

Dropping Out of Administration

Carol J. Pardon offers thoughts about "[Why I Am Dropping Out of Administration](#)" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 1, 2013.

Ms. Pardun has good ideas about administration. For example, "Leading faculty members is about creating an atmosphere that allows faculty members to accomplish their goals and dreams."

And she recognizes that "Some faculty members are simply hard-wired to disagree with administrators."

These are common administrative practices, hopes, and dreams. And I, for one, welcome her understanding. But the practices, hopes, and dreams don't work without the active good will of faculty and administrators. And we often fail in practice.

For example, I counseled colleagues to stop with the constant petty complaints to administrators. I wasn't successful. My fear was that inundated administrators may tune out important concerns. My sympathy was with administrators who managed to put up with petty complaints.

Administrators have more power than individual faculty members and become a greater concern when they misbehave. Here's a minor example:

When our then-director, James Crockett, who, for years practiced "creating an atmosphere that allowed faculty members to accomplish their dreams," got ready to retire, he took a path that was worthy of more than polite criticism.

Our director, who was scheduled to retire, was required to collect nominations for a research professorship. In accordance with the rules governing the selection of the professorship, I delivered a letter nominating a promising young colleague to the director. He handed it back to me and said that he had already nominated himself. He advised me that the chairman of the Selection Committee was supposed to consider nominees later in the week or the week after. The next day, I asked the Selection Committee chairman when we were scheduled to meet and he said the Committee had already met and selected our director to receive the professorship [and the significant financial benefits that accompanied the professorship]. That's how I learned that the director had removed me from the Selection Committee.

Unlike the young colleague I tried to nominate, the Chairman, in his thirty plus years as an academic, had never published any research in a quality academic or professional journal.

As director, he was charged with forming the Selection Committee that awarded the professorship. He had also named himself the representative and individual to respond to any

questions concerning the Perpetual Fund Agreement of the professorship. So, the fox was in charge of the chicken coop.

When I challenged his conflicts of interest, the Chairman was furious and said, "Everyone knew that I [he] was supposed to get the professorship."

A few weeks later, I read in the local newspaper about the appointment of the Chairman as the new professor. The announcement cited his integrity. The university higher administrators backed the director. He retired immediately after a couple years of milking the professorship. And, the promising young associate was lured to another university.

Faculty and administrators are all too human. But, if universities are to do all the wonderful things that are expected of them (read CHE a few days to learn the hopes for higher education), we better get improved versions of faculty and administrators.