This chapter emphasizes the importance of codes of conduct to guide the professional role performance of presidents, academic deans, admissions officers, fund-raising professionals, and faculty who teach undergraduate and graduate students.

Introduction: The Importance of Codes of Conduct for Academia

John M. Braxton, Nathaniel J. Bray

Colleges and universities function as client-serving organizations (Baldrige et al. 1978). The clients served range from prospective donors, prospective students, the individual college or university, faculty members, students as groups, and students as individuals to the knowledge base of the various academic disciplines (Braxton 2010).

Such critical role positions as the presidency, the academic deanship, admissions officers, institutional advancement officers, and faculty members serve one or more of these various clients (Braxton 2010). The occupants of such critical role positions experience role ambiguity or substantial autonomy in the performance of their roles. For example, Birnbaum and Eckel (2005) posit that presidents experience role ambiguity and uncertainty over the way their roles should be performed. Likewise Wolverton, Wolverton, and Gmelch (1999) contend that academic deans also experience role ambiguity and uncertainty. College admissions officers (Hodum and James 2010), institutional advancement officers (Caboni 2010), and college and university faculty members possess considerable autonomy in the performance of their respective roles in both undergraduate teaching (Braxton and Bayer 1999) and graduate teaching and mentoring (Braxton, Proper, and Bayer 2011).

Both role ambiguity and role autonomy strongly indicate the need for formal or informal codes of conduct to protect the welfare of the various clients served by these critical role positions (Braxton 2010). Without the existence of formal or informal codes of conduct to provide guidelines for the performance of these roles, college presidents, academic deans, admissions officers, institutional advancement officers, and individual college and university faculty members are free to make unconstrained and idiosyncratic choices in the performance of their respective roles (Braxton 2010).
In addition to providing parameters for the professional choices of individuals in critical role positions in higher education, codes of conduct also assist the academy in professional self-regulation. William Goode (1969) asserts that the lay public grants professions autonomy in exchange for professional self-regulation. Professional self-regulation entails the exercise of social control of wrongdoing through the deterrence, detection, and sanctioning of professional impropriety (Zuckerman 1988). Codes of conduct play a key part in these three mechanisms of social control.

Accordingly, this issue of *New Directions for Higher Education* focuses on two key issues regarding codes of conduct: the construction of codes of conduct and the existence of codes of conduct in academia. Five chapters of this issue propose tenets for the construction of codes of conduct for such critical role positions as the presidency, the academic deanship, admissions officers, institutional advancement officers, and the graduate teaching and mentoring role of university faculty members. The tenets advanced by each of these chapters rest on a robust foundation of empirically derived normative structures for these critical roles. Norms are shared beliefs of a particular social or professional group that focus on expected or desired behaviors in various professional situations and circumstances (Gibbs 1981; Rossi and Berk 1985). Further clarity comes from Merton’s definition of norms as prescribed or proscribed patterns of behavior (Merton 1968, 1973).

These five chapters are as follows. In chapter 2, titled “Toward a Code of Conduct for the Presidency,” J. Christopher Fleming, proposes eight tenets for a code of conduct for the presidency of colleges and universities. Such a code of conduct safeguards the welfare of clients both external and internal to the president’s college or university. Nathaniel J. Bray describes six tenets for academic deans in the third chapter, which bears the title “Follow the Code: Rules or Guidelines for Academic Deans’ Behavior?” The clients affected by the role performance of academic deans include the institution, the academic college, and the faculty (Braxton 2010). In the fourth chapter titled “A Normative Code of Conduct for Admissions Officers,” Robert L. Hodum delineates nine tenets toward a code of conduct for college and university admissions officers. Such a proposed code protects the welfare of such clients as the prospective student, the parents of prospective students, and the institution of employment. In the fifth chapter, Timothy C. Caboni discerns nine tenets for a code of conduct for institutional advancement officers. Such a code of conduct safeguards the welfare of such clients as the donor and the institution. The title of his chapter is “College and University Codes of Conduct for Fund-Raising Professionals.” In the last of this set of five chapters, Eve Proper outlines six tenets of a possible code of conduct for graduate faculty members to guide them in teaching and mentoring graduate students. The title of this sixth chapter is “Toward a Code of Conduct for Graduate Education.” The tenets described by Proper shelter the welfare of such diverse clients as graduate students, the institution, and academic disciplines.
INTRODUCTION

As previously indicated, the existence of codes of conduct constitutes another issue addressed by this volume. In chapter 7, Dawn Lyken-Segosebe, Yunkyung Min, and John M. Braxton report the findings of study conducted to determine if codes of conduct for undergraduate college teaching exist in teaching-oriented colleges and universities. The title of their chapter is aptly labeled “The Existence of Codes of Conduct for Undergraduate Teaching in Teaching-Oriented Four-Year Colleges and Universities.”

In addition to the construction and existence of codes of conduct, this volume would be incomplete without a thorough discussion of the various issues colleges and universities as organization face in adopting codes of conduct. Nathaniel J. Bray, Danielle K. Molina, and Bart A. Swecker present a thorough consideration of such related topics as the rationale for ethical codes, an overview of the organizational principles underlying their development and functioning, the ways in which ethical codes function as organizational anchors for key constituent groups in higher education, the constraints of institutional structures, and the possibilities for the development of codes of conduct in higher education. The title of this eighth chapter is “Organizational Constraints and Possibilities Regarding Codes of Conduct.”

The last chapter of this volume is titled “Reflections on Codes of Conduct: Asymmetries, Vulnerabilities, and Institutional Controls” and is written by Nathaniel J. Bray and John M. Braxton. This final chapter focuses upon trends seen in the empirically derived codes of conduct that have been developed to this point. They present a detailed consideration of the asymmetries that exist in both positional and professional authority, the relations between main campus stakeholders, and the vulnerabilities that are presented by power differentials in both schemata. The work concludes with a discussion of the detection, sanctioning, and deterrence of normative violations.

References

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