

Two different conceptual frameworks for University coherence and integration

By [Albert Schorsch, III](#)

The writer offers two conceptual suggestions for University coherence and integration: The first, a short illustration of the late C.K. Prahalad's dictum, "Make an explicit connection between strategy, business models, and business processes." The second, an argument from the long-forgotten field of "moral psychology" for managing the University with "open numbers" and local decisions.

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A useful conceptual approach to institutional integration--

The late C.K. Prahalad called in his 2008 book, *The New Age of Innovation: Driving Co-created Value Through Global Networks*, for organizations to "make an explicit connection between strategy, business models, and business processes."

To paraphrase and expand upon Prahalad's tersely profound sentence out of "management-ese" into more common language:

We have to link the special ways we have chosen to reach our most important goals with how we are organized and act, so that the ways and means by which we interact both among ourselves and with others do not contradict, but rather compliment, our mission and purpose.

Part of the story of UIC, and of U of I, is that strategy, models, and processes (including systems) continue to collide. This is something we can change.

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An argument from the long forgotten field of "moral psychology" for managing the University with "open numbers" and local decisions—

In my own religious background, I learned (and taught) a social doctrine based upon subsidiarity and solidarity.

Subsidiarity means that those decisions which can be made locally, should be made locally.

The reasons for this particular approach are moral, in that it allows persons to act as knowing, thinking subjects, rather than objects.

But the consequences of this approach are also practical, in that actors given the chance to make their own decisions are motivated to commit, to share, and to care for the common good.

Solidarity in this context thus means a shared and active commitment to the common good.

In the middle of this social doctrine come mediating institutions, which buffer powerful forces, and allow civil society and private society to exist intact.

This societal model, which grew out of the very church which invented universities, is therefore not a bad working model for a complex university that is at the same time a center for creative enterprise, intellectual inquiry, and the transformation of the young and the not-so-young, that dwells inside an impossible bureaucracy that is the sum total of every regulator's and editorial writer's pet peeve solution, that spins inside a political maelstrom, while trying to become a rational organization that somehow gets the incentives right.

A few weeks ago I shared a website featuring three talks by Hanna Holborn Gray at UC Berkeley about universities. I learned two very important things from these talks, in which Dr. Gray reflected on what the best university presidents she knew (and she) learned over their entire careers, which are:

1. Universities are extremely resistant to change; despite their progressive veneer, they are structured precisely to prevent change.
2. Those university leaders who align universities with market forces can hope to improve and change universities over the long term.

A few weeks ago, I also praised outgoing UIC Provost R. Michael Tanner for making financial, research, enrollment, energy consumption, and so many other "numbers" about the campus and its departments and units visible.

While these numbers have still not filtered down in all places to the faculty level—and might be ignored by some faculty even when they are available to them--these numbers are indeed available in greater quantity than ever before.

This "open numbers" approach (I avoid in this context the nostrum "transparency") along which I have been orienting my own administrative efforts for years in concert with many colleagues sharing this approach, empowers faculty collectively to make good decisions whether locally, or for the wider institution.

To the degree that we all learn what the institution costs to run down to the building level--and even to the classroom level--how much we earn from research, teaching, medical service, contracts, and gifts, we can share a common reality based upon a shared set of facts. We can share the same economy, in a fundamental sense, the same household. We can thereby give ourselves the chance to make wise collective decisions as we struggle to fulfill our mission to teach, research, serve, heal, and develop.

Therefore, whatever structural changes may occur in this University, I ask that the present open information flow from and about the top down to the unit level not only continue, but increase.

When faculty and their colleague employees have a measure of control over their own destiny,

they are motivated to act not only in their interest, but the University's interest. This is aligning with market forces in the best sense of the word.

And this, more than any other reason, is why I think Global Campus—and similar ventures—failed and may fail again. The institution itself did not "live inside" the same numbers that the University leadership did, because for so long, the University kept the numbers inside a black box.

It is one thing to release numbers and proclaim entrepreneurship, but another to "live inside" the numbers on a year to year basis, testing budgets against actual expenditures to create zones for creativity.

Entrepreneurship and creativity rely upon constantly testing the real limits of resources, and testing our own behavior against them. If combined with a shared commitment to the common good of the University, open numbers joined with local decisions can build a more thriving University.

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