational doctorate, but had been thinking along the same lines, gave Dr. Boyle support for the idea. The director was convinced that there was a market niche in Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts for a doctoral program in education leadership, and because it was the philosophy of J & W to provide programs to fulfill markets needs, that it was a good area for the university to pursue. They agreed that there were three compelling reasons for starting a doctoral program in education at J & W University:

- There was no program currently in Rhode Island.
- There was no accessible program that made sense in terms of a delivery system for full-time working professionals.
- There was no accessible program that used a good combination of theory and practice.

Based on these discussions and others, Dr. Boyle put together a taskforce to explore the idea of offering a doctorate in education at J & W University. First, however, he discussed the idea with his immediate supervisor and the person who hired him, the dean of the J & W graduate school. The dean was not smitten with the proposal. When he lured Dr. Boyle to J & W to work full-time in the graduate school, the dean knew that his assistant really wanted only a nine-month contract, so that he could dedicate his summers to sailing. The dean was very interested in keeping his assistant on the job and found that he could get twelve months work from him in nine months. Because the dean knew that Dr. Boyle was very keen on the idea of the doctoral program and because he was very interested in keeping him happy, the dean freed Dr. Boyle to work on the preliminary plan and gave his blessing to forming the original taskforce. As Dr. Boyle spent more time on the design of the doctoral program, the dean took over more graduate school tasks, but thought that the trade-off was well worth the assumption of additional work. With the dean's qualified support, the planning for the program was underway.

### **The Committee**

Being naturally gregarious, Dr. Boyle had over the years acquired many friends and colleagues in education. It was from this network of professionals, who shared his values and views, that he assembled the original 13-member taskforce. He ascertained in

advance that each person asked to serve endorsed the idea of seriously considering a doctoral program in education for J & W University.

At the first taskforce meeting, in November 1990, the mission for the group was presented: To determine the feasibility of offering a program leading to a doctoral degree in educational leadership at J & W University. To accomplish the mission, the taskforce was asked to complete these assignments:

- Identify a specific degree program - - Ed. D. or Ph. D
- Determine the need for the program
- Select the orientation for the program - - primarily research or practice
- Develop a program philosophy and goal statement
- Identify appropriate content areas or courses
- Identify the delivery methods for the program
- Make recommendations for needed support services.

Over time, the name of the group changed and its membership expanded to include additional individuals from Dr. Boyle's network. Many second-round members became the nucleus of the founding faculty and one became a doctoral student. During the evolution from taskforce, to blue ribbon committee, to working group, to advisory committee, the group communication lines were kept open and active. Frequent meetings, memoranda, phone calls, and informal means were used to keep the work on target and to sustain interest in the process. One of the eight stages in the process of creating major change, identified by John Kotter (1996), is to communicate the change vision; failure to communicate the vision may be attributable to the limited intellectual capacities of the receivers or to their general reluctance to change. In working with his collaborative group, Dr. Boyle faced neither of these roadblocks, which was not the result of chance; he had carefully selected group members on the basis of their knowledge and on their willingness to consider change.

Phil Harkins (1999) defined high impact leaders as those who get results, who make things happen, who take charge wherever they are, and who are the ones others want to follow (p. 10). One of the traits found in high impact leaders is that "they match what they say with what they do" (p. 11). Dr. Boyle ably used a comprehensive high-impact leader's strategy by keeping his group centered on a common goal, focused on the necessary tasks, and moving towards defined results. Not only did he *talk the talk*, he also *walked the talk* by being one of the most ardent workers on the project; he set a good example for others.

### **Institutional Clearance**

As the plans for the doctorate program began to take shape, Dr. Boyle recognized that to be successful the idea should not be further advanced without securing permission from the university administration. To this end, he scheduled a meeting with the university president in early December 1990. The purpose of the meeting was to secure

input, feelings, and counsel from the president relative to the planning, development, and implementation of the doctoral program.

In his introduction to the book on the development of J & W University (D'Amato & Tarantino, 1998), President John A. Yena identified, "those simple philosophies which I have derived" from working at the university:

- Real authority rests not within the person's position, but with the person.
- Lead not as though you had rank, but as though you had to depend on the quality of your ideas and the example you set.
- What you are speaks more loudly than what you say.
- Think like an entrepreneur and encourage others to do the same.
- People learn by doing . . . let people do.
- Don't be threatened by people smarter than you. (p. 9)

This approach to leading an academic institution favors innovators. Because Dr. Boyle was familiar with the president's leadership philosophy, going right to the top of the organization at such an early stage in the process was not an arbitrary decision. The president takes pride in the fact that J & W is an entrepreneurial institution with minimum bureaucracy, which he believes fosters creative thinking and products. As a result, taking an idea and running with it is considerably easier to do at J & W University than at many institutions.

- The summary notes of the meeting indicated that the president raised these issues:
- How does a doctoral program fit into the mission of the university?
- Is a doctoral program in concert with the philosophy of a career university?
- What might the practicum aspects the doctoral program include?
- What additional support services, not yet in place at the university, might a doctoral program require?

Although he did not see the doctoral program as an immediate priority for the university, the president did encourage the taskforce to continue with the planning effort. With the tacit agreement of the president (at least he did not say *no*), Dr. Boyle continued to move forward with a promotional agenda for the new program. From the outset, however, the question of the fit between a doctoral program in educational leadership and the university was raised.

### **Regional Accreditation**

Although, long accredited by Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), in January 1991, Johnson & Wales University announced plans to seek accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). Members of the doctoral taskforce discussed whether the additional requirements for regional accreditation, particularly those regarding governance, general education, and library resources, would be more than a fledgling program could bear. Agreement was reached that the NEASC requirements were consistent with those of a quality doctoral

program, and that regional accreditation would be beneficial to program graduates. As a result, throughout the development of the program, the necessity of fulfilling NEASC requirements and requests was never far from the minds of those responsible for the program and the university.

### **Start-up Funding**

After meeting regularly for six months, the taskforce submitted a feasibility study in May 1991 to the dean of the graduate school. The study recommendations included three prime focus items that requested J & W University:

- To continue determined efforts to secure adequate library facilities
- To maintain and further enhance the move towards obtaining regional accreditation from the NEASC
- To commence immediately the offering of a pilot program leading to a doctorate in educational leadership.

In addition, the taskforce challenged the university “to accept this invitation to come to the aid of a large population of Rhode Islanders whose desire is to maintain and further enhance their career status. . . . Is not that the responsibility of a ‘Career University?’”

Armed with the taskforce report, in January 1992, the dean of the graduate school submitted a internal request for grand funding. J & W FAST Grants were designed to provide start-up funds to encourage faculty and staff to launch new initiatives. The requested funds, \$7,780, were to cover the extra costs the graduate school would incur in mounting a pilot program. Accompanying the funding request was a list of advantages that a doctoral program in educational leadership would bring to J & W University. It would:

- Be the only doctoral program in education in Rhode Island
- Fulfill an interest identified by the state board for higher education
- Increase enrollment in the J & W graduate school
- Expand the J & W network to include educational practitioners
- Increase the influence of J & W University in the field of education
- Promote a unique delivery system, which used the practicum approach
- Add status to the university.

The FAST Committee acted quickly and awarded the funds, and the pilot program could begin.

### **External Forces**

In fall 1992, the ACICS team arrived for an on-site accreditation visit. While going through the graduate school files, team members came across one marked *Doctoral Program*, which caught their attention. Asked about this unreported, unaccredited

program, the president immediately called the dean of the graduate school and inquired, not particularly calmly, about the program, whose existence could jeopardize ACICS accreditation for the entire university. The dean immediately handed the phone to Dr. Boyle, who explained that this was only a pilot program, that it was not open to the public, and that no fees were being charged. The reason for the pilot, he explained, was to field-test the feasibility of implementing the program. His response did not entirely placate the president.

As a result, Dr. Boyle was called in to see the president in order to explain in full the direction the program had taken. Responding to the given explanation, the president said that a decision about the program was not one he was willing to make on his own. Instead he asked Dr. Boyle to make a presentation on the doctoral program to the entire university executive committee at an up-coming retreat. The president said: "If they [members of the executive committee] buy it, we will go with it; if they don't, then I don't and it is over and I do not want to hear any more about it."

The next part of the story is best told in Dr. Boyle own words:

*I made a PowerPoint-like presentation that blew their minds away. Let me tell you, this was before PowerPoint, and no one was using it at the time. I am not sure that the content of the program was that great, but the flashy part was, because they had never seen anything like it before. It was before PowerPoint was available, and I may have used Harvard Graphics or Lotus Freelance or a combination; I was testing them out, but it was one of the early ones.*

*I do have a real passion about what I am doing, and I gave it my all. I know what I can do and what I can make happen. After I made my presentation, I asked if there were any questions. [The group included the president, five to six vice presidents, deans, and maybe trustees.] What was really interesting was that no one asked any questions afterwards. Then the president commented; he went on as only he can do, for 15 or 20 minutes, and it was very nice what he said. He was very complimentary. After he was through with his oration, everyone else was like dominoes, everything fell into place, and it was like almost a done deal.*

*Coming home from the retreat, I was flying. It felt like my heart was pumping outside by body. It was a thrill. I have had other successes in my professional life before. And this wasn't big, in terms of something that you could see, feel, and hold. But I just knew that this one would really impact not only the university, but also eventually the way administrators were trained in Rhode Island.*

From that day forward, good to his word, the doctoral program has had enthusiastic support from the president and from the university executive committee. Money has not been a problem for this program and budget requests have been honored. Dr. Boyle has not been bashful in asking for money, and the university has responded generously.

### **The Pilot Program**

The pilot program was initiated in 1992 with two J & W employees, both members of the original taskforce, as students. The program, designed primarily by Dr. Boyle, consisted of a series of readings, consultations with experts, and reality-based projects. Although the program was a tremendous amount of work, the students valued being part of something innovative and intellectually stimulating. The course phase of the pilot study was completed in 1994. The results from the pilot were incorporated into a program plan authored by Dr. Boyle and the two students.

### **The Plan for the Doctoral Program**

The basic elements of the doctoral program in educational leadership, as detailed in the November 1994 report, did not differ significantly from those that defined the program. These features include:

- Opening the program to practicing educational leaders or potential educational leaders, who meet the admission requirements.
- Grouping student into two cohorts: Elementary/Secondary and Higher Education. The cohorts remain together throughout the program, and are intended to foster a team approach to problem solving and to provide a network of support during and after the program.
- Utilizing a non-traditional delivery approach with classes on Friday nights (5 hours) and all day on Saturday (10 hours) on alternative weekends.
- Keeping students engaged by using a variety of teaching techniques: collaborative problem solving, action research projects, faculty and student presentations, guest presenters, on-line searches and discussions, field trips, and community service work.
- Employing faculty members who are current in their fields, who were and/or are respected practitioners, who take an active interest in the students, and who vary their teaching techniques.
- Using the qualifying examination as a filtering device to determine whether students can apply their course work to address structured authentic problems.
- Promoting action research techniques that seek to find useful solutions to real problems, both in course work and for dissertation research.
- Espousing and operating under a philosophy that is in accordance and harmony with the mission and purposes of J & W University.

### **Program in Place**

Since the first class of students entered the program in fall 1996, seven groups or 16 cohorts have started the program. Entering cohorts varied in size from 10 to 21 students. Due to attrition, both voluntary and involuntary, by the end of the two years of coursework, cohorts have shrunk to 5 to 16 students. As the program has become better known, the applicant pool has grown with a corresponding increase in selectivity.

## The Findings

Myths abound about leaders in higher education. Ramsden (1998) suggested two: that management is too intrusive and that academics are far too unproductive. As is often the case with myths, neither of these was substantiated in this case study. One of the primary findings was, in fact, that the university leaders, particularly the president and the program initiator, played their respective roles almost to perfection.

The president of Johnson & Wales University, through his stated policies and subsequent actions, established a climate that enabled change. His own philosophy mirrors that of James Kouzes and Barry Posner (1995): take risks, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, lead by example, and celebrate achievement. By encouraging J & W faculty and staff to take risks, the president perpetuates the entrepreneurial spirit of the university. The shared vision of J & W University, as a stellar career university, keeps new ideas focused on that common theme. Diminished bureaucracy and availability of funds for creative proposals are university policies that enable the development of nascent ideas. The president leads by example in that he is not only a generator of creative ideas, but also a strong supporter of good ideas proposed by others. Celebration comes naturally to J & W University, due in part to its strengths in hospitality and culinary arts. The university has applied this technique well to the doctoral program with numerous dinners and receptions given to recognize significant occasions for students and their families. A necessary element for bringing about change is to have support and encouragement from those at the top of the organization. The J & W doctoral program in educational leadership has enjoyed this support almost from the beginning and this made the program possible.

In his study of change on 15 four-year campuses, William Tierney (2001) identified five strategies for effecting academic reform. Each of these strategies was used in the J & W change process:

- Encouraging an innovation-friendly culture: this is something the J & W president worked hard to establish and maintain.
- Fostering an atmosphere of agreement: the program initiator did this by selecting the original taskforce of change-minded people.
- Defining roles and time frames: the program initiator accomplished this, which kept the program on track through its various lifecycles - creation, collectivity, formalization, and elaboration phases (Cameron & Whetten, 1983).
- Seeking comparative data, this was done by gathering information on other doctoral programs and doing market surveys.
- Ensuring good communications: except for a few minor lapses, fluent communication marked the program from its beginnings.

The initiator of the doctoral program in educational leadership used strategies that mirrored the six principles for sound academic leadership suggested by Ramsden (1998)

in putting the program into place. As an academic leader seeking to initiate a new program:

- He created a dynamic process that involved key individuals in designing, planning, piloting, offering, and celebrating the doctoral program.
- He developed a compelling vision for the doctoral program with an outcomes-focused agenda and a well-defined bottom line: If we build it, the students will come.
- He took the president at his word that the university wanted leaders at all levels, thus assumed the mantle of leadership for the doctoral program.
- He made a compelling case not only for how the doctoral program was consistent with the mission of the university but would enhance its prestige.
- He used various program development stages as opportunities to learn and to have others learn more about doctoral programs and what advanced or impeded the success of such programs.
- He promoted a transformative change by lifting the vision of the university to new heights. He became, by in his own admission, an ordinary person who did an extraordinary thing.

Support from key administrators and a reasoned plan for designing and implementing the doctoral program in educational leadership helped to establish acceptance of the program throughout the university. However, despite the visibility and funding given to the program, university faculty, administrators, and staff not directly associated with the program were often unaware of its existence. Of those surveyed, even many who were aware of the program thought they knew too little to comment on its fit with the university (51%). However, most of the rest of those familiar with the doctoral program, thought that it was a good or reasonable complement to other J & W programs (44%) and that it added prestige of the institution. Only a few (5%) thought that the doctoral program did not fit well with the university. Many of the comments offered by the respondents clarified their views on the question of fit:

- J & W commitment to leadership is consistent with this program.
- J & W is dedicated to education and professionalism – so is the program.
- J & W believes in career education and leadership – this program does both.
- J & W has a solid relationship with educators and the educational industry.
- The program is consistent with the career-focused mission of J & W.
- The program will help to promote good leaders, part of the J & W mission.
- The program expands the concept of career education.
- The program is practitioner oriented and so is J & W.
- The program is flexible and offers opportunity, both hallmarks of J & W.
- The program and its faculty are too removed from the rest of the university.
- Education is not an area of expertise, because J & W has no undergraduate education program in education.

The issue of the fit of the doctoral program in educational leadership with the mission of Johnson & Wales University continues to linger. It is one repeatedly raised by



NEASC in requests for information. The focused evaluation report prepared by the university in 1997 in preparation for the site visit included a point-by-point comparison of the objectives of the program with the mission of the university. Nonetheless, as a follow-up to the 1998 site visit, the first issue raised in a letter from NEASC on March 22, 1999 was: Clarify the relationship of the doctoral program to the university's mission. The response submitted on July 31, 2000 from the university suggested that:

. . . The doctoral program prepares scholar-practitioners leaders who learn by addressing the problems and challenges of education and by bringing theory, research, and best practice to the solution of those problems. . . .

This approach is closely aligned with the university's signature as a career focused institution. As its mission states, the university focuses on preparing students "to achieve success in employment fields with high growth potential." To accomplish this mission, J & W emphasizes learning by doing, in addition to learning about, and learning by working in real-world settings on real-world problems.

### **Conclusions**

Completing a comprehensive case study is a time intensive process and is undertaken with the intention of discovering new insights. When the results yielded almost a textbook description of how to provide leadership for initiating change, they were, at first, somewhat disappointing. On reflection, however, the results of this study were more intriguing than they first appeared. How often does leadership, particularly in higher education, conform to the prevailing models? More often than not, leaders must resort to circumvention or compensation of needed elements; rarely, do models operate in practice as described in theory. The experience at Johnson & Wales University with the doctoral program in educational leadership is an example of how leaders can drive and nurture change. The basic parameters needed for change were there and the leaders worked quickly, as measured in academic time, to catalyze an idea into a program. Considering the type of program that was initiated, educational leadership, it was particularly important that the leadership used was visible, describable, and successful.

The accelerated pace and growing pressures for new approaches in higher education are forcing institutions to consider constructive changes. But if the timelines for bringing about change are too lengthy, many institutions may fall behind their more flexible competitors. Universities need to look at new ways for creating change. One of those ways may be to reread and to reconsider what the literature has to say.

Johnson & Wales University is not a traditional institution of higher education and prides itself on many of these differences. But it is an institution dedicated to learning and to making good use of the current thinking on leadership and change. More traditional universities may have something to learn from a less traditionally bound institution. This case study suggests that they might well.

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