

**BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW:  
THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF CHRISTIAN BUSINESS SCHOOL  
LEADERSHIP**

Steven L. Bovee, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor and Division Chair  
Division of Business & Management  
Roberts Wesleyan College

Robert H. Roller, Ph.D.  
Professor and Dean  
School of Business  
LeTourneau University

Brett K. Andrews, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Management  
School of Business  
LeTourneau University

**ABSTRACT**

This research studies the goals, challenges, stressors, frustrations, and demographics of a sample of business school deans at small, private universities with both Christian faith-based and secular missions. We found that these deans share much in common. They have similar goals for their programs, face similar internal and external challenges, encounter similar sources of stress, and share common frustrations. We also found a number of significant differences, many related to the faith-learning integration mission of Christian universities. Other differences related to the resources constraints of many Christian colleges. We discuss the implications of our findings for business school leaders in Christian colleges and universities.

**BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW:  
THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF CHRISTIAN BUSINESS SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Steven L. Bovee, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor and Division Chair  
Division of Business & Management  
Roberts Wesleyan College  
2301 Westside Drive  
Rochester, NY 14624  
716.594.6763 (PH)  
716.594.6316 (FAX)  
[Bovees@Roberts.Edu](mailto:Bovees@Roberts.Edu)

Robert H. Roller, Ph.D.  
Professor and Dean  
School of Business  
LeTourneau University  
Longview, TX 75607-7001  
903.233.3328 (PH)  
903.233.3221 (FAX)  
[BobRoller@letu.edu](mailto:BobRoller@letu.edu)

Brett K. Andrews, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Management  
School of Business  
LeTourneau University  
Longview, TX 75607-7001  
903.233.3326 (PH)  
903.233.3221 (FAX)  
[BrettAndrews@letu.edu](mailto:BrettAndrews@letu.edu)

Presented to the  
Christian Business Faculty Association  
Annual Conference  
Bourbonnais, IL  
October 2001

**BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW:  
THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF CHRISTIAN BUSINESS SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

**ABSTRACT**

This research studies the goals, challenges, stressors, frustrations, and demographics of a sample of business school deans at small, private universities with both Christian faith-based and secular missions. We found that these deans share much in common. They have similar goals for their programs, face similar internal and external challenges, encounter similar sources of stress, and share common frustrations. We also found a number of significant differences, many related to the faith-learning integration mission of Christian universities. Other differences related to the resources constraints of many Christian colleges. We discuss the implications of our findings for business school leaders in Christian colleges and universities.

## About the Authors

### **Steven L. Bovee, Ph.D.**

Dr. Bovee is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Division of Business & Management at Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, NY, where he also serves as Director of the MS in Management program. He has served at RWC since 1997, and previously served on the School of Business faculty at Oral Roberts University and in public accounting with Deloitte & Touch, LLP. He received his Ph.D. in Economics from Oklahoma State University and his bachelors and masters degrees from Oral Roberts University. He and his wife, Krista, are the parents of four young children.

### **Robert H. (Bob) Roller, Ph.D.**

Dr. Roller is a Professor of Management and Dean of the School of Business at LeTourneau University, where he has served since 1998. He was previously Chair of the Division of Business & Management at Roberts Wesleyan College, and served as a School of Business faculty member at Kennesaw State University (GA) and Oral Roberts University. Dr. Roller is an ordained minister, having served in pastoral roles in churches in Oklahoma, Ohio, Georgia, and Texas. He received his Ph.D. in Strategic Management from Oklahoma State University, and his bachelors and masters degrees from Oral Roberts University. He and his wife, Wanda, are the parents of two beautiful girls, ages 3 and 8.

### **Brett K. Andrews, Ph.D.**

Dr. Andrews is an Associate Professor of Management at LeTourneau University, where he has served since 1998. At LeTourneau, he fulfills teaching and administrative duties in both the traditional and adult business programs. He previously served on the faculty in the School of Business at Oral Roberts University. Dr. Andrews received his Ph.D. from Walden University, his masters degree from Oral Roberts University, and his bachelors degree from Northeastern State (OK) University. Dr. Andrews specializes in the area of Human Resource Management, and holds the PHR certification. Brett and his wife, Tammy, are the parents of two young children.

## **BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW: THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF CHRISTIAN BUSINESS SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Those responsible for providing leadership to Christian college/university business programs—business deans and chairs<sup>1</sup>—have a variety of aspirations and face many challenges, both external and internal. Little has been done to study the backgrounds, leadership aspirations, or goals of Christian college/university business deans, or to understand their challenges/frustrations and whether these factors differ from deans at other colleges/universities. Given the strategic and financial importance of business programs to many institutions affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), we believe that a study of the individuals in these positions of leadership has value to CBFA members and to the leadership of Christian universities.

Business deans operate in a complex environment with numerous stakeholders, including current and potential students, alumni, higher-level administrators, other deans throughout the institution, faculty, boards of regents/trustees, employers, and the communities affected by the institution and its programs. Many factors contribute to the satisfaction of these stakeholders. The school of business must create a strategy consistent with the external factors and internal factors it faces. The nature of this strategy is shaped by the dean's individual goals and aspirations. Because the school of business does not operate in isolation from the rest of the institution (as tempting as that may sound), the organizational architecture of the institution seriously affects the implementation of the school of business' strategy. Such factors as assignment of decision rights, performance evaluation systems, and reward systems (including compensation and benefits), may assist or impede strategy implementation. We use a strategic

---

<sup>1</sup> The authors recognize that a variety of titles exist for the position of leader of the business program, and that the scope of responsibility and authority of business school deans varies greatly among institutions. For the sake of simplicity, we will use the term "dean" throughout the rest of this paper. Similarly, we will also refer to the business unit as a "school of business."

organizational alignment model to study the leadership aspirations of business deans and chairs, under the premise that stakeholder satisfaction is higher when the individual goals and aspirations of the dean, the design of the school of business strategy, and the organizational architecture are in alignment. Previous research (Roller, Bovee, & Andrews, 2000) reviewed each component of this model and its application to this research.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The current study expands on that research in two ways: (1) the CCCU sample size has been increased by over 50 percent, and (2) non-CCCU small private institutions have been included in the sample, including some Christian colleges who are not CCCU members. As a result, the focus of the current study is on the comparison of Christian versus private secular institutions. This paper reports the results of a survey of business deans and chairs at small private universities (less than 5000 students). We examine the differences between Christian and secular institutions in regard to the leadership goals, personal aspirations, challenges, sources of stress, and degrees of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. We also examine demographic differences between Christian and secular schools in regard to salaries, leadership structure, program size, leadership characteristics, and other demographic variables.

Based on our review of the literature, it appears that this is the only research examining business deans at smaller private institutions of higher education. The first purpose of our research, therefore, is to explore the leadership goals, challenges, and frustrations of business deans at smaller private universities, along with examining their demographics. The second purpose is to explore the ways in which Christian and secular college business deans are similar, and the ways in which they differ. We expect that the unique mission of Christian colleges, which involves the integration of faith and learning, will result in important distinctions between Christian and secular business deans.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### The Role of the Dean

*Internally, the [Deanship] position sits within a complex web of faculty, students, and administration. Externally, the deanship is the representative conduit through which funding bequests and program requests pass, and where needs, disputes, and demands between faculty and administrators get arbitrated. Moreover, it imposes upon one person the demands of a myriad of jobs, all within the context of serving the institutional good while trying to retain some semblance of normalcy within the individual. Above all else, it should serve as the model of innovation and advancement upon which the reputation of the college depends. (Wolverton, Montez, & Gmelch, 2000, p. 13)*

This description of the role and responsibilities of deans paints a sober picture of the realities challenging those providing academic leadership within the academy. Deans have been described as “doves of peace intervening among warring factions, dragons holding internal and external threats at bay, and diplomats guiding and encouraging people who live and work in the college” (Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1999, p. 82; Tucker & Bryan, 1988). Deans are frequently looked to as visionaries and change agents, yet in the process of implementing change, they must carefully negotiate the tensions between faculty, administration, and other stakeholders (who often hold conflicting priorities with regard to the outcome), while remaining focused on the mission and goals of the institution (Montez & Wolverton, 2000; Austin, Ahearn, & English, 1997). Because of the role of faculty in academic decision-making, effective leadership as a dean requires persuasion, collaboration, and consensus building, rather than reliance on rank, power, and formal authority (Shenkir, 1997; Stevens, 2000). Henninger (1998) affirms that deans serve as critical levers in facilitating change by involving and coordinating faculty in the decision-making process and signaling academic priorities. Birnbaum (1992) described the leadership paradox faced by deans as shepherding higher education into the 21<sup>st</sup> century while attempting to survive in a culture unsupportive of change (Montez & Wolverton, 2000, p. 4). Further complicating the leadership

challenge faced by deans is the fact that their roles are constantly evolving “as the constituents [they serve] and their demands change” (Wolverton et al., 1999, p. 5).

There is no question that academic deans serve a critical role in the growth and development of academic programs and institutions. However, the roles and responsibilities of deans, and the challenges they face, seem to be exacting a significant toll on those serving these roles. In fact, O’Reilly (1994, p. 64) concludes that deans are getting “burned out and eased out with astonishing speed.” What issues are contributing to this problem?

### **Research on Deans**

Prior to the 1980s, very little formal research had been done examining the role and challenges of academic deans (Gmelch, Wolverton, & Wolverton, 1999). Gmelch and his colleagues review a number of studies conducted between 1979 and the mid 1990s on deans of education, social work, law, and liberal arts, as well as the career path, gender and ethnicity, and leadership journeys of deans (Gmelch et al, 1999). Additional studies in the late 1990s examined dean selection from inside vs. outside academia (Shenkir, 1997), the dean’s role in change (Henninger, 1998), and the relationship between deans and department chairs (Gmelch & Sarros, 1996). In 1996, however, a landmark study of higher education academic deans was conducted by the Center for Academic Leadership; this study has spawned a flurry of related research activity. The National Survey of Academic Deans in Higher Education (Gmelch, Wolverton, Wolverton, & Hermanson, 1996) study sample consisted of 1,370 deans (response rate of 60 percent) at 360 public and private institutions (Wolverton et al., 1999). This study overall, and several findings in particular, serve as a useful benchmark for the current study.

Their study found that the average age of the respondents was 54. Less than 10 percent were younger than 40, and less than 5 percent were 65 or older. Nine percent were female, 12 percent were minorities, 82 percent were married, and 52 percent had at least one child still living at home. The average years of current service as dean was 5.6 years. Sixteen

percent had served one year or less in their current deanship and only 13 percent had served ten or more years (Wolverton et al., 1999). Sixty percent of deans had served previously as department chairs, 40 percent as associate deans, 18 percent had experience outside of academia, and 38 percent were serving in their first deanship (Gmelch, 2000). Several deans also had previous experience as program directors/coordinators (Wolverton & Gonzales, 2000). Most deans felt they were hired to facilitate change (34%), sustain current programs (28%), or deal with growth (20%); a smaller number felt they were hired to deal with crisis (11%) or serve as interim dean (7%). While seven percent viewed themselves as primarily faculty, the majority viewed themselves as administrators (34%) or both faculty and administrator (59%) (Wolverton et al., 1999).<sup>2</sup> The average term of service for deans is 6.6 years, with approximately one in five deans leaving their positions each year. Twenty-seven percent plan to return to the faculty, following their service as dean, 22 percent plan to pursue a higher leadership position, 17 percent plan to retire, 15 percent plan to pursue another deanship (8 percent at a more prestigious school and 7 percent at a similar institution), and 2 percent plan to move on to a non-academic position. An average of seven department chairs and one or more associate deans reported to these deans. With regard to the institutional profile, the mean undergraduate and graduate enrollments were 1,694 and 395, respectively, served by an average of 85 full-time (58% tenured) and 46 adjunct faculty (Gmelch et al., 1999).

Eighteen percent of the survey respondents served as deans of schools or colleges of business. Several significant differences surfaced among business deans, when contrasted with deans from other disciplines. Business deans were significantly more likely to be married (93%) and male (90%), and less likely to be a minority (8%) or to have had a mentor (50%, vs. 55% for all deans). The average term of service for business deans was significantly less (5 years). They were also less likely to have previously served as department chairs (54%) and

---

<sup>2</sup> This differs significantly from department chairs, 52 percent of whom viewed themselves primarily as faculty (Gmelch et al., 1999).

more likely to have had previous senior management experience outside of academia (31%). Business deans were more likely to pursue a higher leadership position (26%), a deanship at a more prestigious school (12%), or a leadership position outside of academia (7%). They were less likely to return to the faculty (24%) or pursue a deanship at a similar institution (2%) (Wolverton & Gonzales, 2000).

The 1996 study by Gmelch et al., generated a number of related publications examining the interconnection between job satisfaction and work-related stress in deans (Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1998), the roles of role conflict and role ambiguity on deans (Wolverton et al., 1999), the education dean's search for balance (Gmelch et al., 1999), the role of mentors for deans (Nies & Wolverton, 2000), career paths for deans (Wolverton & Gonzales, 2000), and the roles and challenges of the deanship (Montez & Wolverton, 2000; Wolverton et al., 2000). Several of these studies examined the effects of role conflict and role ambiguity on stress, job satisfaction and effectiveness, and organizational commitment among academic deans. These studies and their findings have particular bearing on the current study, since we rely on similar instruments in our examination of these factors for business deans at small private colleges.

### **Dean Challenges/Stressors and Performance Implications**

The critical hypothesis in most of these studies is that while some degree of work-related stress has positive benefits (energy level, productivity, etc), above average levels of role conflict and role ambiguity increase work-related stress and decrease job satisfaction, job effectiveness, and organizational commitment (Wolverton et al., 1998; Wolverton et al., 1999). Gross, Mason, & McEachern (1958) defined role conflict as "any situation in which the incumbent of a focal position perceives that he/[she] is confronted with incompatible expectations" (p. 248). What factors might be expected to contribute toward role conflict for deans? Henninger (1998) points toward the dualism of structure, control, and authority in higher education (formal hierarchical authority on one hand and the collegial principle of shared decision-making/governance on the

other) and potentially conflicting roles/agendas between deans and their department chairs (or associate deans).

Wolverton et al. (1999) similarly note that although a dean within a university holds legitimate authority, “within his or her college such direct power can rarely be exercised” (p. 81). They also found that the following factors contributed most significantly (in descending order) toward role conflict for deans: working with two or more groups who operate quite differently, doing things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not by others, receiving an assignment without the proper resources and materials to execute it, and receiving an assignment without the proper staffing to complete it. Further, they found that role conflict tends to be greater in deans under the age of 50, if the dean had one or more children at home, when they have served for more than two years as dean, with the number of tenured and adjunct faculty, when they work with an associate dean, and if they were hired to bring about change. Interestingly, they also noted that

deans at comprehensive universities... experience much more role conflict. This may occur because these institutions occupy an uneasy middle ground. They are no longer purely teaching universities and they are not doctoral degree granting institutions but may have aspirations to be such (pp. 98-99).

This may be a particularly relevant observation, given that a number of the small private colleges that are the subject of this study likely find themselves in this “middle ground.” Role conflict tends to be less for deans who saw their primary role/responsibility as sustaining current programs and who viewed themselves as primarily faculty (vs. administrator or administrator/faculty). Their study also supported the hypothesis that excessive role conflict lowers job satisfaction and organizational commitment and increases job-related stress, as Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal (1964) had found previously.

Role ambiguity results from insufficient/conflicting information regarding the scope and responsibilities of a dean’s job, either because it is nonexistent or because it has been inadequately communicated (Wolverton et al., 2000; Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo, House, &

Lirtzman, 1970). Lack of clarity with regard to institutional mission and goals is one potentially significant contributor toward role ambiguity for deans (Henninger, 1998). Birnbaum (1988) argues that

as colleges and universities become more diverse, fragmented, specialized, and connected with other social systems, institutional missions do not become clearer; rather, they multiply and become sources of stress and conflict rather than integration (p. 11).

This observation mirrors the earlier comments by Wolverton et al. (1999), about the impact of institutional growth and evolution on role conflict. They further caution that

universities need to figure out who they are, what they are about, what they want to be, whom they want to serve, and be clear about it. This is particularly pertinent for comprehensive universities, because they live a kind of schizophrenic existence – mandated to be regional institutions that offer undergraduate and master's level education, aspiring, and sometimes being pressured, to raise to the rarified arena of research universities (p. 102).

They found that deans are least clear (experience the greatest role ambiguity) regarding what their responsibilities are, how much authority they have, and what is expected of them (p.89). Role ambiguity was greater for deans who were under the age of 50, had children at home, and who viewed themselves as faculty or faculty/administrators. Role ambiguity tended to be less for deans who were hired to deal with growth, had mentors, or were satisfied with their personal scholarship. As was the case with role clarity, higher levels of role ambiguity significantly increased deans' work-related stress and decreased their job satisfaction and, to a lesser extent, their organizational commitment and perception of effectiveness.

A number of studies examine factors, in addition to role conflict and role ambiguity, believed to contribute to work-related stress for deans. These factors include excessively high self-expectations and time pressures (Gmelch et al., 1999), insufficient time to remain current in one's discipline (Gmelch, 2000), workload, interruptions, and too many deadlines (Wolverton et al., 1998). Deans appear to be less stressed by their

compensation and pace of work, and their work-related stress appears to decrease with age (Wolverton et al., 1998). Nies & Wolverton (2000) contend that role ambiguity, work-related stress, burnout, and fatigue may be reduced when deans are mentored. Montez & Wolverton (2000) examine the evolution of the kinds of challenges that deans have faced over time and their perceptions of how effectively they would be able to deal with these challenges. Fiscal, administrative, and curriculum/program development challenges were anticipated as being the most significant over the next 3-5 years, followed by faculty, technology, personal balance, and diversity challenges. When asked how effectively they anticipated being able to deal with these challenges, business deans anticipated being less effective in dealing with personal balance and technology demands, than did deans from other disciplines. These factors may, therefore, be viewed as contributing to the stress level of business deans in the near future.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

We developed a questionnaire designed to solicit responses from business deans concerning their leadership goals and aspirations, the challenges they face in attempting to lead their business schools, and their levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Most of the measures were developed by the authors for this line of research, but some questions concerning stressors were adapted from a previous study of education deans (Wolverton et al, 1999); and scales with established validity and reliability were used for job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and organizational commitment (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). A stratified random sample of was taken of faith-based institutions (n=59) and secular institutions (n=44), for a total sample size of 103 respondents. The Christian college respondents included members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU)

and other institutions with Christian faith-based missions. To minimize size differences, only institutions with total enrollments of less than 5000 students were included in the sample.

Respondents were contacted by telephone to obtain their participation in the study. Questionnaires were sent to and returned from respondents via e-mail or fax. Responses were tabulated and analyzed. Substantial demographic data was also gathered so that appropriate analyses could be completed. Unless otherwise indicated, a significance level of  $\alpha = .05$  was used for all statistical analysis.

## **RESULTS**

### **Respondent Demographics**

Tests of significance did not reveal great differences between the two respondent groups demographically. However, in order to understand the sample, it is helpful to construct a demographic profile. In regard to their professional title, over one-half (58.25%) of the respondents were chairs of their respective departments. Another 30.1% were deans, with the remainder of the respondents reporting a variety of titles, such as Academic Director, Director of the MBA program, Associate Vice-President for Business Programs, and Interim Director. The respondents reported being in their present position for a mean of 5.45 years. As to their career path, the most popular position previously held was that of professor (57.2%), followed by chair (13.5%), and various administrative posts from other academic or administrative areas of the university (13.5%). Seven respondents reported having held an industry position immediately previous to their current positions. The respondents spent an average of 8.3 years in their previous positions, and have an average of 16.5 years of full-time teaching experience. A Chi-square test indicated a relationship between institutional type (secular or faith based) and previous position held. Inspection of the data indicates that deans at secular institutions were more likely to move through multiple layers of administrative positions than deans at faith-based institutions.

The vast majority of respondents (89.3%) reported having some type of teaching load associated with their position. The median load was reported to be 9 semester hours. This figure varied widely, from a minimum of 2 credit hours to a maximum of 21. In terms of teaching load, there was not a significant difference between Christian college business deans and their peers at secular institutions. There was, however, a significant relationship between total institutional enrollment and dean/chair teaching load ( $r = -.387, p < .001$ ). Teaching load, however, was not significantly related to enrollment in the business program, whether traditional, nontraditional, or graduate.

The future career aspirations of respondents varied. The most popular career move was to return to the role of a teaching faculty member (35.9%), which was followed closely by retirement (23.3%). Over one-fifth of respondents (22.4%) expect to move to a higher-level position, including promotion to dean at another institution (7.8%), accepting a promotion to Provost at their current institution (6.8%), becoming a university president (3.9%), or becoming a dean at the same institution (3.9%). A few respondents expected to obtain a position in industry (1.9%), or to pursue various other career paths (9.7%). There were no significant differences in the career expectations of respondents at faith-based versus secular institutions. When compared with respondents in the Gmelch et al (1999) study, deans in our sample were more likely to return to the faculty, more likely to retire, and less likely to pursue a higher position in academia.

The respondents were predominantly white (95.1%) and male (82.5%), who are currently married (85.4%). Their average age was 52.04 years, with a range from 33 to 74 years in age. When compared to the Gmelch et al (1999) study, deans in our sample were more likely to be white, but less likely to be male or married.

The respondent groups did differ based upon the demographics of their programs. Deans at secular institutions reported having a significantly higher enrollment in their traditional

business programs ( $t = 2.22$ ;  $p < .02$ ). Also, the deans at secular institutions reported having significantly more full-time faculty than their faith-based counterparts ( $t = 2.21$ ;  $p < .02$ ). Similarly, the average faculty pay within secular business programs was significantly higher than in faith-based business programs ( $t = 4.24$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

### **Program Goals**

Respondents were asked to list their top five goals for their business programs. The open-ended responses were post-coded and categorized. The most common category of goals was that of student preparation, which included vocational development, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, stimulating entrepreneurship, and developing students with character and integrity, among others. The second most common category was program development goals, including curriculum development, on-line program development, specialized accreditation, off-campus program development, forming an advisory council, implementing graduate programs, and so on. In descending order, the remaining categories were faculty attraction, retention, and development; enrollment goals; resource development, and community involvement goals.

To determine whether these goals varied by the type of institution (faith-based versus secular), we used a Chi-square test. The test did not reveal any significant differences.

### **Individual Goals**

We also asked respondents to list their top five individual goals. Analysis of the responses indicates that many of the respondents have great difficulty separating their professional and personal existence. Given the nature of the survey, which focused on the professional issues, we should not be surprised to find many professional goals included in the personal goals list. The most common category was leadership goals, which were mentioned by 33.3 percent of respondents. This category included items such as having a positive impact on the university, growing as a leader, training a replacement, leading effective change

management, earning the respect or appreciation of the top administration, and so on. The second category was program development, mentioned by 30.5 percent of respondents. The third category was teaching, which was mentioned by 28.9 percent of respondents. This included development as an effective teacher, learning better teaching techniques, ensuring ethical roots in students, integrating technology with course work, and so on. One respondent indicated that he wanted to do his best “to insure that those who have studied under me never attempt to manage others in the ways I have, from time to time, been managed.” The next most popular category was the “faculty” category (mentioned by 25.4 percent of respondents), which focused on professional development of the business unit’s faculty. In descending order, the remaining categories were student interaction (20.5%), research (18.6%), community interaction (16.5%), personal development (9.9%), and spiritual goals (7%).

To determine if there were significant differences in the individual goals of deans based on the type of institution (faith-based or secular), we used a Chi-square test, which was significant (Chi-square = 20.403,  $p < .05$ ). Inspection of the results shows that faith-based respondents listed spiritual goals, research goals, community interaction goals, and personal development goals more frequently than respondents from secular institutions. Contrariwise, respondents from secular institutions listed leadership goals, student interaction goals, and faculty goals more frequently than deans from faith-based institutions.

## **Frustrations**

Respondents were asked to list their top five frustrations with their current position. Since this was an open-ended question, the results were post-coded and then analyzed in categories. The most important issue, as noted by 70.8% of respondents, was insufficiency in resources and funding. This category included such items as lack of money, lack of resources, low budget levels, inadequate budget systems, and viewing the business program as a cash cow to support other programs. This issue was followed closely by the difficulty in attracting and

retaining faculty (62.5%). This issue unanimously stemmed from the problem of low faculty salaries making it difficult to attract and retain faculty. The third most important frustration was that of time commitments and bureaucratic minutia (58.3%). This issue dealt with busywork and various commitments the respondents viewed as non-productive, such as committee meetings, paperwork, red tape, and overall time commitment. One respondent referred to this frustration as “pesky administrative work.” The fourth most important issue was the respondents’ frustration with the strategic direction of their institution and/or the strategic direction imposed upon their business program. Respondents felt that top administration did not have a clear direction or was fragmented in its focus. This resulted in unclear strategic directions being dictated to the school/division.

The final three categories resulted in ties among many smaller issues. The fifth most important frustration (25.0%) was a tie between student enrollment and retention issues and interpersonal conflict issues with faculty and staff members. The sixth most important issue was a three-way tie (16.6%) among communication issues with the institutional leadership, organizational structure and authority issues, and the issue of a heavy teaching load. The final frustration was a tie (8.3%) between institutional politics and change management problems.

Given the focus of this paper, we used a Chi-square test to determine if the frustrations indicated by respondents from faith-based and secular institutions differed. The analysis revealed a marginally significant relationship (Chi-square = 16.36,  $p < .10$ ). Inspection of the results indicates that deans in faith-based institutions reported more frustrations with student enrollment and retention issues, and with insufficiencies in resources and funding, than deans in secular institutions. On the other hand, deans in secular institutions indicated more frustrations with communication issues, organizational structure and authority issues, and change management issues, than their counterparts in faith-based institutions.

## Challenges

The challenges facing business deans were categorized into two categories—internal and external. Respondents rated each challenge on a 5-point scale (1 = No challenge at all; 5 = A great challenge). In analyzing the means of the external factors (Table 1), we found that shortages of potential faculty represented the greatest challenge. The next most challenging factor was competition from public four-year universities.

Faith-based schools reported significantly more ( $t = 2.17$ ;  $p < .03$ ) competition from Christian colleges in their competitive landscape than did secular schools. Secular schools saw significantly more ( $t = -2.26$ ;  $p < .02$ ) competition from 2-year community colleges than faith-based schools.

**Table 1 – External Challenges (ranked by descending mean)**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Shortages of potential faculty	4.04	1.08
Competition from public 4-year universities	3.59	1.05
Expectations of accrediting bodies	3.15	1.24
Increasing importance of professional accreditation	3.13	1.14
Competition from private secular colleges	3.00	1.16
Demographic trends for college-age students	2.86	.98
Competition from Christian colleges	2.54	1.15
Competition from distance education programs	2.28	1.04
Competition from public 2-year colleges	2.21	1.08
Competition from online degree programs	2.13	.97
Competition from corporate universities	1.89	1.11

In analyzing the internal challenges facing business deans (Table 2), we found greater differences than with the external challenges category. The major internal challenges facing business deans have to do with an external shortage of labor (qualified professors) and securing the necessary resources to fund business unit initiatives (including labor). This challenge is made more difficult by the institution which either does not possess or is not willing to relinquish either/both the financial resources and other resources necessary to attract and retain qualified faculty members.

In analyzing the differences between the two groups, deans at secular institutions report having a significantly greater challenge in gaining influence over decisions regarding nontraditional business programs ( $t = 2.12$ ;  $p < .03$ ). Also, these same deans report having significantly greater challenges resulting from a change in institutional mission or vision ( $t = 2.27$ ;  $p < .02$ ).

**Table 2 – Internal Challenges (ranked by descending mean)**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Securing adequate staffing for the business unit	4.16	.96
Inadequate levels of faculty compensation in the business school	4.12	1.06
Securing adequate funding for the business unit	4.00	1.04
Inadequate levels of faculty compensation throughout the institution	3.91	1.08
Securing adequate funding and scheduling flexibility to support research and professional development opportunities for business faculty	3.75	1.03
Securing a reasonable percentage of revenue generated by the business programs to fund the business programs/initiatives	3.53	1.23
Inability to keep pace with technology requirements of the business program	3.40	1.23
Too little influence on reward systems for business faculty	3.37	1.35
The business dean has too little input in the budget process	3.30	1.32
The teaching load of business faculty is too high and thus impacts the quality/extent of faculty research	3.24	1.26
The business dean has too little input in faculty compensation decisions	3.23	1.37
The business dean's teaching load is too high, and thus constrains his/her ability to provide strategic leadership	3.23	1.47
Convincing other chairs/deans of the need for change	3.20	1.23
Securing adequate support for leadership development opportunities for the dean and others with business program leadership responsibilities	3.13	1.05
Inadequate structure to allow for growth of the business program	3.13	1.23
Differing cultures of the institution and the business unit	3.03	1.38
Inadequate decision-making rights	3.00	1.32
Convincing the business faculty of the need for change	2.99	1.23
Inadequate faculty evaluation process	2.92	1.29
The teaching load of business faculty is too high, and thus impacts the quality of classroom teaching	2.90	1.08
Inadequate structure for the size of the institution	2.89	1.21
Convincing the university president of the need for change	2.79	1.34
Convincing the VPAA/Provost of the need for change	2.77	1.26
Reputation of the institution	2.52	1.26
The business dean has too little input in the faculty evaluation process	2.39	1.15
Competition with other non-business programs	2.34	1.14
The business dean has too little influence in decisions regarding nontraditional business programs	2.33	1.22
Changes in institutional mission or vision	2.25	1.15
Competition with leadership of the adult business program	2.02	1.27

As dynamic as these challenges may be, an entirely different set of factors is responsible for high stress in business deans (Table 3). These factors can be grouped into two categories: personally-imposed stress and organizationally-imposed stress. Personally-

imposed stress appears to result from personal work habits, while organizationally-imposed stress results from job design in the way the institution mandates the dean’s use of time. When comparing the two groups of deans, only one significant difference is evident. Deans at faith-based institutions report having significantly less academic time ( $t = 2.19$ ;  $p < .03$ ). This may be the result of a teaching orientation at faith-based institutions as opposed to a research orientation at secular institutions.

**Table 3 – Factors That Cause Stress (listed by descending mean)**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Too heavy of a workload	3.65	1.16
Excessively high self expectations	3.55	1.19
Too many meetings	3.50	1.22
Insufficient academic time	3.49	1.33
Maintaining professional and personal balance	3.42	1.23
Financial program support	3.32	1.14
Report and paperwork deadlines	2.97	1.25
Making decision affecting others	2.78	1.17
Activities outside regular hours	2.52	1.13
Conflict with faculty	2.28	1.14

When the two groups are analyzed in the context of organizational commitment, Christian college business deans reported having significantly more value congruence with their organization than deans at secular institutions ( $t = 2.48$ ;  $p < .01$ ). In contrast, deans at secular institutions reported that they could work for any organization as long as the work was similar ( $t = -2.28$ ;  $p < .02$ ).

### **Structure**

For the sample as a whole, a Chi-square test revealed that the organizational structure of the business unit is significantly related to the classification of the dean’s position. It appears that as a business unit grows into a school or college of business, it is more likely that the dean’s position will be seen as an administrative position. Conversely, the dean’s position within smaller business units is more likely to be seen as both an administrative and faculty

position. However, the existence of a non-traditional program is a significant difference, in that deans who must operate where a non-traditional business program is present report having greater difficulty in convincing business faculty of the need for change ( $t = -2.325$ ,  $p = .030$ ). These same deans also report more often that their non-traditional programs are administered outside of the school of business.

Greater differences are seen among business program heads that are titled as “chairs” and business program heads that are titled as “deans.” Deans were significantly more challenged by internal factors. Deans reported having more difficulties in convincing both business faculty members ( $t = -3.260$ ,  $p = .004$ ) and the university president ( $t = -2.488$ ,  $p = .021$ ) of the need for change. Deans also reported having more funding challenges. Deans felt that their institution, as a whole, had low levels of faculty compensation ( $t = -2.621$ ,  $p = .016$ ), and that the business dean had far too little input in the budgetary decisions and budgeting process ( $t = -2.776$ ,  $p = .011$ ). Teaching loads also differed significantly, with chairs teaching an average of 9.6 credit hours per semester, and deans teaching an average of 4.6 credit hours per semester ( $t = 5.383$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

## **DISCUSSION**

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to specifically study business deans at relatively small private institutions, both Christian and secular. Thus the first objective of the study was to learn more about these deans and their challenges, aspirations, goals, and frustrations. What we have learned has been documented in the results section of this paper.

Our second objective was to explore ways in which business deans at faith-based institutions are similar to and differ from their counterparts at secular institutions. We expected to find similarities, in that these deans operate in similar competitive environments; and differences, since they are attempting to fulfill different missions. Our expectations were fulfilled.

In what ways are deans at smaller, private institutions similar? First, it appears that their perception of the external environment is similar, based on the external challenges they face, with shortages of potential faculty, competition from public and private four-year institutions, and accreditation challenges high on the list. But their perception of the competition differs somewhat, in that the faith-based institutions found competition from other Christian colleges to be important, while non-faith-based institutions found competition from two-year institutions to be important.

The challenges provided by the internal environment are also viewed similarly by both faith-based and secular school respondents. All of the most highly-rated internal challenges were resource based, indicating that resource issues are pervasive throughout smaller private institutions. Many of the second tier of internal challenges involved the decision-making power of the dean, including decision-making rights concerning budgets, faculty compensation, and reward systems. The only areas of difference in internal challenges between faith-based and secular deans were on items that received low ratings overall.

Closely related to the challenges faced by business deans are the frustrations they feel. Resource frustrations are, once again, at the top of the list. Similarly, frustrations over having the resources to attract and retain qualified faculty are pervasive. Another important resource, time—or the lack of it—is a key frustration. While these frustrations are a concern regardless of the type of institution, they appear to impact Christian college business deans more than their peers at secular institutions. Deans at secular institutions, however, appear to face more frustrations with the work environment in terms of communication, structure, authority, and change management. Thus, while Christian colleges may be under-funded, they may have better work environments than secular institutions, due to a commonality of purpose and mission.

Another area of similarity was in the goals that the deans listed for their business programs, which did not differ based on the type of institution. Deans appear to want the same things for their school of business: to do a good job of preparing students, to have a strong business program with up-to-date curriculum, and to recruit and retain good faculty. Despite these similar goals, it is important to note that the definitions of these goals differ in faith-based and secular institutions. In a faith-based institution, the job of preparing students includes faith-learning integration, as does having a strong business program with up-to-date curriculum. And the goal of recruiting quality faculty includes their spiritual qualifications. Thus, while the goals are similar, the tasks necessary to accomplish those goals are inherently more complex in faith-based institutions.

An area of difference in both program goals and frustrations of deans is in regard to student enrollment and retention issues. Deans at faith-based institutions mentioned enrollment and retention goals three times more frequently than deans at secular institutions. They also reported frustrations with student enrollment and retention issues, which were not mentioned at all by deans at secular institutions. It appears that this issue arises due to the intensely tuition-driven nature of most Christian colleges, where a major role of a business dean is to somehow ensure increasing enrollment in business programs. This seems to be another area where the demands on Christian college business deans exceed those of secular college business deans.

The information we gathered concerning individual goals provides some fascinating insights into the personality of business deans. First, it shows that they have difficulty separating their personal and professional lives. Secondly, it shows a great desire to be effective leaders, to build effective business programs, and to assist in the professional development of their faculty. Third, it shows a desire to work on professional areas that they perceive as personal weaknesses. For example, deans at secular institutions listed student interaction goals more frequently than their Christian college peers, implying that they

understand this area to be a comparative weakness. On the other hand, Christian college deans listed research goals and community interaction goals more frequently than their secular college peers, indicating that these are areas that need development. But Christian college deans also listed spiritual goals and personal development goals more frequently, indicating the importance of these areas to a Christian college business dean. Some of the spiritual goals mentioned included “to demonstrate Christian character to students, faculty, and staff”, “to model Christ in the classroom,” “to model a life committed to Jesus Christ,” “to integrate my faith into my teaching,” and “to seek the Lord’s guidance and follow it in all my administrative and teaching tasks.” Such comments indicate the high calling involved in being a Christian college business dean.

## **CONCLUSION**

As Christian college business faculty, we proudly proclaim that our institutions are unique—that our Christian missions make us different—and that, therefore, our jobs, are different from those who serve at secular institutions. This study shows that Christian college business deans are indeed different from their peers at secular universities. The major differences, however, are not ones of contrast. In most ways, the business deans in our sample are alike. They have similar demographics, similar program goals, face similar challenges, and have similar sources of stress. Instead, the difference is one of addition. Christian college business deans have to do everything their peers at secular institutions do, and more. They have to be committed to faith-learning integration. They have to recruit faculty who are qualified spiritually as well as professionally. They have to be a spiritual and professional role model to faculty and students. They have to be involved in their communities and their churches. They have to be excellent teachers, committed to scholarly and professional development, be committed Christian spouses and parents, and continue to grow spiritually. They have to deal with the politics of higher education, but do so in a Christian manner.

In accomplishing all of these goals, however, the Christian college business dean often has fewer tangible resources at his or her disposal. The expectations are higher, but the resources are lower. The inevitable result is frustration (and prayer). Sometimes Christian business deans must feel like the enslaved Hebrews in Egypt, to whom Pharaoh declared:

*Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks" (Exodus 5:18, NIV).*

Amazingly, levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment are similar for Christian business deans and their peers at secular institutions. Perhaps this is due to the positive Christian atmosphere and commonality of mission at most Christian colleges. Perhaps it is influenced by a sense that the Christian business school deans cannot, as the secular deans reported, work at any other institution so long as the work is similar. And, perhaps, some Christian business deans have become like the Apostle Paul, who declared:

*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength (Philippians 4:12-13, NIV).*

There is something energizing and strengthening about being called to serve God as a Christian college business dean. God gives the ability to accomplish the task even with insufficient resources. As Paul told the church at Thessalonica, "The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24, NIV).

## REFERENCES

- Austin, M., Ahern, F., & English, R. (1997). *The professional school dean: Meeting the leadership challenges*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Birnbaum, R. (1992). *How academic leadership works: Understanding success and failure in the college presidency*. San Francisco; Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How colleges work: the cybernetics of academic organization and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Baldrige, J.V. (1971). *Power & conflict in the university: Research in the sociology of complex organizations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bovee, S.L., Roller, R.H., & Andrews, B.K. (2000). The pursuit of excellence: Costs, benefits, and motivations for Christian college business accreditation. *Research on Christian Higher Education*, 7, 45-69.
- Brickley, J.A., Smith, C.W., & Zimmerman, J.L. (1997). *Managerial Economics and Organizational Architecture*. Boston: Irwin.
- Corson, J.J. (1960). *Governance of Colleges and Universities*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Cullinan, M. (2001). But what does a dean do? *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 47, (26), 5.
- Gmelch, W.H. (2000). The new dean: Taking charge and learning the job. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Chicago, IL, February.
- Gmelch, W.H. (2000). Rites of passage: Transition to the deanship. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Chicago, IL, February.
- Gmelch, W.H., & Burns, J.S. (1994). Sources of stress for academic department chairpersons. *Journal of Educational Administration*. 32(1), 79-94.
- Gmelch, W.H., & Sarros, J. (1996). How to work with your dean: Voices of American and Australian department chairs. *The Department Chair*, 6(4), 1-19.
- Gmelch, W.H., Wolverton, M., & Wolverton, M.L. (1999). The education dean's search for balance. Presented to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Washington (DC), February.
- Gmelch, W.H., Wolverton, M., Wolverton, M.L., & Hermanson, M. (1996). The 1996 national survey of academic deans in higher education. Pullman, WA: Washington State University, The Center for Academic Leadership.

- Gross, N., Mason, W., & McEachern, A. (1958). *Explorations in role analysis; Studies of the school superintendent role*. New York; John Wiley & Sons.
- Hackman, J.R. & Oldham, G.R. (1976). Motivation through the design of work: Test of theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 16, 250-279.
- Henninger, Edward A. (1998). Dean's role in change: The case of professional accreditation reform of American collegiate business education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy & Management*, 20, (2), 203.
- Kahn, R., Wolfe, D., Quinn, R., Snoek, J., & Rosenthal, R. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kemelgor, Bruce H., Johnson, Scott D., & Srinivasan, S. (2000). Forces driving organizational change: A business school perspective. *Journal of Education for Business*, Jan/Feb 2000, 75, (3), 133, 5.
- Montez, J., & Wolverson, M. (2000). The challenge of the deanship. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans, LA, April.
- Moore, K.M., Salimbene, A.M., Marlier, J.D. & Bragg, S.M. (1983). The structure of presidents' and deans' careers. *Journal of Higher Education*. 54(5), 500-515.
- Mowday, R.T., Steers, R.M., & Porter, L.M. (1979). The measurement of organizational commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 14, 224-247.
- Nies, C., & Wolverson, M. (2000). Mentoring deans. Presented at the Annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, April.
- Okun, K. (1982). Deans as change agents: testing assumptions of the dean's grant program, *Politics, Power and Personality*, 127-167. Minneapolis: National support Systems Project, University of Minnesota.
- O'Reilly, B. (1994). What's killing the business school deans of America. *Fortune*. August 8, 1994, 64-68.
- Rizzo, J.R., House, R.J., & Lirtzman, S.I. (1970). Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15, 150-163.
- Roller, R.H. & Bovee, S.L., & Andrews, B.K. (2000). Leadership aspirations and challenges of Christian college and university business deans and chairs. Presented to the Christian Business Faculty Association, Buffalo, NY, October.
- Roller, R.H. & Bovee, S.L. (1998). Business education and the Christian university: Challenges for the new millennium. Presented to the Christian Business Faculty Association, Vancouver (B.C.) Canada, October.
- Ryan, D. (1980). Deans as individuals in organizations. D.Griffith & D. McCarty (Eds.), *The dilemma of the deanship*. Danville, IL; The interstate Printers & Publishers.

- Sarros, J.C., Gmelch, W.H., & Tanewski, G.A. (1996). *Role stress and satisfaction of academic department heads*. Frankston, Victoria, Australia: Monash University.
- Shenkir, William G. (1997). Are deans selected from academia preferable to deans selected from the nonacademic community? The pro position. *Issues in Accounting Education*, 12 (1), 176, Spring.
- Sivage, C. (1982) Advocates of change: an analysis of deans' roles as directors of dean's grant projects, *Politics, Power and Personality*, 1-70. Minneapolis: National Support Systems Project, University of Minnesota.
- Stevens, George E. (2000). The art of running a business school in the new millennium: A dean's perspective. *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, Summer.
- Tucker, A., & Bryan, R.A. (1988). *The academic dean: Dove, dragon, and diplomat*. New York: ACE and Macmillan.
- Vazzana, G., Ekfrink, J., & Bachmann, D.P. (2000). A longitudinal study of total quality management processes in business colleges. *Journal of Education for Business*, 76 (2), 69-75.
- Wolverton, M., & Gonzales, M.J. (2000). Career paths of academic deans. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, April.
- Wolverton, M., Montez J., & Gmelch, W.H. (2000). The roles and challenges of deans. ASHE Annual Meeting Paper, Sacramento, CA, November.
- Wolverton, W., Wolverton, M.L., & Gmelch, W.H. (1999). The impact of role conflict and ambiguity on academic deans. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 70 (1), 80-106.
- Wolverton, W., Wolverton, M.L., & Gmelch, W.H. (1998). The interconnections between job satisfaction and work-related stress in academic deans. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA, April.

**Figure 1**  
**Organizational Alignment Model**

**Individual goals, strategy, and organizational architecture and their influence on stakeholder satisfaction**

