

**THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS  
ACADEMIC PLANNING SYMPOSIUM  
Llewelyn Curling, PhD  
Professor, School of Sciences & Technology  
Presented at the Bahamas Tourism Training Centre  
May 6<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

**Introduction**

The College of The Bahamas (COB) is an institution. Institutions are organizations. An organization is a large group of people organized for a common purpose. The way the group is organized affects the group's ability to achieve its goals. The group can be effective and efficient working together, or it can be cumbersome and ineffective. Once the group knows what it wants to achieve, it should use its collective knowledge and wisdom to organize itself not only appropriately but for the best.

**Academic Units**

The College of The Bahamas is trying to organize (or should I say reorganize) to become an effective university. There are many effective universities in the world, so it shouldn't be too difficult to organize ourselves like one of them or in a way that is appropriate to our particular objectives. With respect to academic departments and schools (formerly called divisions) and faculties, COB has had a reasonably good construction (structure) from the beginning, demarcated along familiar subject lines, for e.g. the SBAST, SEDUC, SCCA, SES, SNS&ES, SOT, SOSC, etc., and all of their sub-areas. The vast body of academic and practical knowledge has already been painstakingly divided into subject categories, and effective universities tend to be organized into departments along such divides; it should not be necessary to reinvent the wheel in this regard. What is more important is the influence of administrative demands and resource

constraints on the organizational structure, e.g. – What are the best combinations of areas given the finiteness of resources? How will Indian Chiefs and Indians be proportioned so that maximum efficiency can be achieved?

This problem is not of the magnitude of a doctoral dissertation and should be easy to solve with a modest combination of experience, wisdom and logic.

Another point is that not every existing academic program or new program needs to coincide with a separate or new department. Multidisciplinary programs can be constructed which draw upon the resources from a number of subject areas (departments) and fall under the coordinatorship of a single individual who could be a member from any of the constituent departments. There is no pressing need to create a new department for every new program. There are many examples of these both here at COB and abroad.

### Administrative Services & Support

The human resources of a university consist of faculty, staff and administrators, and its main clients are its students. Other clients include anyone in search of knowledge and understanding, as well as anyone who is willing to provide some consideration for proprietary knowledge.

The business of a university is to provide service to its clients. We all know how to render good service to our students and how to provide knowledge and advice when they are needed. The question is, is the machinery appropriately in place to facilitate these objectives in as effective and efficient a manner as possible? In other words, is COB organized well enough to do the job well enough? Organization is the question raised earlier

from the perspective of academic delivery. Now the question of organization is raised once again with regard to administrative efficiency.

COB has made some progress with online systems, but systemic glitches, and other service complaints indicate that there is still room for improvement. This is why we should not give up the fight but continue along the path of imaginative and innovative thinking with the resolve and the commitment to one day get it completely right. In this regard, employee training and motivation are key and administrative systems that engender such, through systemic-based incentives and rewards supported by fair and objective performance evaluations. Healthy managerial practices should be encouraged. Colleagues should treat one another fairly and equitably according to the rules of the humane systems that mutually, orderly and civilly govern them.

### Institutional Resources

The institutional resources are both human and physical. Aspects of our human resources have been referred to in the above. The physical resources include the buildings or edifices, owned and utilized by The College, the equipment contained in these buildings and all the lands, materials and other facilities at the institution's disposal.

It is amazing what an institution like COB can offer its students in terms of products and resources. Recently a student had some difficulty finding and registering for an elective. The desired course was to be at the 200 level in the humanities or the social sciences. A quick search of all that's available on IQ Web revealed a host of individual subject areas, that is, knowledge areas at the student's disposal. These are academic resources (courses) available to students that have been developed and organized over

the years through the diverse knowledge and expertise of all the persons who have been connected with COB, all who have come and gone including those who are still present at The College. In this regard, COB clearly has the makings of a great institution if the proper enhancements are achieved and all of its institutional systems function flawlessly. We mustn't sell ourselves short. The variety and quality of student options are amazing. In this regard, COB is a reasonably well-developed machine. This magnitude and kind of development takes time. So one shouldn't try to erase COB's history or its legacy, but learn from it and build the future university upon it. In this regard, I'd say restructure what needs to be restructured, but also, what's not broken does not need to be fixed. Otherwise, progress will be unnecessarily slowed.

## Conclusion

### Issues and Challenges

The real issues are perfection, quality, artisanship and pride in workmanship, ranging from a flawless course timetable for the next term to the bathroom faucet that never drips or the roof that never leaks. Also of concern is the energy that is wasted, energy that can easily be conserved. The rectification of these and all similar issues depends on the presence and implementation of sound and intelligent systems that work without flaws. Once these systems are in place and they demonstrate wholesome and engendered productivity and effectiveness, system operators must learn to let the systems rule and take individual and personal preferences, as well as emotional impediments, out of the systemic processes. Resolve and commitment require motivation. Motivation requires incentives and rewards. Performance requires competence, guidance and reinforcement – positive

and negative consequences for action and inaction, respectively. We must hire competently and provide training opportunities where necessary. The sound and intelligent systems to accomplish all of the above need to be in place. These are some of the challenges the new University of The Bahamas will face.