

Case Study #1: THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Rev. Dr. Guido Sarducci serves as the VPAA/Dean of the Faculty at Rocky Road College (RRC), a private, church-related college with a liberal arts core and a variety of professional programs. While some students live on campus, nearly 60% commute from a nearby city. Like many colleges in the northern tier of states, RRC is facing declining numbers of students since they have recruited exclusively within the state and a few adjoining states. As a result, the student to faculty ratio has dipped to 10 to 1. RRC also has relied heavily on adjunct faculty: 37% of the faculty members have adjunct positions. Some of the adjuncts are professionals in their field and teach a few courses each year in related programs. Others make a living by teaching at RRC, a nearby regional university and a community college.

Dr. Sarducci has just been asked by the president's assistant to come to the president's office, right away. When Dr. Sarducci entered, the president was looking very grim.

President (P): Guido, the budget just isn't working, and the board is pushing really hard. We have to improve the student to faculty ratio by next fall, or we will be in serious trouble. I need you to take this on, right away, and give me a plan a month before the spring meeting of the board. And, you can't just count on the Admissions Office to bring in more students at a lower discount rate. In fact, assume that we are lucky and the number of students stays steady.

Provost Sarducci (S): I hear what you are saying. In essence, I need to cut the size of the faculty, right?

P: Yes. And we need budget savings of at least \$1M. So cutting a bunch of adjuncts just isn't going to work. You need to right size departments, and maybe even get rid of some that are underperforming.

S: Do you have any strategies that you want to recommend? Will you be announcing this at next week's faculty senate meeting?

P: No and no. I need to meet a potential donor, in Palm Springs and then fly to Ft. Lauderdale to meet with a few alums who may be able to help us launch a campaign. Sorry, you are on your own.

As Dr. Sarducci walked back to his office he was fuming. This was all on his shoulders and it would cost him dearly and he only has two months to develop his plan.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How/when should Dr. Sarducci announce this news to the faculty?
2. Given the short time frame, how should he develop his plan? With whom can/should he consult?
3. What role should shared governance play in the development? What role should department chairs/division heads/deans play?
4. What data does he need?
5. Should he develop a plan with multiple options? If so, how should he ultimately decide which plan to implement?

CASE STUDY #2

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND THE NEW PROGRAM

Dr. Jenny Wolf has been VPAA for six years at Fern College, a somewhat selective liberal arts college in the midAtlantic. A rhetorician by training, Dr. Wolf was hired in part because of her measurable commitment to the traditional liberal arts and served as the Dean of the Honors College at her previous institution. Since arriving, she has successfully led some change initiatives including general education revision and an expansion in study abroad. She enjoys the reputation of being communicative and transparent with her faculty. She attributes her longevity and success in the role, right or wrong, to effective collaboration with faculty leadership and to having deft facilitation skills.

Still, during her tenure enrollment has steadily declined. The faculty attributes the enrollment decline to a lack of resources being devoted to marketing their current complement of programs as well as too much turnover in the VP for Enrollment role. Moreover, the integrity of the liberal arts is getting a lot of chatter among faculty. There is vocal opposition to adding any new professionally oriented programs.

The president calls Dr. Wolf to her office early in the fall semester to let her know that the board of trustees are concerned about the enrollment decline and think new program development is necessary. The board chair, an engineer and a member of Fern College athletics hall of fame, has pledged 8 million dollars if an engineering program is started – 6 million will be used for facilities, scholarships, and faculty. The remaining 2 million can be used to create an academic discretionary endowment, the interest from which can be used to support experiential education or faculty development or whatever the VPAA deems most needed. However, Dr. Wolf must get an engineering curriculum approved by the end of the academic year or the board chair will only contribute 4 million all of which will go to athletics.

The president is in her tenth year and enjoys the support of the trustees, her cabinet, and the broader community. Still, it is widely rumored that she is likely to announce her retirement at the end of the year with plans to retire in 2027. Dr. Wolf thinks she can be a most capable and effective president at Fern College and is eager for the opportunity.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How might Dr. Wolf engage key stakeholders in a productive and constructive discussion about whether it makes sense to pursue engineering? Who are those key stakeholders?
2. What data will she need to evaluate the viability of engineering?
3. Design a process that will lead to the outcome of having a civil engineering curriculum approved by year's end. What process can you imagine that would likely lead to the opposite outcome of not adding engineering. How much influence does Dr. Wolf have in shaping the outcome? What are the (dis)advantages of both outcomes? Is there a compromise?
4. While Dr. Wolf and the president have a good working relationship, Dr. Wolf has observed the president's deference to the board chair on numerous occasions. Dr. Wolf thinks it might be possible to persuade the board chair to give you more time to make the best decision for the college. How should she proceed?