



## Layers of Management at the School: Part II

Author : Mike Smith

Categories : [Strategic Planning](#)

Date : October 14, 2009



There were a number of interesting and helpful comments to my original post about layers of management. My post looked only at the senior management of the School, partly because there has been a lot of external attention focused on that level of university administration, but also because I assumed that you would be interested in that piece of it too. It is relatively easy to identify senior administration and make comparisons with other campus units that are somewhat useful.

Some of the comments asked about the growth of all administrative positions within the School, not just senior level management. It is a fair question. For example, one person asked (via email) if we have looked at the growth of administration generally compared with the growth in positions that provide direct client services (teaching, advising, and writing). We have not looked at it so much in terms of growth, and that may be a useful perspective for us to apply. Looking at other administrative positions is more complicated than looking at the senior level positions because straight counting produces even less meaningful comparisons. Too often we are looking at apples and oranges.



Another person offered the following perspective (via email), which closely mirrors my own thinking: “Focusing on people and their titles is not a productive exercise. Rather, focusing on (1) what administrative work needs to be done to ensure that we fulfill our mission and (2) who is the best person/people within the organization to do that work in the most efficient and effective way possible puts the issue in a more appropriate perspective.” I agree that this is the heart of the question, and we have been working on it in a couple of targeted areas. Michael Crowell raised a related point, which is whether there is “too much bureaucracy,” meaning “(1) it is hard to figure out who can decide a matter and/or (2) you have to go through more than one person to get a decision.” Again the question is not the number of administrators. Instead we must focus on what needs to be done and who should do it in the most efficient and effective way?

I will work with the management team and others to be sure that we are focused on the right questions in determining how much administrative support we provide and how it is organized and managed. Let me ask you to help. Where does it seem to you that there is too much administration? Where is it hard for you to figure out who can decide a matter? When do you have to go through more than one person to get a decision? I would like to be able to analyze and respond to specific situations, as opposed to guessing about where you believe we should be making administrative improvements. We can respond more effectively if folks are willing to share their experiences and ideas. I would love to get your comments on the blog, but emails to me are fine too. There may be a perfectly reasonable explanation for why something happens the way it does now, but I will be happy to make changes if there is not. Let me know what you think, including those of you involved in administration—broadly defined. Thanks for helping us think about this important question for the School.