

DAILY PRACTICE Ethics in Leadership

PART 3

Readers who begin this series with Part 3, may catch up by reading [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).

...verification, public review, and opportunities for rebuttal by decision-makers

In an effort to develop as many perspectives as possible, my students and I invited Dean Doty and Committee Chairman Carter to discuss their decision. A list of questions was included in the invitation. I expected Dean Doty to accept the invitation as an educational opportunity to advocate the merits of reading the Wall Street Journal. Students were optimistic when they sent the invitation to attend any class at the Dean's and Committee Chairman's convenience. They had become knowledgeable and looked forward to putting their thoughts, evidence, and reasoning to a test.

A month passed without a word from the Dean, but students extended a second invitation. He was often out of town and may have needed more time to schedule a visit. Another month passed and it became evident that silence was the Dean's response.

Students were disappointed. They wanted an opportunity to discuss the Wall Street Journal Academic Partnership Program. Moreover, an announced increase in tuition added to their interest in costs. As time passed, though, students began to wonder aloud, "What were they [Dean Harold Doty, Accounting Director Rod Posey, and Committee Chairman George Carter] hiding?"

The WSJAPP Case Reports

The semester was coming to an end, so students wrote their case reports without hearing views from the decision-makers. When I read their reports, I was pleased that they acknowledged the benefits of reading the Wall Street Journal. But they also observed that other periodicals offered current business news to students at discount prices. Furthermore, students were not shy about criticizing Dean Doty. They concluded based on evidence and documentation available to them that "[g]etting free Wall Street Journals was in the Dean's and faculty's interests because it saved them money." They not only viewed the \$14,000 per year in Wall Street Journal as a kickback to the Dean and faculty but also a conflict of interest for requiring all of the students to pay \$58,000. Furthermore, students resented that no disclosure of the deal had been made to them and no Q&A was forthcoming from the Dean and Committee.

Regardless of the failure to answer their questions, students believed that the Dean and Committee should revisit their decision. An exemplary college they discovered in a search of the internet had used donations to pay the Wall Street Journal for all its business students, faculty, and administrators. Students had included that idea in their written communications to the Dean and his Committee. Alternatively, if the Dean was to continue the WSJAPP, it seemed obvious to them that the dean and faculty should also pay \$19 per semester for their copies of the newspaper. The student's preference, if a donor could not be found, was that their \$58,000 per year could be better spent because the library had multiple copies to be read for free.

Through it all, students were concerned about the perception Dean Doty chose to create. Dean Doty's, Director Posy's, and Committee Chairman Carter's refusal to discuss the issue with them created a perception of a "cover up." A common refrain was, "This is a University—where better to ask and get answers to questions?"