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## Views

Administrating

### A Guide to Administrators

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Professor I. M. Sari, a senior sociologist at U of All People, has recently published a study of administrators in higher education, a somewhat baffling enterprise for a researcher who claimed in his two-year grant from the Farquhar Foundation that he'd be addressing the effects of group dynamics in urban crowds. The Dean of Humanities is currently looking into whether Professor Sari can be penalized for blatantly disregarding the terms of his four-paragraph grant proposal back in 2006.

Meanwhile, what Sari has produced, in his recent article in *Sociology: Not So Hard Science*, is a detailed taxonomy of types, from chancellor to assistant chair. Below are some of his categories.

**The Pushover:** Usually occupying a lower rank, Pushovers will grant almost anything anytime, from extra travel funds to sabbatical requests, whether or not they have the authority to do so. Pushovers have an intense desire to be liked, and are popular until the faculty figures out what little power they have, after which they are routinely ignored in favor of more efficacious administrators.

**The Naysayer:** Occupying any level, the Naysayer is the opposite of the Pushover, categorically denying all requests on the assumption that faculty beg only for frivolous items and are not to be trusted. Naysayers tend to relish their negative roles, for which most faculty see them as having almost unlimited power, another benefit of refusing that third request for an office chair to go with the desk.

**The Underling:** Also known as toadies, Underlings are always deferring to the person who got them into office, usually a provost or, in the case of an Underling Provost, a Chancellor or President. As deans or chairs, Underlings may even be people of high integrity -- except when it comes to voting on that referendum against the president's pet building project, at which point they become oddly silent.

**The Quid Pro Quo Type:** Usually at the level of a chair or dean, the Quid Pro Quo Type embodies the Latin phrase "what for what." In return for a new office allocation, for example, the Quid Pro Quo Type may stipulate that the faculty member teach a section of Bio 101, or trade a new computer for extra committee work. Also known as wheeler-dealers, Quid Pro Quo Types pride themselves on their so-called fairness.

**The Academic Turned Administrator:** These types publicly feel for the faculty, continually reminding everyone that they, too, were once academics. They claim to anyone who'll listen that they long for a return to teaching and research, until someone calls their bluff, remembering what lousy teachers they were and how little they published.

**The Mother of All Administrators:** Usually a woman but not always, the Mother of All Administrators is not necessarily the mightiest dean but rather a maternal presence who nurtures the faculty, sometimes in embarrassing ways. How else to explain the matching pen and pencil sets for all faculty in the political science department?

**The Business Model:** Perpetually talking about the bottom line, Business Model types hew strictly to economics, whether the topic is class size or parking. "Cost efficient" is their mantra -- until it's time to talk about their \$200,000 salary.

**The Paper Pusher:** a charmingly antique term, dating from the days before e-mail and texting, when faculty mailboxes would be clogged with flyers about arcane lectures and insurance benefit reminders. Nowadays, the Paper Pusher has morphed into a large-scale electronic disseminator, issuing everything from listserv memos to giant PDF's that require five minutes to download.

**The Philosopher King:** originally a term from Plato's *Republic*, the Philosopher King is an intelligent person who does not wish to serve but does so anyway out of a misguided sense of duty. Disliking responsibility, Philosophers rule with a light hand, unless they

find that they start to like the job, at which point they become tyrants.

**The Resourceful Type:** This species, able to propose a workable agenda, cohere a divided department, or run a smooth meeting, operates both upfront and behind the scenes for the betterment of almost everyone, yet manages to preserve integrity and respect. Unfortunately, the last sighting of the Resourceful Type was spotted at U of All People in 1955 and is now thought to be extinct.

— David Galef

David Galef is happily employed as an English professor at Montclair State University, not, thankfully, at U of All People.

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- Guide to Faculty
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- I also recently completed a similar study of faculty. Here are some of the more important categories I came up with:

The Paranoid – Primary talent lies in ascribing malice to every action of every administrator. Is convinced not only of the impossibility of good intentions on the part of administrators, the Paranoid is in fact convinced that all actions are directed as retaliation (for what it is equally unclear and unimportant) at him or her personally. Expressions of paranoia can range from cowering to outright aggression at the site of an administrator.

The Idealist – Flabbergasted by the notion that everything from office supplies to offices themselves aren't magically provided for the accomplishment of their good work and that someone has to actually pay for and manage these things. Characterized by extreme difficulty understanding the notion of limited resources and the need to allocate those resources (which, again to the befuddlement of the Idealist, happens to be the definition of economics).

The Turf Staker – fine with any decision that anyone makes as long as it does not infringe on his or her turf, which typically extends in a 1000 meter radius from the Staker's position at any given point in time. Becomes particularly agitated when a suggestion is made regarding the turf, and that agitation tends to be in direct proportion to the quality of the suggestion.

The Archer – Lives for individuals to make politically risky but institutionally beneficial comments or suggestions in a public forum. This provides the Archer the opportunity to unleash his or her quiver of arrows at the poor target in the form of pointed but often ridiculous questions. Unfortunately Archers typically have bad aim and rarely hit the mark with a question, though occasionally they do shoot arrows through their own feet. Natural habitat for Archers is any public meeting that includes refreshments.

The Rational Academic – Is interested in an academic discipline, but perhaps more interested in students and the welfare of the institution. Recognizes that difficult decisions often have to be made to ensure the continued opportunity to educate future students, even if that means we can't all have 2/2 loads with no service obligations. Oddly, sightings of Rational Academics often occur in conjunction with sightings of purple unicorns.