

Paths to the Canadian Deanship: A Study of Canadian Universities' Appointment

Announcements (0071)

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Abstract

Who are the Canadian deans? Where are they from? And how often are they reappointed? This paper presents the results of a content analysis of Canadian deans' appointment announcements. By focusing on gender, race, previous roles, movement across positions, institutions, provinces, and countries, this study tells us who the Canadian deans are and where they are from. It finds that Canadian deans come from outside the institution as often as inside, and that the paths to the deanship are many and run parallel, though the great majority of them involve a rise through the academic ranks. Of particular interest, it finds that women, while showing equal representations among newly hired deans, are underrepresented among reappointed deans. Implications for research and policy are explored.

Announcements

Purpose

As academic middle managers, deans occupy the "critical fulcrum" (Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez, & Nies, 2001, p. 14), between central administration, faculty and staff members, students, and external stakeholders (Bolman & Gallos, 2010; Gmelch & Wolverton, 2013). This central role plays a critical role in allowing universities to navigate the tensions surrounding debates about accountability, rationalization, globalization, governance, and corporatization (Gaskell, 2013; Gumport, 2008; Van Thiel & Leeuw, 2002), and to determine the adequate balance between change and tradition (Kerr, 1963/2001; Selznick, 1957/2011).

Yet, little is known of deans and their career histories. In recent years, scholars have taken steps to fill this gap (see Bolman & Gallos, 2010; Clift, Loughran, Mills, & Craig, 2015; Gmelch & Wolverton, 2013; Meek, Goedegebuure, Santiago, & Carvalho, 2010), but we still know very little about deans, and particularly about Canadian deans. One notable exception is the study by Boyko and Jones (2010) of Canadian universities' policies regarding academic administrators. Their findings highlight a lack of prescriptions about reappointment processes and identify stated efforts to recruit internal candidates. However, there is no empirical evidence to confirm whether practice follows policy. Instead, Canadian scholars have had to rely on American studies, the most recent dating back to 1996 (see Gmelch & Wolverton, 2013).

The purpose of this paper is to expand the nascent research literature on Canadian deans by describing important features of their career histories. In particular, it looks at reappointments, change of institution and travel across provinces, man/woman and white/non-white distributions, and non-Canadian experience.

Methods

This study analyzes the written content found in appointment announcements. Mainly quantitative, the study's methods draw from the work of Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, and Bragg (1983) and Amey, Vanderlinden, and Brown (2002). However, it draws its data not from surveys, but from appointment announcements published in the magazine *University Affairs*, a well-established channel for announcing open or filled academic leadership positions in Canadian universities.

Each appointment announcement is analyzed to answer the following questions: (a) What was the appointee's highest previous role? (b) Is the dean reappointed to the position? (c) Is the appointee a man or a woman? (d) Is the appointee white or not? (e) Did the appointment involve a change of institution, province, or country? Analysis is conducted first for each variable, then through a cross-analysis of multiple variables.

Sample

This study uses a dataset obtained by collecting the appointment announcements published in the People rubric of the magazine *University Affairs*. At this point of the study, data collection has covered the July 2015 to June 2016 period, with 53 appointment announcements. The complete study will cover the January 2013 to June 2016 period, with an expected sample size of 150 appointment announcements.

An important limitation of the study is that appointment announcements are voluntary and only an estimated 25% of appointments are reported. Nevertheless, in the absence of a national repertoire, studying appointment announcements provides researchers with an indirect access to Canadian deans' career histories.

At this stage, preliminary cross-analyses have been conducted on a third of the sample (53 dean appointments' announcements) to determine emerging trends.

Preliminary Findings

Overall, the preliminary study finds that, not counting the reappointments, 55% of the newly hired deans come from a different institution. The most common path to the deanship is through associate deans' or research centre directors' positions, with a proportion of 30% of announcements, then through either a deanship in another institution (15%) or by serving as chair (15%). Finally, 21% of announcements were reappointments to the deanship, while 6% were appointments of acting or interim deans.

The most surprising finding is the proportion of women reappointed for a second mandate, compared to the proportion of women hired as deans and the overall proportion of women in full-time teaching positions. Governmental statistics show a steady increase of the proportion of women in full-time teaching positions, rising from 10% in 1976, to 37% in 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2012). In contrast, our preliminary sample shows a 50% representation of

women in recent appointment announcements, but a 20% representation in the reappointed deans' group. In other words, though women are now as likely to be appointed dean, they are not as likely to be reappointed.

The next stage of the study will take place this coming fall and include the analysis of two more years of announcements, with an expected final sample size of 150 announcements.

Conclusion

This study is the first to characterize the gender, race, provenance, and previous role of newly appointed and reappointed deans of Canadian universities. Its preliminary findings echo United States' findings from Moore et al. (1983) and from Gmelch and Wolverton (2013). There are many paths to the Canadian deanship and these paths run parallel within academia. However, the findings contrast with Boyko and Jones's (2010) and show that universities pay lip service to policies favouring promotions from within the institution. Finally, the findings identify a profound gender asymmetry favouring men over women in reappointment decisions.

These results have important implications for researchers and policy-makers. They underline the need to study the underlying cause for the reported gender asymmetry between newly appointed and reappointed deans. For policy-makers, the results show that hiring practices do not follow policy and that further support is required to support women's reappointments.

By unearthing the hiring pattern of Canadian universities, this study brings to light the sharp contrast between policy and practice in deans' appointments and reappointments. Future research should aim at answering why this is so and focus on deans' perspectives.

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