

Scenario One

Professor Walt McNaught is a newer chair in the Marketing and International Business department at a Doctoral/Research university. Promoted from within, he likes having the opportunity to shape the direction of his department but is struggling due to his strained relationship with Dean Sean Catrall. Dean Catrall has a nickname: The Screaming Dean. He is a volatile leader who earned his Ph.D. in Operations Management, spent years in executive management positions in industry and was hired two years ago to lead the University's Business School. In his welcome of Dean Catrall, the University president said Dean Catrall is going to make the Business School into one of the Top Ten Business Schools in the country. His reputation in industry is widely known – he brought a leading tool company back from the brink of bankruptcy. He has committed to raising 50 million dollars per year for the Business School and to increase the number of MBA students by 25% in the next two years.

Though Dean Catrall is highly regarded by upper-level administrators, those who worked closely with him feel differently. He expects to have access to chairs 24/7 via Blackberry and email. He travels extensively and thinks nothing of calling chairs at home late at night. Walt learned his lesson the hard way about being accessible to Dean Catrall when, one night, he turned off his Blackberry and went to bed. The next morning he had two messages from Dean Catrall. The first sternly insisted that Walt call him back, and the second was an angry tirade about how he was headed into a meeting at 8:00 with potential donors and needed numbers from Walt immediately. He ended the message with a threat: “If I don't hear back from you before going into this meeting, we have serious problems.”

Walt's role as a chair took over his life. His research, family and health suffered. He began missing the department's weekly research colloquiums and could find little time to spend with faculty. The only time he saw his colleagues anymore is in faculty meetings. Chandani Chemmanoor, Walt's long-time colleague and friend, caught him in the hall one day. “Slow down. I never see you anymore. I'm worried about you. Do you want to have lunch later?” Walt replied that he didn't know how long his meeting with Dean Catrall would run. “Next week?” he asked. “I'd love to hear about how your research project is coming. I miss my research and have to live vicariously through you!”

In their meeting, Dean Catrall tasked Walt with leading change in the Marketing and International Business department, including integrating experiential learning into undergraduate classes, and developing the department's partnerships abroad. Walt's agenda items included suggestions for improving the graduate student experience. “That's not where my head's at right now Walt” Catrall said impatiently. “Your department needs to lead the charge on these international collaborations that the President is so keen on setting up. There's no way in hell Dick in the Hayek School is gonna show me up on this!”

On the undergraduate education initiative front, Walt formed a committee of faculty, staff and students to outline the steps needed to create internships for students and integrate other new forms of pedagogy at the undergraduate level. He made sure the committee reported out their progress at every faculty meeting. Walt had successfully advocated for the faculty and negotiated some support for these changes, including release time for those developing new pedagogy, and the hiring of a new Internship Coordinator and more Teaching Assistants. Together, Walt and the faculty began to discuss existing concerns, obstacles and short-term goals.

Walt also took steps on the global partnership action item. Assuming he was doing them a favor, Walt assigned some faculty members the duty of hosting international faculty based on their

similar intellectual interests. Others he tasked with travel to academic institutions abroad in order to court potential collaborations. Finally, he asked a few faculty to join an interdisciplinary committee called The Global Future of Education. Walt was surprised to be met with great resistance from faculty regarding this push to globalize education in the MBA program.

Tensions rose over the additional service requirements, to the point where the momentum for change at the undergraduate level was jeopardized. In a meeting, faculty complained that the international push has come out of nowhere and that graduate students' low morale and high attrition rate should be addressed first. Professor Chemmanoor suggested that they update the department's strategic plan. "We should figure out our most important priorities and then we see if we can align them with the direction the College is headed in." Her practical recommendation received a number of nods, but a cadre of faculty, who feel Walt is no longer an approachable colleague, dismissed it. Scott Hartfield, unable to hide his anger regarding what he called "Walt's kowtowing to Catrall," asked: "Are we going to let that tyrant suit of a dean dictate our priorities? Am I just an 'inefficient' faculty member refusing to be a team player because I don't want to do more work for nothing?"

Questions

- 1. What is Walt doing right and where could he improve?**

- 2. How is Walt managing faculty expectations? And the Dean's?**

- 3. Where is Dean Catrall coming from and what are some strategies to manage his expectations?**

- 4. Since Walt's relationship with his peers has changed, what could he do to better manage this change?**

- 5. If you were chair of this department, on which elements of this case would you seek advice from this group of peers?**