

Book Review

Reframing Academic Leadership

Lee G. Bolman and Joan V. Gallos. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011. ISBN-13: 978-0-7879-8806-7, 288 pages, \$42.00 US.

I have enjoyed reviewing the book, *Reframing Academic Leadership*, by Lee G. Bolman and Joan V. Gallos (Jossey-Bass, 2011). The authors state in the preface that the book is designed for those “who care deeply about higher education” and who can “appreciate its strengths and imperfections,” and are “committed to making it better.” They note that academic organizations are special due to their “complex mission” along with their somewhat unique “dynamics, personnel structures, and values,” and, thus, require “a distinct set of understandings and skills to lead and manage them well.” Since the book actually was aimed at a slightly different target audience, college and university leaders and administrators, I was not certain how well it would meet the needs of chiropractic educators. However, as I read the book, I was reminded of the fact that academic health centers and health professions schools are even more dynamic and complex due the addition of patient care to the mission. Those who guide the development of future health professionals have an even more sacred mission.

The book was built on over 30 years of work in academic administration for the authors and work with thousands of other academic leaders through their own teaching. The authors are very experienced. Lee Bolman is the Marion Bloch/Missouri Chair in Leadership at the Henry W. Bloch Management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and Joan Gallos is a professor of leadership, a University of Missouri’s Curators’ Distinguished Professor, and Director of the executive master of business administration program at the Henry W. Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. The married authors dedicated the book to their family and, through reading the preface and the “about the authors” section, it is apparent that the authors reinforce their promotion of leadership as a personal journey and personal commitment.

I appreciated how the book was set up. The main principles were highlighted in tables or special boxes that make them easy to locate when the reader goes back to review key principles. Most chapters opened with a story to help anchor the principles and provide context. It is the

stories, all within academia, that separate this book from the typical business-based leadership book.

The book was divided into three sections. The first section was entitled “Leadership Epistemology: when you understand, you know what to do,” and focused on basic principles related to the leader’s need to be a continual learner along with the responsibility to create appropriate learning environments. Chapter 1 sets the stage with a discussion of the challenges and opportunities of academic leadership. In Chapter 2, the authors discuss their core philosophy of reframing, which they define as, “the deliberate process of looking at a situation carefully and from multiple perspectives,” and incorporates “examining alternative views and explanations.” Chapter 3 focused on habits of learning for leaders and approaches to action, and encourages leaders to examine the theory underlying their own actions. These 3 chapters remind the reader of some of the basic principles of leadership, including reflection, listening, observing, learning, relationship building, and action that balances advocacy with inquiry.

The second section “Reframing Leadership Challenges” is intended to provide four perspectives that the leader can use to examine the complex work of leading within academia. These perspectives are: leader as analyst and architect (Chapter 4); as compassionate politician (Chapter 5); as servant, catalyst, and coach (Chapter 6); and as prophet and artist (Chapter 7). Each of these “frames” or perspectives focuses on key elements of leadership, including structuring work and change, engaging the political dynamics of the institution, building networks, and working with people as individuals and in teams, and seeing the symbolic view of academic institutions as theater and temple. This section combined discussion of principles with guidance for practice, including mnemonics, like the three Ps of change: patience, persistence, and process.

The third section “Sustaining Higher Education Leaders: Courage and Hope” was very practical, with each Chapter focusing on a specific challenge and set of skills. These included managing conflict (Chapter 8), leading from the middle (Chapter 9), leading difficult people (Chapter 10), managing your boss (Chapter 11), sustaining your own health and vitality as a leader (Chapter 12), and feeding the soul, attending to the need to continually grow as a person in addition to growing as a leader. These chapters provided perspective and practical guidance, with my personal favorite being leading from the middle. I

particularly liked this chapter, because every professional leads from the middle. We all are answerable to those we serve (students, patients, family members) as well as to those in positions above us (program directors, chairs, deans, boards of directors, accrediting agencies, the public). The perspectives and guidance provided were useful.

The book concludes with an epilogue where the authors share their philosophy that administration/leadership within academia is a special calling and a sacred trust. Within the health professions, perhaps, this is even more resonant and can serve to remind leaders at all levels that there are good reasons to continue the “difficult and sometimes thankless work” of leading within academia.

I believe that the book fulfilled its goal – to bring new perspectives to those who work within academia. *Reframing Academic Leadership* provided stories that resonated with my almost 40 years of experience within academic medicine, and amused me as I gained new insights and

picked up helpful hints. In fact, after reading the book, our team in the Master of Academic Medicine program at the University of Southern California has selected this book to lead off our course on the enterprise of academic medicine.

I have confidence that any chiropractor, particularly those in academic institutions, will see himself or herself in these pages, both in positive examples and in less flattering examples. Also, if, as the authors recommend, you are open to change, you might be stimulated to see through a new “frame” or to try a new approach.

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