

# **The Faculty-Administrator Relationship: Partners in Prospective Governance?**

**Marietta Del Favero, *Louisiana State University***  
**Nathaniel Bray, *The University of Alabama***

## **Abstract**

In this article the authors examine characterizations of faculty-administrator relationships, in particular as related to shared governance. Two primary perspectives guided the study. The first perspective focused on the fragile nature of shared governance, characterized by a lack of harmony and mistrust. The second perspective focused on the root of faculty-administrator tension as both cultural and structural in nature. The study illuminates problems associated with shared governance, attributed primarily to the conflicting cultures within which faculty and administrators work. As well, the authors articulate a three dimensional frame including holistic descriptions, participant perceptions, and participant behaviors, which characterize the dynamics of faculty-administrator relationships. Dispositional contexts associated with these relationships are further examined.

## **Background**

The faculty-administrator relationship in colleges and universities is central to the effectiveness of shared governance (Breslin, 2000; Guskin, 1996; Westmeyer, 1990). Yet, the literature on this important relationship and its implications for institutional governance is disjointed and haphazard and has yet to be taken up by scholars in a serious way. One gets a general sense from the higher education literature of a relationship that is at the very least challenging, and at the extreme is adversarial and conflict-laden. This perception, to the extent that it represents reality, is problematic given the requirements of shared governance calling for

“joint effort” and “inescapable interdependence” (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 1966). We believe study of the faculty-administrator relationship is important in informing the burgeoning literature on governance and its effectiveness. This paper synthesizes what the governance literature tells us about this all-important relationship and advocates the necessity of its study as an independent line of inquiry.

The dynamics of the faculty-administrator relationship are important given that faculty and administrators hold very different views of how their institutions function (Bensimon, 1991; Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Peterson & White, 1992). The differences may be expected, but are worth noting given that academic administrators tend to have come to their positions from the faculty ranks (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Cohen & March, 1974; Dill, 1991). However, once in an administrative post, the administrator is often viewed as being increasingly removed from central academic concerns, at least in the eyes of many faculty (Birnbaum, 1988). These groups therefore are marked by conflicting interests (Leslie, 2003) and values conflicts (Dill, 1991), and represent at best an uncomfortable alliance (Guffey & Rampp, 1998). In the past, faculty might avoid these challenges by opting not to participate. Increasing external pressures, including those for faculty accountability, are necessitating greater faculty participation in decisions that are impacting their welfare more than ever before. Increased use of part-time faculty for example, has put more pressure on tenure track faculty to participate in governance processes (Morphew, 1999). The challenges of fostering a climate valuing joint effort and the interdependent nature of faculty and administrator work can no longer be ignored.

Kezar and Eckel (2004) have pointed out that the scholarship on how groups interact in the governance process is minimal. There has been a coinciding press for a comprehensive body of research on this topic becoming increasingly evident in recent calls for revitalized governance systems (Benjamin & Carroll, 1993, 1998; Braskamp & Wergin, 1998; Chaffee, 1998; Greer, 1997; Gumpert, 2000; Lawler & Mohrman, 1996; Peterson & White, 1992; Rhoades, 1995; Schuster, Smith, Corak & Yamada, 1994; Tierney, 1998). At least some are calling for new paradigms for thinking about governance. Greer speaks directly to a new type of governance needed as “prospective,” or forward-looking and relationship-focused. Likewise, Rhoades (1995) advocates attention to “connection, common cause, and a broad sense of community” (p. 26). Additionally, Lazerson (1997) has argued that the days of the “pay me and leave me alone” mentality is long gone (p. 12). Institutions must begin to stimulate an ethos that values the faculty-administrator partnership in decision-making (Del Favero, 2003). Further research is needed to inform higher education leaders how to best facilitate the kinds of “bridging activities” (Leslie, 2003, p. 27) that foster a relationship marked by joint effort, mutual respect, and trust.

The objectives of this research were threefold: (a) to synthesize existing knowledge of the faculty-administrator relationship in the context of academic governance;

(b) to offer one approach to conceptualizing the relationship and its various dispositional contexts to advance its comprehensive study; and (c) to transcend the faculty bias often suggested in accounts of faculty-administrator interactions. This third objective is made possible in that we have ourselves occupied both scholarly and administrative roles in our careers. Consequently, we are in the unique position of understanding the perspectives of faculty as well as that of non-academic administrators who, absent the status of a scholar, must negotiate a level playing field with respect to joint decision-making. In addition, the study informs broader purposes called for in recent examinations of governance in higher education. For example, Kezar and Eckel (2004) assert the importance of framing governance scholarship in more meaningful ways, calling specifically for increased attention to the human dynamic. Stretching their point somewhat, this suggests to us that we ought to return to the traditional ethos of collegiality that was preeminent prior to the rise of formal, more isolating and impersonal decision-making structures. For this to be possible, we need to better understand the dynamic of the faculty-administrator relationship within a broad array of institutional decision-making contexts. Studies such as this one, intended to present a balanced view from both administrative and faculty perspectives, are useful in providing tools for further study of how the institutional decision-making environment in higher education can be improved.

### **Perspectives Guiding the Study**

The purpose of this research was to examine characterizations of the faculty-administrator relationship for purposes of conceptualizing it for empirical study. In so doing we will contribute to operationalization of the human dynamic (Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Tierney, 1998) of decision-making. Absent this knowledge, any attempts to further explore this relationship would have to be based on prevailing perceptions of how the two groups interact. We believe that a reliable understanding of the relationship must be based in the literature, since reliance on prevailing perceptions may result in a bias toward faculty views as the literature is historically biased toward faculty perspectives (Rice & Austin, 1988), and this bias continues to some extent. Recognizing that a prevailing bias exists, our objective here was to contribute to a more balanced understanding of issues and concerns on both sides. Two primary perspectives guided this study. First, while the partnership between faculty and administrators is essential to shared governance, it is also a fragile one, characterized by lack of harmony and large doses of mistrust. Thelin (2001) takes the impact of this lack of trust one step further in his metaphor of a “dry rot” that is eroding a positive sense of campus community (p. 11). Indeed, cooperation between the two groups often is difficult to achieve (Birnbaum, 1988; Borland, 2003; Minor, 2004; Weingartner, 1996; Welsh & Metcalf, 2003). Welsh and Metcalf’s study of faculty and administrator support for institutional effectiveness activities underscored the absence of a “shared platform” (p. 445) for improving institutional performance.

Second, we have taken the perspective that the root of faculty-administrator tension is both cultural and structural in nature. This approach will be important in studying this topic as it will contribute to enhancing the explanatory power of the interaction by opening up an array of bodies of literature for consideration in a way that would not have been possible had we limited the contexts of tension to one or the other. Cultural differences in the academic and administrative worlds and their underlying values have been widely discussed in the literature (Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker, & Riley, 2000; Clark, 1987, 1991; Dill, 1991; Etzioni, 2000). Faculty highly value autonomy and the direction of their work is largely self-determined. The role of administrators on the other hand, is to serve the collective good requiring them to measure and weigh a multitude of interests. Influence is a tool widely used by administrators to build consensus while academics tend to believe it indecent, even immoral, to attempt to influence others (Dressel, 1981). Additionally, as subcultures within the broader context of an institutional community, each culture potentially disables members' awareness of alternative social realities.

Structural limitations to a smooth functioning faculty-administrator relationship can be attributed at least in part to the professionalization of administrative work and the advent of academic senates in the 1960s as a means of formalizing faculty participation in governance. These structural aspects of the organizational environment certainly can be seen as exacerbating the already existing cultural differences in the two groups by widening the chasm between them. The resulting, often complex and misunderstood decision-making structures (e.g., information systems, communication mechanisms, planning and resource management activities) frustrate participation (Birnbaum, 1988; Dressel, 1981), particularly by faculty whose focal interests, unlike administrators, are discipline- rather than institution-related.

Thus, while joint effort, mutual respect, and trust are hallmarks of the quality of shared governance systems being called for in the literature, consideration of those aspects of the governance relationship that broach faculty participation has been woefully deficient. Addressing this deficiency is paramount to well functioning governance systems. Yet we agree with Kezar and Eckel (2004) that current scholarship on how groups interact in the process of joint decision-making is inadequate. Following on Kezar and Eckel, this paper attempts to ignite scholarly attention to this vital aspect of governance.

### **Mode of Inquiry/Data Sources**

Gumport (2000) brought attention to the need for alternative approaches to understanding the dynamics of change associated with higher education restructuring, while Tierney (2000) called for greater attention to the internal dynamic of governance processes. Our review of the literature suggested that a viable alternative for this study would be to focus more specifically on the human dynamic

(Guffey & Rampp, 1998; Kezar & Eckel, 2004) as manifested in the relationship between faculty and administrators.

A review of shared governance literature was conducted as a way of gleaning how this relationship has been depicted and explained. The governance literature has been our initial focus since it is in the interest of institutional decision-making that faculty and administrators are called upon to interact. We began with Kezar and Eckel's (2004) review of the governance literature as a way of identifying key research on the topic. From there we examined other empirical, conceptual, and opinion literature to better understand the characteristics of the relationship, issues, differing values, and perceptions that most often caused tension and conflict, and how the tension/conflict is played out in some of the most common governance interactions.

The literature review focused on the following questions designed to explain not only what we know about this relationship but the prevailing views on what it needs to look like if governance systems are to be most effective into the future.

1. What collective interests and self-interests are evidenced in the interactions and how are they manifested? Differences in faculty and administrative cultures dictate that their values and preferences, and therefore what consumes their attention will vary. Specifically, faculty work is driven by self-interest while the efficiency focus of administrators demands that their work is system or institutionally focused. Understanding what interests motivate the interactions between these two groups will lay the foundation for understanding their divergent cultures and the concomitant difficulties associated with shared decision-making.
2. How is the faculty-administrator relationship characterized in the literature? This question is important given the often unsupported assumptions made by faculty in the literature used to critique the unacceptable actions or decisions of administrators. This question serves primarily a confirmatory purpose as it enabled us to construct a definitional foundation in the literature upon which further studies will build.
3. What kinds of interactions characterize the relationship? To understand the relationship per se, a focus on interactions is needed. This approach is consistent with recent calls for greater attention to the human dynamic of governance (Kezar & Eckel, 2004) and its internal dynamic (Tierney, 1998). Our intent at the beginning of the literature review was to make sense of these characterizations such that a tool for empirical study of its quality could be advanced. This study indeed suggests that the interactions between faculty and administrators can be depicted in two dimensions that might frame a range of positive and negative behaviors.
4. What are the functional contexts within which the relationship is enacted? While there is little agreement on the areas of faculty authority

---

in decision-making (Minor, 2004), this question will guide future research by confirming the multitude of possible arenas within which joint decision-making occurs. This question serves a confirmatory purpose as well, and will guide the selection of additional bodies of literature for further study of the relationship.

### **Collective and Self-Interests**

Problems associated with shared governance are commonly attributed primarily to the conflicting cultures within which faculty and administrators operate. The literature on academic organizations has demonstrated broad agreement regarding the existence of two widely divergent cultures—academic and administrative (Becher, 1989; Birnbaum, 1988; Clark, 1987; Etzioni, 2000; Morphew, 1999; Westmeyer, 1990). A key differentiating characteristic of the two cultures is the primary focus or interest directing faculty and administrators in their work. According to Guffey and Rampp (1998), participants in shared governance are focused on their own respective agendas, a situation that complicates decision-making. Administrators are more commonly concerned with the collective. From the administrator's perspective, decisions made in the institutional interest most often take into account competitive interests vying for their fair share of the spoils. Resources are scarce. And, it is the job of administrators to fairly and effectively determine whose interests best match up with institutional objectives, and furthermore, who is most deserving. Their decision processes are obliged take the collective into account.

The literature describing faculty work (Birnbaum, 1988; Clark, 1991; Dill, 1991; Etzioni, 2000; Morphew, 1999; Weingartner, 1996), on the other hand, presents the work of this group as less overarching or institution focused and driven by more self-interested motives. They are concerned with obtaining resource support for their research, teaching, and service work, and may not be inclined to view the needs of others as equally, and certainly not as more, deserving. It is difficult for some faculty then to see beyond their own work and make judgments that will ultimately have the effect of disadvantaging their own program or individual support needs. Knowing this, any examination into the relationship between these two groups must recognize that they are motivated to engage with each other for very different reasons. Administrators are charged with handling matters of broad interest to the institutional community. The role of faculty is to conduct the academic functions of the institution, which means they are inexorably focused on teaching and research with the service component of their role often considered to play a tertiary role in institutional assessment of their work for promotion and tenure purposes. Consequently, participation in institutional decision-making activities often is considered a low priority activity for faculty.

Their divergent goals as a given, faculty and administrators often come to the

joint decision-making context with varied and conflicting interests. To the extent that the parties to the relationship understand these interests, appeals to the interests of the other will be useful in the collaborative process. We believe that over the longer term, relationship building and maintenance will be less difficult, and trust and mutual respect more likely to develop where preferences and interests of collaborators are well considered in process interactions.

A primary interest of faculty on the other hand is autonomy or control over their own work (Birnbaum, 2003; Clark, 1987; Dill & Helm, 1988; Gumpert, 2000; Keller, 2001; Leslie, 2003). Institutional actions viewed by faculty as hindering their freedom of inquiry, speech, or instructional control, can be vigorously opposed regardless of the positive impacts such a decision might have on the collective good. Additionally, Leslie (2003) cited class size, access to resources to support their work, and routes to publication as sources of faculty interest. Class size establishes in many cases the amount of effort involved in the teaching role. Where institutional type (e.g., research universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges) dictates the extent to which teaching and research involvement must be prioritized, large classes often require that more time be spent on teaching. Resources and publication concerns are directly related to the research role, and represent for many faculty the primary criteria for productivity and associated rewards. These values are held close by faculty, many of whom would cite them as their reason for choosing the academic profession in the first place.

Contrary to the self-interested focus of faculty work (e.g., concern with individual productivity, publication, and excellence in one's teaching), administrators see their role as serving a collective interest (e.g., fair distribution of resources, advancing institutional visibility and public image, and generally improving institutional performance). Among their highly prized values is efficiency of institutional operation (Birnbaum, 1988, 2003; Etzioni, 2000). According to Birnbaum (2003) administrators are also bound to consider and respond to pressures from the external environment (e.g., rapidly changing technology, public demand for new programs, and most importantly, diminishing state and federal support) that makes the need for fundraising a critical one. The institution's public image is also an important concern of administrators (Leslie, 2003) since it dictates the kind and amount of support the public will provide. Taking a somewhat different view, Bai (2003) opines that administrators are more concerned with their own careers and reputations, an assertion that we might expect to be true in many cases owing to the fact that acting outside the regard for self-interest can be difficult for anyone. We do not mean to imply that faculty are selfish and administrators are magnanimous. The implication here is that faculty focus on a specific field of research and historically were expected to maintain their focus there and let administrators run the institution and focus on links across disciplines. Shared governance has changed this dichotomous view into a blended role in which institutional effectiveness and accountability is the bailiwick of all. Where self-

promoting motives drive administrative action within the faculty—administrator relationship, it is valuable when this is recognized and considered in attempts to build and strengthen the association. Indeed, while faculty have an interest in the financial viability of programs (O'Brien, 1998), such interest is most typically associated foremost with how that viability will enable support for their work and for that of their closest colleagues. Evaluating this attitude from the perspective of the collective, such a value is justified insofar as it enables their highest and best contribution to the collective enterprise.

Birnbaum (2003) encapsulates the divergent priorities of the parties to higher education decision-making at somewhat of an abstract level similar to the AAUP Statement. Faculty are concerned with academic values, governing boards are focused on responsiveness, and administrators make efficiency a priority. We would argue also that administrators are concerned as well with responsiveness insofar as they derive their authority from the Board and are charged with implementing policy at their behest.

Varying interests also pertain related to the conduct of the decision-making process. The academic training of faculty has prepared them to place a high value on argument as opposed to closure. Closure as an objective prevails for administrators. Birnbaum (2003) states the argument versus closure matter in terms of cultural values. Faculty culture values creativity, critical discourse, and the unfettered pursuit of knowledge. Here, compromise is of little value. Administrators, on the other hand, seek compromise as a way of reaching decisions where the differing perspectives of decision-makers must be bridged.

## **Characterizing the Relationship and Its Interactions**

This section discusses the findings associated with the second and third research questions that focus respectively on how the relationship is characterized in the literature, and, the kinds of interactions that characterize the relationship. These results are combined given the lack of distinction in the literature between general relationship characteristics and characterizations of interactions. These characterizations fell into three main categories. First, there were descriptions that considered the overall character of the association between faculty and administrators. Second, there were perceptual characteristics that described an overall assessment of the attitudes, perceptions, and dispositions of one group toward the other. Lastly, the literature revealed descriptions of behaviors associated with the interactions between the two constituent groups. The following paragraphs will discuss each of these types of characterizations in turn. Table 1 provides a representative list of examples of characterizations of the faculty-administrator relationship in each of the three categories.

Characterizations were classified in three categories based on common characteristics of descriptions and how they integrated conceptually. First and most



Table 1. Characterizations of the Faculty-Administrator Relationship

| Holistic Descriptions  | Participant Perceptions  | Participant Behaviors   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ We-they relationship (Borland, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Philosophical split (O'Brien, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Adversarial (Mortimer &amp; McConnell, 1978)</li> <li>◆ Inability to work together; animosity (Minor, 2004)</li> <li>◆ Uncomfortable alliance; potential for friction (Guffey &amp; Rampp, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Marked by conflict (Greer, 1997; Leslie, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Two alternative realities that are irreconcilable; negotiation of contested terrain (Leslie, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Undercurrent of strife (Guffey &amp; Rampp, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Lack of trust on both sides (Bai, 2003; Borland, 2003; Guffey &amp; Rampp, 1998; Minor, 2004)</li> <li>◆ Deep chasms exist (Gayle, Hakim et al, 1999)</li> <li>◆ Value conflicts (Dill, 1991)</li> <li>◆ Choice in interaction is conciliation or confrontation (Greer, 1997)</li> <li>◆ Latent hostilities (Thompson, Hawkes &amp; Avery, 1969)</li> <li>◆ Turf struggles (Guffey &amp; Rampp, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Lack of frequent dialogue (Borland, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Animosity (Carlisle &amp; Miller, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Problem is lack of agreement not lack of consultation (O'Brien, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Ineffective communication (Miller, Williams, Garavalia, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Educational outcomes almost never discussed; stalemate/gridlock describe deliberations (Guffey &amp; Rampp, 1998)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Administrators are overbearing/overpowering (F)(Carlisle &amp; Miller, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Lack of respect for faculty (A) (Miller, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Colleagues in administration are "enemies" (F)(Ehrenberg, 2000)</li> <li>◆ Expectation of "display of authenticity" (F/A) (Guffey &amp; Rampp, 1998)</li> <li>◆ "While others decide, faculty feel left out" (F)(Leslie, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Faculty are more knowledgeable (F) (Etzioni, 2000)</li> <li>◆ Suspicion, fear, divisiveness, insecurity (F)(Kissler, 1997)</li> </ul> | <p><i>Administrators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Disregard for faculty rights; shut faculty out of process (Carlisle &amp; Miller, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Placating, coalition development (Miller, Williams &amp; Garavalia, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Deviate from wishes of faculty (Miller, Williams, &amp; Garavalia, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Resentment/suspicion of faculty involved in administrative work (Pope &amp; Miller, 1999)</li> <li>◆ Cooperation (Minor, 2004)</li> <li>◆ Contact with faculty receives little time compared to other activities (Dill, 1991)</li> <li>◆ Consultative (Weingartner, 1996)</li> <li>◆ Supportive (Leslie, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Coloring, altering, misusing, and holding information hostage (Guffey &amp; Rampp, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Displays of authenticity, commitment to process (Guffey &amp; Rampp, 1998)</li> </ul> <p><i>Faculty</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Faculty resistance of administrative controls (Gumpert, 2000)</li> <li>◆ Placating, coalition development (Miller, Williams &amp; Garavalia, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Inattentive to institutional issues (O'Brien, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Resist acknowledgement of administrative authority (Etzioni, 2000)</li> <li>◆ React defensively to administrator suggestions; cede ground grudgingly (AGB, 1996)</li> <li>◆ Anger and frustration about perceived lack of consultation (Kissler, 1997)</li> </ul> |

plentiful in the literature are what we term *holistic descriptions*. These descriptions less often rest on empirical research and derive from knowledge about the bifurcation of culture in academe. While sharing a home in academe, academic and administrative cultures are vastly different. Academics work in more autonomous contexts of teaching and research, and decisions about their work and performance are made with little regard for institutional concerns. Student learning and publication productivity drive their work. They devote scant attention to the collective needs of the institution that play little into the activities for which they are rewarded both psychically and materially. Administrators on the other hand, conduct their work in large part with the interests of some collective, if not the entire institution, in mind. Bureaucratic processes guide their decision-making and the needs of the collectivity demand their attention and energy. In sum, by necessity, faculty are typically concerned with institutional decision-making that will ultimately affect their own work and less concerned with administrative activity that does not. This cultural chasm defining the work of faculty on the one hand and administrators on the other, makes cooperation in the interest of shared governance difficult at best. Holistic descriptions of the faculty-administrator relationship derive from this cultural fragmentation, that is, the differences in the way administrators and faculty think of themselves and their work in relation to the institutional decision-making environment. For example, Guffey and Rampp (1998) describe the environment as one marked by turf struggles and a real potential for friction between faculty and administrators. Dill (1991) points to value conflicts that are inherent in the differing cultures of the two constituent groups. Thompson, Hawkes, and Avery (1969) believe that the different "truth strategies" subscribed to by the two groups is a source of latent hostility between them. Similar to scholars representing the divergent cultures as a source of fragmentation, Thompson, Hawkes, and Avery rely on the notion of pluralism of truth strategies as the primary source of issues associated with faculty participation in institutional governance.

The second category that emerged was labeled *participant perceptions*. Characterizations in this group represented the perceptions of faculty or administrators with respect to their involvement in joint decision-making activities. In building a solid relationship, perceptions are important in that they offer a starting point for collaboration and joint effort. Where perceptions are positive the assumption is that collaborative effort will be subjected to fewer hurdles; alternatively where perceptions of the other are negative, this represents an obstacle to be overcome before productive interactions can occur. Such negative perceptions can also foster attitudes that permeate through decision-making and relational contexts to create a culture that impedes productive interactions between the two groups. Miller (2003), for example, opined that administrators lack respect for faculty. Conversely, faculty have been described as suspicious of administrators (Kissler, 1997) and find them to be overbearing and overpowering (Carlisle & Miller, 1998).

The last category of descriptions focuses on *participant behaviors*. These

descriptions are more likely to have been derived from empirical observation as they identify specific behaviors engaged in by faculty and administrators. Such behaviors include placating by either party (Miller, Williams & Garavalia, 2003) as a way of indulging the other's whims, withholding or misusing information (Guffey & Rampp, 1998), or displaying defensive reactions (Association of Governing Boards, 1996). Cooperative and collaborative behaviors are discussed in the literature more in the breach than in action, underscoring the challenges associated with joint decision-making involving faculty and administrators.

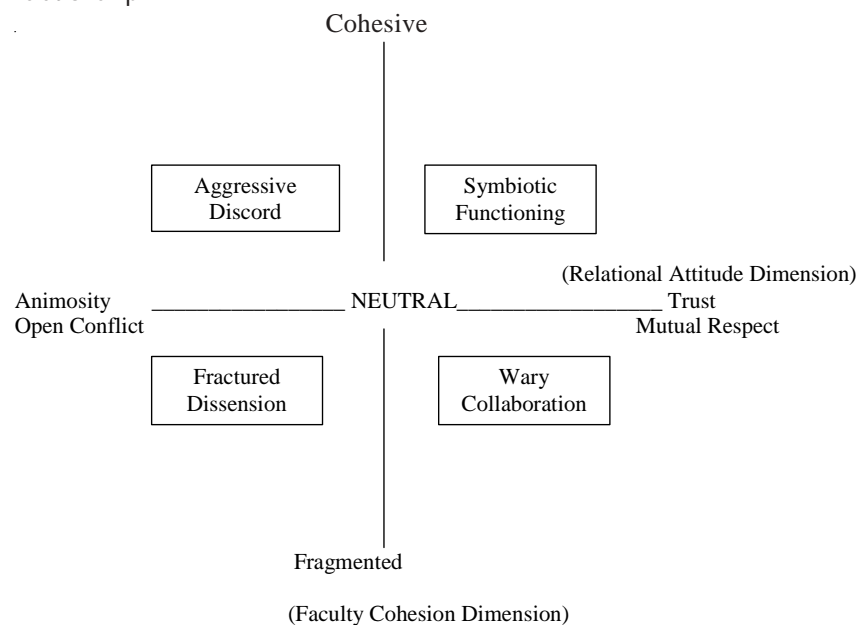
Overall, we conclude that much of the governance literature assumes the relationship is dysfunctional and conflict-prone, and this assumption has gone virtually unchallenged in studies of shared governance. While such a foundational premise has offered compelling commentary around the inadequacies of current decision-making paradigms, new approaches to relationship building should be informed by the more in-depth study enabled by the focus on interactions suggested here.

## **Dispositional Contexts Associated with the Faculty-Administrator Relationship**

Our synthesis of perceptions and behaviors associated with the faculty-administrator relationship suggests to us the notion of a grid of attitudes and dispositions that would adequately represent the range of possible relationships. As shown in Figure 1, the consideration of the relationship between faculty and administrators cannot occur by considering solely the relationship between the two groups as if they were monolithic entities. For instance, as noted in a synthesis of empirical research by Braxton and Hargens (1996), faculty differ widely and often significantly in their approach to institutional concerns based upon their disciplinary focus. Disciplinarity is but one possible cause for faculty fragmentation. Faculty in social and physical sciences for example, are likely to have differing expectations for administrative behavior. These differences arise from the different behavioral norms associated with high and low consensus fields, represented respectively by the physical and social sciences. Demographics and professional characteristics may also play a role in how faculty members expect administrators to behave and how they themselves interact with administrators (Bray, 2003); tenured and untenured faculty may expect different administrative supports, as may male and female faculty members. Informal social groups may also exist and exert influence. Simply put, given the necessity for faculty to specialize so heavily in a given field, there are numerous possibilities for fragmentation among faculty.

We have, as a result, defined the possibilities for interactions along two axes as shown in Figure 1. The horizontal axis represents the *relational attitude* scale, while the vertical axis displays the *faculty cohesion* scale. The faculty-administra-

Figure 1. Dispositional Contexts Associated with the Faculty-Administrator Relationship



tor relationship is ultimately played out in the contexts defined by the intersection of these two factors. The range of relationships for the horizontal scale shows a continuum from animosity and adversity at the negative extreme (unilateral effort) to mutual trust and respect at the positive extreme (joint effort). The central position represents one of neutrality. It is defined as neutral based on Birnbaum's (2003) condition of infrequent interactions between members of the two groups as indicative of less compliance with organizational values. While our definition takes Birnbaum's condition to the extreme, it suffices in presenting an idealized characterization for purposes of expressing the points on the continuum (i.e., no interaction, non-participation, or disregard for the relationship). The positive end of the continuum representing joint effort can be thought of as depicting the ideal working relationship. To the negative end of neutral, suspicion and deviance operate as hindrances to an effective relationship, but are seemingly less destructive than overt conflict and adversarial behaviors (the negative end point of the continuum) that often result in stalemates and delayed decision-making.

The vertical axis addresses the aforementioned level of fragmentation or cohesiveness that may exist within a given body of faculty members. Fragmentation can be perceived as taking several forms, while many could consider cohesion a precious if rare commodity. Given the evidence throughout many studies (Braxton

& Hargens, 1996) that faculty vary across disciplines, it is vital to note that disciplinary differences may or may not be considered to be a source of fragmentation. Because disciplinary differences define the academic framework, that is, how institutions as a whole are able to forward knowledge through the process of specialization, discipline indeed serves as a fragmenting force. Though having said that, there is still an essential piece to evaluating shared governance that involves an acknowledgement that faculty within disciplines are not homogeneous. It is through their interactions with and in the relational environment that the fragmentation considered here becomes apparent. Faculty may differ strongly in their approval or disapproval of administrative methods. They may furthermore be at odds over the role of faculty in the process, or at loggerheads in considering the appropriate direction for the institution.

Our conceptual approach to understanding the faculty-administrator relationship combines the relational attitude and the faculty cohesion scales to provide dispositional contexts or models associated with faculty-administrator interactions. These contexts serve to define the environment and culture in which the two groups interact, and ultimately the behaviors characterizing interactions in a shared governance context. We construe from this grid described by the intersection of the two scales or dimensions, that the level of faculty cohesion and the prevailing relational attitude combine to foster a behavioral culture that corresponds to one of four models: Symbiotic Functioning, Wary Collaboration, Fractured Dissension, or Aggressive Discord.

Symbiotic Functioning is the ideal shared governance environment. Symbiosis is the circumstance in which two organisms live closely together in a mutually beneficial manner. Symbiotic relationships between faculty and administrators fill this definition of two varied groups who can live in a mutually beneficial manner, and must seek to do so for the most effective institutional functioning possible. In the upper right-hand quadrant of the grid, representing both high levels of trust from a positive attitudinal environment and a cohesive faculty, faculty and administrators are able to work together effectively and in mutual respect, negotiating strategies and policies that serve the institution and its individuals as well as possible. The point of reference for the joint effort described here is the spirit of cooperation as expressed in the AAUP Statement of Governance (1966). This statement sets forth the conditions under which shared governance can be expected to operate in higher education, and describes an “inescapable interdependence” among decision-making participants. Further, it calls for coordination of interests and the establishment and maintenance of clearly understood and observed channels of communication. While we thought it important that the continuum, and any scale or index from which it may ultimately be derived, reflect the spirit of the AAUP Statement, which is considered a fundamental document in defining shared governance in higher education, we drew from the literature to provide dispositional descriptors that characterize the relationship. The literature is clear about the desired characteristics of effective governance systems in repeated references to

mutual trust and respect (Braskamp & Wergin, 1998; Gumpert, 2000; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Tierney, 1998).

While Symbiotic Functioning is marked by an optimal level of faculty cohesion and relational attitude, often the faculty are not a cohesive group. Instead, pockets of faculty exist with varying viewpoints, ensuring a lack of unanimity and often leading to disagreements and the need for negotiation. In such cases, a state of Wary Collaboration exists as both administrators and faculty seek to work carefully but not necessarily always in a feeling of openness and trust. Negotiation and placation are seen as falling short of the ideal in that these qualities describe interactions that may not always be sufficient or effective to sustain a high performing governance system.

In the bottom left-hand quadrant, the relational attitude slides below neutral to focus on those instances where the administrator-faculty relationship is more rocky and is typified by lack of trust and conflict. In the Fractured Dissension context, though, the faculty are not joined in their discord and animosity with the administration. Instead, discord and suspicion are spread across fractured groups and through splinter groups full of discontent. Not all faculty need be at odds with administration in this realm, although there is a prevailing tendency in that direction. The fragmentation among faculty may occur through disagreement among themselves, or disagreement over the relationship required or sought with administration.

The fourth and final quadrant represents an untenable institutional situation—Aggressive Discord between administration and faculty. In this instance, faculty are united in their opposition to the administration and what it is they are trying to accomplish or how they are trying to accomplish it. That is not to say that every single faculty member is anti-administration. However, our prevailing sentiment at this point is divergent with the administrative vision, and the faculty are by-in-large united in their opposition. At such a point, the environment is ripe for faculty initiatives to remove administrators and votes of no confidence in executive officers.

Focusing on the attitudinal context and faculty cohesion, Figure 1 leaves unaddressed the possibility of discord within the administrative culture. It is argued here that the administrative culture, by virtue of its bureaucratic nature and its overall focus on institutional and system level issues, tends by nature to be a more cohesive environment than the faculty one. Consequently, while we believe discord amongst administrators does exist, the inclusion of a third axis representing administrative environments did not appear to benefit the discussion based on our reading of the literature. In the future, a consideration of administrative environments predicated on certain management fads or inclusionary decision-making models may warrant consideration, and is a concern for future research.

## **Functional Contexts of the Relationship**

Important also to the study of the faculty-administrator relationship is knowl-

edge of the functional contexts within which joint decision-making is enacted. Knowing the contexts where joint decision-making occurs suggests the various organizational venues where studies of the relationship can be conducted. Further, it informs the direction of subsequent literature reviews where depictions of the relationship can be found for the purpose of more detailed study. The objective of such reviews will be to examine accounts of faculty-administrator decision-making activities to create a more comprehensive understanding of how they interact in a variety of functional contexts.

It is evident from the governance literature that there is little agreement on the areas of faculty authority. The AAUP Statement on governance does indeed list the broad areas of responsibility as educational policy, planning, budgeting, and administrator selection. These areas are at best difficult to match up with the contexts for faculty authority cited in the literature. Focusing on the role of academic senates, Minor (2004) describes their areas of involvement as varied based on the role played by the senate body in an institution. These include curriculum, tenure and promotion, instruction, and academic standards. Where senates are particularly influential, Minor adds institutional improvement matters, strategic and budget priorities, and faculty issues to the list. Leslie's (2003) attempt to answer the question of faculty authority areas examined where conflict in decision-making occurred. Because conflict underlies academic governance, according to Leslie, where there is conflict, authority also is at issue. He lists faculty recruiting, admissions, allocation of faculty lines, the structure of the faculty reward system, selection of department leadership, and degree requirements as focal areas. Rosser (2003), on the other hand, chose to focus on decision-making structures designed to solicit faculty participation as a gauge to determine the arenas of faculty authority—department-level decisions, faculty committees related to academic and fiscal affairs, and campus-wide deliberative bodies (e.g., faculty senates) that deal with curriculum, promotion and tenure, program/degree requirements, professional activities, and student performance. Some perspectives represented more specific areas of faculty authority; for example, determination of curricula, methods of instruction, admission/graduation policies, selection and evaluation of faculty, and academic development of students (Bai, 2003). Dill and Helm (1988) included design of critical academic support services and the establishment of budget priorities, while O'Brien's (1998) declaration of faculty unionization as a matter of faculty authority was more issue specific.

## **Conclusion**

The governance literature overall suggests that despite ongoing recommendations for improving the faculty-administrator relationship in the interest of more effective governance systems, that a permanent state of tension and conflict mark this relationship. While conflict indeed can be productive, the literature suggests

that colleges and universities as a whole have not reached a point where a consistent and proven approach, or one best way of working together, including approaches to managing conflict to productive ends, can be identified. This is problematic given the press to make governance systems more responsive to fast changing societal needs (Tierney, 1991).

The literature demonstrated interactions between faculty and administrators as typically occurring in formal decision-making contexts. Little attention was given to interactions outside their joint decision-making roles. This fails to acknowledge or critically evaluate the oft-considered powerful and popular notions of networking and other forms of socializing, and influencing as viable approaches to building trusting relationships. Interactions are most often characterized as fraught with tension, mistrust, and clashes between self- and collective interests. The empirical literature provided little insight into the kinds and contexts of interactions that produced trusting, fruitful relationships, yet we believe there must be consistently productive models in practice and have spoken with many faculty and administrators who have achieved this sort of trust. Research is needed to frame exemplary models of the interaction dynamic in a variety of contexts and over time.

We conclude that additional reviews of the literature are needed across a broad sampling of decision-making contexts where administrative activity can impinge most significantly on faculty work, often threatening their sense of academic freedom and autonomy. These areas, which we intend to explore in an upcoming study are: curriculum and teaching, resourcing of academic programs, research, and promotion and tenure. This approach is supported by Dill and Helm's (1988) view that faculty participation extends well beyond decision-making and into the very nature of the academic enterprise itself. Examination of the four dispositional contexts in each of these areas will offer clues to the functionality of shared governance in each case.

A preliminary review of representative additional literature confirms what we expected, that comparisons of the perspectives of faculty and administrators on institutional decision-making issues have been understudied at best. While few researchers have taken a holistic approach to understanding the relationship between these two important decision-making groups, participant interactive behaviors as a key to the relationship have yet to be explored. Furthermore, contexts change. While exploring interactions within a decision-making context is the beginning, Wheatley's (1999) assertion of relationships as vital to organizational effectiveness suggests that webs of inclusionary activity (Helgeson, 1995) encompass a variety of ways of being together that extend beyond decision-making contexts. The shared governance literature's depiction of the relationship tells us that decision-making in shared governance activities are but one aspect of this multi-faceted and dynamic relationship. While there have been great efforts to improve this relationship in practice, this paper points to the need for greater attention to the underlying dynamic of its strengths and weaknesses, specifically



to overarching relational attitudes and levels of faculty cohesion. Greater knowledge of these dispositional contexts in terms of how they frame faculty-administrator interactions is vital. Future work in this area will aid institutions in framing what Becher (1989) has identified as “boundary crossings” needed to connect various subcultures in higher education organizations.

## Contribution

This analysis will be valuable in creating heuristic empirical frameworks for including faculty-administrator relationship variables in future studies of governance restructuring in higher education. The dispositional contexts described in the model presented can be used as a tool for empirical study of the relationship and improvement in the practice of shared governance. The next step will be the validation of the model for assessing the quality of the working relationship between these two key constituents. Future work might highlight this relationship as a possible constraint in governance restructuring, particularly given Rhoades’ (1995) contention that current operational assumptions must be challenged for progress to occur. Such a focus on the relationship aspect of shared decision-making will also advance the study of the human dynamic that many believe is so vital to our understanding of shared governance. Finally, our review challenges what seems to be a traditional reluctance to study this relationship (Del Favero, 2003) by formally identifying and acknowledging its characterization in the extant literature and challenging others to contribute to building a comprehensive body of research in this area.

## References

- American Association of University Professors. (1966). *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Professors.
- Association of Governing Boards. (1996). *Renewing the Academic Presidency: Stronger Leadership for Tougher Times*. Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards
- Bai, K. (2003). The national scene: Faculty involvement in governance. In M. T. Miller & J. Caplow (Eds.), *Policy and University Faculty Governance* (pp. 19-30). Greenwich CT: Information Age.
- Baldrige, J. V., Curtis, D. V., Ecker, G. P., & Riley, G. L. (2000). Alternative models of governance in higher education. In M. C. Brown II (Ed.), *Organization and Governance in Higher Education*, (5<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 128-142). Boston: Pearson Custom.
- Becher, T. (1989). *Academic tribes and territories: Intellectual enquiry and the cultures of the disciplines*. Bury St Edmunds, UK: Society for Research Into Higher Education, Open University Press.
- Benjamin, R., & Carroll, S. (1993). *Restructuring higher education—By design. RAND Issue Paper 2* (April). Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, Institute for Education and Training.
- Benjamin, R., & Carroll, S. (1998). The implications of the changed environment for governance in higher education. In W. G. Tierney (Ed.), *The Responsive University: Restructuring for*

- High Performance* (pp. 92-119). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Bensimon, E. M. (1991). The meaning of "good presidential leadership": A frame analysis. In M. W. Peterson (Ed.), *Organization and Governance in Higher Education*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 421-431). Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Custom Publishing.
- Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How colleges work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Birnbaum, R. (2003). *The end of shared governance: Looking ahead or looking back*. Retrieved March 19, 2004, from [www.usc.edu/dept/chepa/gov/governance\\_roundtable\\_03.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/chepa/gov/governance_roundtable_03.html)
- Blackburn, R. T., & Lawrence, J. H. (1995). *Faculty at work*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Borland, K. W. (2003). The relationship between faculty and academic administration in governance functions. In M. T. Miller & J. Caplow (Eds.), *Policy and University Faculty Governance* (pp. 85-94). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Braskamp, L. A., & Wergin, J. F. (1998). Forming new social partnerships. In W. G. Tierney (Ed.), *The Responsive University: Restructuring for High Performance* (pp. 62-91). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Braxton, J. M., & Hargens, L. L. (1996). Variations among academic disciplines: analytical frameworks and research. *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, XI, 1-45.
- Bray, N. J. (2003). *Faculty perceptions of academic deans: Stakeholders, boundary-spanning, and social control*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.
- Breslin, R. D. (2000). Lessons from the presidential trenches. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 10, 2000, B24.
- Carlisle, B. A., & Miller, M. T. (1998). *Current trends and issues in the practice of faculty involvement in governance*. Unpublished manuscript. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 423758)
- Chaffee, E. E. (1998). Listening to the people we serve. In W. G. Tierney (Ed.), *The responsive university: Restructuring for high performance*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Clark, B. R. (1987). *The academic life: Small worlds, different worlds*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Clark, B. R. (1991). Faculty organization and authority. In M. W. Peterson (Ed.), *Organization and governance in higher education*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 449-458). Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Custom.
- Cohen, M.D., & March, J.G. (1974). *Leadership and ambiguity: The American college president*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Del Favero, M. (2003). Faculty-administrator relationships as integral to high performing governance systems: New frameworks for study. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 46(7), 902-922.
- Dill, D. D. (1991). The nature of administrative behavior in higher education. In M. W. Peterson (Ed.), *Organization and governance in higher education*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 369-388). Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Custom.
- Dill, D. D., & Helm, K. P. (1988). Faculty participation in strategic policy making. *Higher Education Handbook of Theory and Research*, IV, 319-355.
- Dressel, P. (1981). *Administrative leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ehrenberg, R. G. (2000). *Tuition rising: Why college costs so much*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Etzioni, A. (2000). Administrative and professional authority. In M. C. Brown II (Ed.), *Organization and governance in higher education*, (5<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 111-118). Boston: Pearson

- Custom.
- Gayle, D. J., Hakim, T. M., Agarwal, V. K., & Alfonso, P. J. (1999). Turning culture clash into collaboration. *Trusteeship*, 7, 24-27.
- Greer, D. (1997). *Prospective governance*. AGB Occasional Paper #31: Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities. Washington, DC.
- Guffey, J. S., & Rampp, L. C. (1998). *Shared governance: Balancing the euphoria*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED418617)
- Gumport, P. (2000). *Academic governance: New light on old issues*. Occasional Paper #42: Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities. Washington, DC.
- Guskin, A. E. (1996). Facing the future: The change process in restructuring universities. *Change*, July/August, 27-37.
- Helgesen, S. (1995). *The web of inclusion*. New York: Doubleday.
- Keller, G. (2001). Governance: The remarkable ambiguity. In P. G. Altbach, P. Gumport, & B. Johnstone (Eds.), *In defense of American higher education* (pp. 304-322). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kezar, A., & Eckel, P. (2004). Meeting today's governance challenges. *Journal of Higher Education*, 75(4), 371-400.
- Kissler, G. R. (1997). Who decides which budgets to cut? *Journal of Higher Education*, 68(4), 427-459.
- Lawler, E. E., & Mohrman, S. A. (1996). Organizing for effectiveness: Lessons from business. In W. F. Massey (Ed.), *Resource allocation in higher education*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Lazerson, M. (1997). Who owns higher education? The changing face of governance. *Change* (March/April), 10-15.
- Leslie, D. (2003). *Governance or Governing?* Retrieved March 19, 2004, from [www.usc.edu/dept/chepa/gov/governance\\_roundtable\\_03.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/chepa/gov/governance_roundtable_03.html)
- Miller, M. T. (2003). Conclusion: Defining a critical meaning for shared governance. In M. T. Miller & J. Caplow (Eds.), *Policy and university faculty governance* (pp. 153-159). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Miller, M. T., Williams, C., & Garavalia, B. (2003). Path analysis and power rating of communication channels in a faculty senate setting. In M. T. Miller & J. Caplow (Eds.), *Policy and University Faculty Governance* (pp. 59-73). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Minor, J. T. (2004). Understanding faculty senates: Moving from mystery to models. *The Review of Higher Education*, 27(3), 343-363.
- Morphew, C. C. (1999). Challenges facing shared governance within the college. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 105(Spring 1999), 71-79.
- Mortimer, K., & McConnell, T. (1978). *Sharing authority effectively*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- O'Brien, G. D. (1998). *All the essential half-truths about higher education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Peterson, M. W., & White, T. H. (1992). Faculty and administrator perceptions of their environments: Different views or different models of organization? *Research in Higher Education*, 33(2), 177-204.
- Pope, M.L., & Miller, M. T. (1999). *Stressors related to managing faculty governance in community colleges*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED430606)

- Rhoades, G. (1995). Rethinking restructuring in universities. *Journal for Higher Education Management*, 10(2), 17-30.
- Rice, R.E., & Austin, A.E. (1988). High faculty morale: What exemplary colleges do right. *Change*, 20(2), 50-58.
- Rosser, V. (2003). Historical overview of faculty governance in higher education. In M. T. Miller & J. Caplow (Eds.), *Policy and university faculty governance* (pp. 3-17). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Schuster, J. H., Smith, D. G., Corak, K. A., & Yamada, M. M. (1994). *Strategic governance: How to make big decisions better. ACE Series on Higher Education*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Thelin, J. (2001). Campus and community: A world turned inside out? *The Review of Higher Education*, 25(1), 1-14.
- Thompson, J. D., Hawkes, R. W., & Avery, R. W. (1969). Truth strategies and university organization. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 5(Spring), 4-25.
- Tierney, W. G. (1991). Organizational culture in higher education: Defining the essentials. In M. W. Peterson (Ed.), *Organization and governance in higher education*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 126-139). Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Custom.
- Tierney, W. G. (1998). *The responsive university: Restructuring for high performance*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Tierney, W. G. (2000). Critical leadership and decision making in a postmodern world. In M. C. Brown II (Ed.), *Organization and governance in higher education*, (5<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 537-549). Boston: Pearson Custom.
- Weingartner, R. H. (1996). *Fitting form to function: A primer on the organization of academic organizations*. Phoenix AZ: American Council on Education, Oryx Press.
- Welsh, J. F., & Metcalf, J. (2003). Faculty and administrative support for institutional effectiveness activities. *Journal of Higher Education*, 74(4), 445-468.
- Westmeyer, P. (1990). *Principles of governance and administration in higher education*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Wheatley, M. J. (1999). *Leadership and the new science* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

## About the Authors

Marietta Del Favero is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Counseling at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Her research focuses on academic leadership and governance in higher education, and faculty work, with particular emphasis on faculty-administrator relationships and differences across academic disciplines.

Nathaniel J. Bray is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Dr. Bray's interests stem from a sociology of the organization perspective, and include student affairs and retention as well as the relationship of faculty and administrators.