INSIDE HIGHER ED

FOREWORD BY STEPHEN TRACHTENBERG

GOVERNANCE RECONSIDERED

How Boards, Presidents, Administrators, and Faculty Can Help Their Colleges Thrive

SUSAN RESNECK PIERCE

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Governance Reconsidered

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For my father, Elliott Resneck

For my sisters, Linda Resneck DiStefano Krohn and Brenda Resneck Laughery

For my daughter and son-in law, Sasha and Steven Seigel

For my grandsons, Sean and Ryan Siegel

Foreword

Dr. Susan Resneck Pierce is the celebrated former president of the University of Puget Sound and the author of *On Being Presidential*, one of the preeminent guides for college and university leaders. With this second contribution, *Governance Reconsidered*, to the canon of the American academy, she is becoming one of the most consequential scholars of the discipline of higher education. Without leaving anything to the imagination, she inspires the imagination. She writes with clarity and specificity and provides examples and case studies which one can actually use to address a working agenda.

University presidents are burning out like so many moths in a room filled with lit candles. *Governance Reconsidered* provides an antidote to this melancholy circumstance. To read this book is to experience the scales falling from one's eyes about the management and governance of America's colleges and universities in one of the most daunting times since the Great Depression. Pierce has identified the most significant contemporary challenges to institutions of higher education and their leaders and has provided answers that are insightful and informed by reflection and practice. In her studies she covers shared governance, university financing, university personnel issues, the place of the university in America, and remarkable and fascinating tales of issues addressed by presidents,

faculty, and trustees. This book is a tool that will help institutions address their future.

This book will be of interest to all who have any concern whatsoever with the future of our nation's colleges and universities. It will be particularly helpful to policy makers and practitioners and should be read by political leaders, university presidents, and other administrators, including provosts, vice presidents, deans, and department chairs. Faculty who need to be knowledgeable about the institutions which host their work will also benefit from this valuable volume; likewise, students of both university administration and governance. Every trustee of state-supported and independent colleges and universities should receive a copy of this book along with his or her appointment letter. Journalists and others who think and write about the academy should have this on their desk to consult on a regular basis. Parents sending their youngsters off to college, as well as adult learners, should read this volume in order to better understand the institutions with which they are engaged. In other words, this is an important book, perhaps vital, for all.

Someone who reads *Governance Reconsidered* as well as *On Being Presidential* will begin to understand the fascinating special world of the American university. The literature will reveal how universities work and don't; will describe generic and unique challenges of university leadership; and will give reason for concern and encouragement. But Pierce's contribution is surely one of the most contemporary and comprehensive available and should be at the top of any such reading list. It is an outstanding contribution and, properly understood and used, will save the career of many a university leader in the demanding days to come.

At age seventy-six, I have not lived long enough to completely understand the meaning of the term "shared governance" as it is applied to colleges and universities and yet it persists, as I have myself said elsewhere, to enjoy an almost religious status in the academy, even while the tempo of faculty deliberations goes on to dominate university decision making. This is as true today as it was

one, two, or three decades ago, even as we engage now in an even more taxing environment where large amounts of money are committed and the strategic agenda is increasingly complicated.

The culture of faculty tends to be risk adverse. This is arguably the result of the skill set developed while earning a PhD where the credential was not historically awarded for pyrotechnics. It is hard to recall when the need for sound decisions made in a timely manner was more imperative on campus, and yet our universities have divided into what the late C. P. Snow called, "two cultures"—one of which focuses on decision making while the other makes decisions. And if the second group doesn't apply themselves, then the first may have cause to worry about future compensation and employment. This is not a good thing. Susan Resneck Pierce's book addresses and helps to mitigate the worst concerns that I contemplate. She explains why shared governance must be accompanied by shared responsibility. She illustrates that fiscal concerns involving big data needs full-time attention that is not an easy fit with full-time scholarship and teaching. She shows why when these two cultures come together the meeting is sometimes noisy. The deliberate faculty culture may not fully appreciate that shared governance includes a timely call to action; and that universities are about to be disrupted, as have most recently journalism, medical care, and other historic practices. The reconciliation of faculty and administrators to the common good within the process of vital decision making could not be more imperative. President Pierce's contribution is the right book at the right time.

Stephen Joel Trachtenberg

Stephen Joel Trachtenberg is President Emeritus and University Professor of Public Service at The George Washington University. He is the author of five books about higher education, most recently along with Gerald B. Kauvar and E. Grady Bogue, of Presidencies Derailed: Why University Leaders Fail and How to Prevent It *(Johns Hopkins University Press).*

Preface

In July 1984, two weeks after I began what turned out to be a six-year tenure as the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tulsa, the provost, Thomas F. Staley, gave me important advice. Telling me that I was off to a good start, he cautioned that I might be even more effective if I were a bit more patient. Specifically, he advised me to look both ways before crossing the street.

As dean, I was in the enviable position of being an administrator with no financial worries. Tulsa's enrollment was about 4,000 students. The endowment was around $450 million. Tom had dedicated $250,000 annually for an arts and sciences discretionary fund to be used to enhance our academic programs. The only technology that we really worried about populated our science and language laboratories, and those labs were well equipped. No one seriously questioned the value of higher education. Those days are long gone, even at Tulsa.

At the beginning of that fall term, I constituted the department chairs as an advisory council. They had not previously met as a group and so were skeptical about whether these twice-monthly meetings would have value. In response, I told the department chairs that I wanted them to advise me on matters of importance to the college. I expressed the hope that together we might be able to make decisions that would benefit teaching and learning

and that also would make a difference for our colleagues and our students.

At our first meeting, I asked the department chairs about the unusual policy that all arts and sciences graduates, including those majoring in fields like biology and mathematics, received Bachelor of Arts degrees. The department chairs unanimously agreed that we should also offer the Bachelor of Science degree. We quickly agreed on which degrees belonged in the arts category and which in the sciences.

I suggested that the department chairs each discuss the matter with their departmental colleagues and report back at our next meeting in two weeks. If, as we now all anticipated, there was broad agreement, we could simply make the change. The provost and president had already agreed it was a good idea. We would not need to take the matter to the board.

One department chair, ignoring my proposed timetable, mused that making this change, which he favored, would take a long time. When I asked him how long, he responded, "At least three years." I, not having yet mastered the art of patience, exclaimed, "Why three years?" He then asked how long I thought it would take. I said that I was thinking about something like three days but that I could live with three weeks. We did make the change in two weeks.

There was in fact no real urgency to changing a policy that had apparently existed for many decades, and the impetus for seeking action within two weeks was not impatience. Rather, I hoped to demonstrate to my new colleagues that with appropriate consultation and communication, we could make and implement obvious decisions easily and quickly. These colleagues and many others on the faculty became supportive of that approach, and over the next several years, through their collaborative and creative efforts, we earned a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, began to internationalize our offerings, created partnerships with such cultural organizations as Tulsa Opera, increased enrollment, improved student quality, and earned grants from national foundations.

The Inspiration for This Book

My interest in the topic of governance has been inspired both by recent changes in the higher education landscape and by my work since 1973 as a faculty member, a department chair, a dean, an academic vice president, a president, a member of a number of nonprofit boards, and, for the past eight years, a consultant. The many conversations I have had in my consulting role with faculty members, administrators, students, trustees, alumni, leaders of higher education associations and foundations, and elected officials have informed my thinking about governance in new and more nuanced ways.

In the past several years, new economic and political pressures, along with the advent of new technologies, have led to conflicts on many campuses over who is responsible for the nature and pace of change generally and for decisions about academic matters in particular. On these campuses, contentiousness has often replaced collaboration.

Concerns about ever-growing expenses and ever-increasing tuition, for example, have led some governors and other elected officials to seek in unprecedented ways to influence the leadership, the curriculum, the tuition, and even the conventional classroom-based approach to teaching at a number of state-supported universities. These same concerns have led boards of both public and private colleges and universities to push presidents to make changes quickly to eliminate programs and even positions that are not cost-effective and to identify and implement new revenue streams. Many presidents have done just that, turning to the academic programs, which until recently on many campuses had been protected from budget cuts and which previously had been considered the province of the faculty. Having already made all the cuts that they believed that they could make in nonacademic areas, many presidents and their senior administrative colleagues have phased out academic programs and hired adjuncts rather

than tenure-track faculty to meet instructional needs. Many presidents have also led their institution to add new majors (often pre-professional) and new graduate programs, to create online courses often taught by adjuncts, to enroll greater numbers of international students, or to establish campuses abroad.

When presidents and their senior colleagues take such actions without honoring the often time-consuming, highly deliberative processes of shared governance, they almost always trigger conflict with the faculty, who inevitably value those processes and their deliberative nature. In such instances, faculty members typically argue that shared governance as it has historically been practiced ensures that all academic decisions are mission-driven and that all academic programs are of high quality. Higher education journals and the national press are now filled with stories about faculty members at both public and private colleges and universities who are critical of their presidents and sometimes their boards for making unilateral, top-down decisions that faculty members maintain have compromised academic values and academic quality.

This book will specifically explore how and why the notion of shared governance as it has been practiced to varying degrees on most US campuses since the mid-1960s is being challenged and even shattered on many campuses. The book will describe how conflicts about governance often escalate in ways that are destructive to the institutions about which trustees, presidents, and faculty generally care so deeply. Finally, the book will reconsider governance, offering recommendations to trustees, presidents, and faculty members about their roles and responsibilities going forward so that they can enable their institutions to thrive and in some cases to survive.

The Intended Audience

This book is intended for trustees, presidents, senior administrators, faculty members, elected officials, leaders of higher education associations and foundations, and people who care about the quality of

higher education in this country. I hope to help those in each group to understand the roles and responsibilities of each of the players and the complexities inherent in those responsibilities. I also hope to inspire them to work together effectively rather than to be locked in adversarial relationships that harm our colleges and universities and inevitably their students as well.

The Structure of This Book

Chapter 1 begins with a history of shared governance in the United States and the challenges it has faced historically and currently faces. In writing this chapter, I was particularly struck by how the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) was at its founding a century ago focused primarily on the question of academic freedom and that only in its 1966 statement did the AAUP make explicit the linkage of shared governance and academic freedom. This chapter also discusses the impact on the presidency of contentiousness on many campuses about governance.

Chapter 2 focuses on the causes of the various financial pressures facing colleges and universities today and explores the impact of constrained resources not only on the quality of the academic programs but increasingly on how governance is practiced and, on a number of campuses, has been shattered.

Chapter 3 describes the growing reliance on contingent faculty, the vast majority of whom are part-time and who do not participate in governance. This chapter further explores the similarly negative implications for shared governance of MOOCs (massive open online courses), online learning, and for-profit institutions.

Chapter 4 considers the impact on governance of growing questions about the value and cost of higher education. Specifically, the chapter explores ways in which higher education is in fact vulnerable to some of the criticism it is receiving from elected officials, commentators on higher education, and trustees. The chapter also makes the case for the value of a college education and describes

the negative effect of elected officials and trustees substituting their judgment for that of college and university presidents in terms of policy and budget and for that of the faculty in terms of curriculum and other academic matters.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 offer cautionary tales about presidential, faculty, and trustee actions respectively. Each chapter also offers recommendations for how each of these groups need to reconsider governance and work together collaboratively so that their institutions will thrive and in some cases simply survive.

The book ends on a more hopeful note by presenting, in chapter 8, four exemplary tales about presidents who have been responsible for bringing about transformational change on their campuses and who have done so in partnership with the faculty and the board. Each of these mini-case studies highlights the benefits of presidents who successfully engage their campuses and their trustees in thinking about and contributing ideas for how their institutions can most productively move forward.

Some Explanations for My Readers

I draw heavily throughout the book on examples of both dysfunctional and effective governance.

When these examples have made their way into the national press and also social media and have received extensive coverage, I name the institutions and cite that coverage as I think appropriate. I am aware that such accounts, whether in the mainstream press, blogs, or Facebook posts, may be incomplete, biased, or both. (Although I make every attempt to present these stories fairly, as a student of William Faulkner's fiction, I am mindful of the unreliability of narratives and so recognize that those who are closer to the events that I am recounting than I am may have different understandings and perspectives about those events.)

When I know of examples that, to the institution's good fortune, have not made their way into the public realm, I seek to disguise the

institution and the players. In such cases, I sometimes change the gender of the president, trustees, or key faculty members. I sometimes describe the institution as being located in a different setting. I sometimes modestly alter the institution's mission. I sometimes alter slightly the details of events. And in a few cases I conflate similar events that have occurred on two campuses into one case study. At the same time, I want to be clear that the stories I tell are always grounded in real events.

I have learned about these examples in a number of ways. Sometimes, I simply have firsthand knowledge. Sometimes, the stories have come to me from those on the campus itself. In all instances when there is contentiousness, I have sought to understand and represent all sides of the issue.

I also want to point out some choices about terminology. Although members of governing boards at public institutions are often referred to as "regents," for the sake of simplicity and to emphasize that governing boards are entrusted with the health and integrity of their institution, I will use the term *trustees* throughout the book. Similarly, although the chief executive officer on some campuses is referred to as the chancellor, I have chosen throughout to use the more common title of *president*.

Finally, because Jossey-Bass prefers not to use footnotes or endnotes, I am including an extended bibliography that lists the numerous newspaper and journal articles that have provided me with pertinent information.

Acknowledgments

After my interview in February 1992 as a finalist for the presidency of the University of Puget Sound, I arrived home just in time to receive a phone call from the board and search committee chair, the quite wonderful late Lowry Wyatt, who offered me the position. I accepted without asking about the salary. We agreed to meet two days later to talk about details. I hung up the phone, and before I called my family and friends to share the good news, I danced around my house.

That moment was the last time I failed to negotiate vigorously, although going forward my negotiations were for the college, not for me personally. It was also the last time that I danced alone, because I quickly learned that creating partnerships with my colleagues, trustees, students, alumni, the community, national foundations, and others would better serve Puget Sound than any solo act I might pull off.

Although the early sections of this book include cautionary tales about boards, presidents, and members of the faculty who have contributed to or even created dysfunction on their campus, I want to emphasize that I nevertheless have a deep and abiding faith in this country's colleges and universities.

The great majority of faculty members with whom I have worked have been dedicated to their students. These faculty members have sought to teach students to be critical thinkers, to write and speak

clearly, to value logical arguments supported by evidence, and to be passionate about ideas and knowledge. Over and over again, I have seen faculty members who have been transforming agents—in the most positive of ways—in the lives of their students. Although I certainly have encountered my share of criticism, recalcitrance, and political posturing from some faculty members, I have also and always (please note that I said "always") been able to count on the collective wisdom of my faculty colleagues when it came to institutional matters.

Similarly, I have also come to know some unbelievably effective presidents who have brought about constructive change on their campuses in collaboration with the faculty and with the support of their boards. They have much to teach us about effective leadership, and so I will try to point out throughout the book the lessons to be learned from them. In particular, I want to thank Francesco Cesareo, Assumption College; Tom Evans, Carroll College; Mark Gordon, Defiance College; Rob Huntington, Heidelberg University; Rock Jones, Ohio Wesleyan University; Steve Kaplan, University of New Haven; Brit Kirwan, the University of Maryland System; Ted Long, Elizabethtown College; Bob McMahan, Kettering University; Vince Maniaci, American International College: Jo Ellen Parker, Sweet Briar College; Georgia Nugent, Kenyon College; Pam Reid, the University of St. Joseph; Steve Trachtenberg, George Washington University; and Rich Wagner, Dunwoody College of Technology. In addition, I want to acknowledge two provosts who have also taught me a great deal: Bob Entzminger, Hendrix College, and Patricia Killen, Gonzaga University.

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I am again grateful to my editor, David Brightman, executive editor for Higher and Adult Education at Jossey-Bass. (OK, I admit it: I love to say the phrase "my editor.") I first worked with David on my recent book, *On Being Presidential: A Guide for Colleges and Universities*, and suddenly understood the enormous value a truly talented editor brings to a manuscript. In the case of this book, David wisely encouraged me to expand my interest in writing a book about trusteeship to the larger question of governance. It was he who suggested the book's title, with its nod to the much-admired Ernie Boyer's pathbreaking work *Scholarship Reconsidered*. David is a consummate editor and a good friend.

I also deeply appreciate the support of Aneesa Davenport, associate marketing manager for Higher and Adult Education at Jossey-Bass, and Cathy Cambron for her superb copyediting.

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Writing is very solitary and demanding work. In that light, I want to thank my friends Karen Goldstein and Joel Trosch and my daughter, Alexandra (Sasha) Siegel, for being avid and critical readers of various iterations of this manuscript. They each gave me, in different ways, the kind of encouragement I needed to write the book and the critical perspective that led me to make it better.

I want to thank my grandsons, Sean and Ryan Siegel (ten and eight at this writing), for providing me almost daily with a much-needed respite from writing. They also have become my biggest promoters. For instance, while waiting for pizza to be served one evening at a local restaurant, they found *On Being Presidential* on Amazon.com. They proudly showed the website to the waitress and waiter and to everyone sitting near us. Each of them is a voracious reader, and they are better writers at their respective ages than I ever was. How lucky am I?

I also want to acknowledge my 93-year-old father, who remains deeply interested in my work; my sisters, Linda Resneck DiStefano Krohn and Brenda Resneck Laughery, who simply give me support no matter what; and my son-in-law, Steven Siegel, who makes me happy because he so loves my daughter and my grandchildren. I also want to thank Albert (Bert) Sonnenfeld, who has been an important part of my life since he was the best teacher I ever had when I was a graduate student, and John Riggs, who has been a friend since we were teenagers in Janesville, Wisconsin, some decades ago. And although my husband, Kenneth Pierce, died almost seven years ago, his insights into how institutions work and his unfailing encouragement still inspire me.

Finally, I want to acknowledge a number of my former students throughout my career as a faculty member and administrator. That I am still in touch with each of them makes me happy. By virtue of who they have become and the ways they each have made a difference in the lives of others, they make me proud and reaffirm my faith in higher education.