

## Chapter 3

# Cultivating Leaders from Within: Transforming Workers into Leaders

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter examines the practice of internal recruitment and internal advancement of administrative personnel within higher education. The purpose of this chapter is to determine the perceived success of one campus's approach to internal promotion from the view of the promoted. Additionally, the chapter discusses the rationales for promotees' views in relation to current literature and provides a contextual analysis of best practices related to internal promotion within higher education forums. The data analysis indicates that even within a single campus, practices vary widely, with little consistency or predictability. There is a correlation between the perceptions of job efficacy to support and access to mentoring from higher-level administration.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the field of administration, more often than not, the predominant theory regarding promotion is based solely on past accomplishments, an interview, and the “vibe” that is portrayed when he meets with senior administrators in the organization. How often do we find ourselves examining candidates and attempting to choose between the lesser of two evils, or possibly wishing that the candidate with the best interview had just a bit more

experience in one area or the other? A revolutionary concept to sweep through administrative theory recently is that of “advancement pools.” Critics may argue that advancement pools are breeding grounds for like-minded individuals who hope to close the door of opportunity on outsiders, or even certain groups within the organization. However, used in the appropriate manner, advancement pools can generate a new kind of leader specifically tailored to the needs of the organization of which they are a part (Bisbee, 2007).

This chapter will address the intricacies of the initiation of an advancement pool within the college setting. In addition to an extensive review

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of literature regarding best practices in recruiting for leadership as well as the implementation of an advancement pool, this chapter will discuss the perceptions of newly advanced leaders at a moderately sized, public institution of higher education. Nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Northern Georgia, the institution consists of two campuses and serves a population of approximately 9,000 students, with approximately 6,500 served on the main campus. The campuses are entirely commuter campuses, and are reasonably diverse in ethnicities represented, age of student population, and representation of students classified as non-traditional. The largest majors at this institution are Business and Education. Additionally, the gender division is approximately 54% female and 46% male. Students currently range in age from 15 years to 85 years of age, and 29% of all students are classified as non-traditional. The institution has converted from a two-year to four-year institution within the last five years (GSC, 2012). This conversion has provided the institution with welcome growth in student population and the resulting need to restructure to serve the population effectively. Restructuring the academic and student service divisions resulted in a large number of internal advancements. This literature analysis will incorporate anecdotal data that was collected via an anonymous survey. The survey was issued to all administrative personnel within the institution and responses were then analyzed and coded for commonalities in response patterns. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss best practices in internal advancement and recruitment as well as to examine the perceived success of a campus' approach to those concepts.

## **BACKGROUND**

A guiding premise behind the creation and utilization of advancement pools lies in the fact that most organizations have complex management

structures (Twombly, 1990). Staff members who demonstrate excellent potential for leadership are sometimes looked over in favor of an outsider with more experience. These up-and-comers within the organization, if given appropriate training and opportunity, could easily become managers of specific areas, transforming them into loyal leaders who experience high levels of job satisfaction. Advancement pools are also generally accessible to the entire body of the organization that allows staffers who are "late bloomers" to experience the same potential for advancement that new hires enjoy. This also provides a perfect resource from which the administration can draw members for assignments to special task forces or perhaps delegate increased levels of administrative responsibility as discussed in van Ameijde's (2009) discourse on distributed perspectives. In this situation, the leadership team will understand individual contributions to the organization, while providing a clear picture of an individual's ability to balance his or her own desires for advancement with the needs of the organization (USA Today, 2001).

Assumptions have generally been that since only select candidates are chosen for training within the advancement pool, job mobility to the masses is still limited (Bisbee, 2007). This assumption is a fallacy. The basis of an advancement pool is to allow any member of the organization to apply for acceptance into the advancement pool. This allows the administration to get a "snap shot" of the potential candidates who may not have been considered in promotional processes prior to their affiliation with the advancement pool. Participation in the pool also allows the administrative team to begin training leaders in general areas, as opposed to training for a specific position. Candidates from within the pool then become more versatile within their organization's leadership constructs, and in turn, are greater assets to the overall needs of the organization. Leadership candidates are able to gain a better understanding of the vision

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