Executing

Making Difficult Decisions

Terri Fiez (terri@eeecs.orst.edu)
Director, School of EECS
Oregon State University
Putting Decisions into Perspective

Vision Sets the Target
Values are the Foundation for Leadership
Decisions Facilitate your Success
Values: The foundation of all Leadership

- A value is a belief, a mission, or a philosophy that is meaningful.
- Personal values are the foundation for actions/decisions.
- Organizations also are guided by values & often determine success:
  - Sears' commitment to trusting the customer.
  - Apple Computer's belief in the values of solving problems of society.
- Implementing values energizes.
Values are Determined by Many Things...

- Parents’ values
- Family situation
- Experiences
- Disposition
- Birth order
- Astrological sign
- Others
Some of My Values

- Education is the way
- Anything is possible given creativity & a sense of humor
- Integrity, honesty & doing the right thing are most important
- Build, cultivate, and treasure relationships
- Make it fun & if it isn’t – move on
- Focus, focus, focus
- Set goals, stay the course, see through to completion
- Family first!
- Do what you can to help others
- Remain balanced and rational
- Think strategically but be prepared to do anything and everything (no job is too small) to see the vision through
- Empower others – let wild horses run!
- Seek collaborators with complementary talents & interests
- Grow the pie
- Laugh, learn, & grow
Values Serve as the Leadership Compass

- Directs
  - Decisions
  - Attitudes
  - Directions
  - Interactions
  - Vision
  - Strategy & Tactics
Vision

- Visions serve as a guiding light
- Constantly evolve strategy based on opportunities as they arise
- Being open to variety of avenues is key to working toward the vision
- Vision is the fun part but only represents ~5-10% of time/effort
Back to Decisions...
Defining Difficult

- Emotionally hard
  - Possible confrontation?
  - Scared?

- Not clear why making decision

- Unsure if doing the right thing

- People may criticize you

- Don’t know what will happen next
Making Decisions

- Collect facts
- Make the best possible decision given the information and time available
- Be decisive – don’t second guess decisions but...
  - If your gut is telling you something is wrong – re-evaluate
  - Make course corrections as needed – as more information is available
- Balance the necessary issues: Legal, past experience, facts, personnel, precedence
- Check in with the key players
Never Look Back...

- Make decision
- Communicate with the appropriate people before, during and after
- Learn from your decisions
- Never dwell on past decisions
- Practice making decisions
  - Grow in your ability to make decisions
    - Build your skill and people will follow you
4 Phases of Leadership

(So Said Terri Fiez (S²TF))

- Phase I: The Honeymoon
- Phase II: Steer the Ship (change and transformation)
- Phase III: Walk Side-by-Side (build in succession)
- Phase IV: Let Wild Horses Run

Type of Decisions and How they are approached varies as the organization progresses.
The Honeymoon

- Budgets – Slash and burn
  - Evaluate assets – wood shop
  - Faculty workload - instructors
- P&T – errors in judgement
- Hiring w/tenure example
- Freshmen/senior experiences
  - Faculty buy in
  - College buy in
- Generally – Pilots are nonthreatening!!
Change and Transformation

- Performance reviews – the good and the bad
- Redefining department
  - Qualifying/prelim exam
  - Collaboration-R-us – space
- Formalizing workload
- Executing the vision
Walking Side-by-Side

- Help others make decisions and propagate the culture
- Help recruit leaders in other departments – faculty image of dept. head changed
- Mid tenure and tenure decisions
- We’re a team – checking in
Let Wild Horses Run

- Relinquish all control
- Fully confident in others ability to make decisions based on common values
Leadership Traits to Practice

- Be proactive with others
- Be decisive
- Be fair
- Execute the hard decisions & find comfort in knowing you’re doing it for the right reasons
- Don’t let things get you down or cause you to lose sleep
- Think big
- Drive initiatives versus responding to requests
- Be creative
- Keep a positive attitude
- Deal with problems in a timely fashion (especially personnel issues)
- The end goal will guide your actions
- Listen carefully