

Reflections on Academic Burnout

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REFLECTIONS ON ACADEMIC BURNOUT

A FRIEND of mine, the chairman of an English department in a large midwestern university, had enjoyed six weeks of his sabbatical when he received a letter from his dean requesting copies of all the work he had written and submitted for publication during that time. The committee reviewing his promotion had postponed their decision. In order to determine the merit of his scholarship, they wanted to see two or three more examples of his work. Though they respected the work he had already published, they wanted to see just a little more.

Six weeks. How would the work of that short period tell a committee more than they should have learned by reviewing the dossier of a fifteen-year career? They had worked with the man for more than a decade. Would six weeks change him significantly?

My friend had spent the first two weeks of his leave recovering from the strain of administrative work before finishing the research for a major section of the new book he had been working on during the last year. He had begun sleeping through the night and had even enjoyed some reading for pleasure. The absurdity of the idea that he should already have submitted new work for publication made him furious. The committee's unrealistic request is characteristic of the demands that universities have begun to make on their faculties—more productivity with fewer rewards—encouraging a condition commonly recognized as burnout.

Burnout in the academic world is not easy to talk about. Productivity is considered the measure of success, even though we often disagree about the value of our products, especially in humanistic fields. Our most visible products are our publications, but our performance also includes teaching (which most of us agree is difficult to evaluate) and administrative leadership (which most of us agree should be improved, though it doesn't count for much in measurable terms). We resist discussion of burnout because it implies personal failure in a highly competitive world where few of us have or want any other employment options. Nonetheless, burnout has become a serious problem in academic life, one that we must learn to recognize and acknowledge in order to develop effective ways of avoiding it.

The term *burnout* comes to us from the language of aerospace. The latest *OED* supplement (1972) includes several citations from the 1950s that use *burnout* to describe the consumption of fuel in rockets and nuclear reactors. Although the *OED* does not show any applications of the term to human behavior, it does remind us of earlier variants like *slow burn* (a manifestation of anger or frustration, 1938) and *burn up* (U.S. slang for irritate or enrage, 1957).

Mary Louise Briscoe

It took somewhat longer for *burnout* to be recognized by American dictionaries. *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate* (1963) lists nothing, not even a variant. *Webster's New World* (1966) lists *burn out* only as a variant of the verb *burn*, meaning to stop burning for lack of fuel or to destroy by heat or friction. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1979) includes the noun form as "a failure in a device attributable to burning, excessive heat, or friction" or "termination of rocket or jet-engine operation because of fuel exhaustion or shutoff." But a significant addition to comparable meanings for the verb form extends the concept to human behavior. To burn out, it says, is "to become exhausted, especially as a result of overwork or dissipation."

Our term for space-age stress came into the language quickly, as these things go. Apparently a lot of people understood what it felt like to become inoperative because of fuel exhaustion, heat, or friction. The mechanical origin of the term suggests the most debilitating aspect of its meaning: burnout victims do not believe they can initiate any significant activity, because someone else controls the machines or institutions with which they live and work. As the rock song suggests, they feel like heavy metal.

We commonly talk about burnout in corporate life, usually among managers who have become personally and professionally disabled by the stress of their jobs. A current television ad depicting desperate executives downing Alka-Seltzer in the boardroom, the boss's office, and at the water cooler is a popular illustration of a serious and ongoing cultural problem. Corporations that are sensitive to the problem have been inventing ways to deal with it for several decades. Before *burnout* entered our language, General Motors offered employees vacation travel at discount prices, ski trips, membership in athletic clubs, and other diversions to break the stress and monotony of work patterns. Recognizing the impact of stress on physical fitness and eventually on job performance, many businesses have built health clubs in their own buildings or made cut-rate memberships in nearby clubs available to their employees. In-house seminars on corporate stress have become commonplace. In the light of this history, it is curious that universities

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have done little to address the problem of burnout in the academic world.

Many popular magazines have published articles on stress and burnout during the last few years. An article in *Psychology Today* asks, "Can Companies Kill?" One in *Christianity Today* argues that burnout is the result of reaching too high. A woman interviewed by *Black Enterprise* asks, "How come my good job feels so bad?" And *Ms. Magazine* suggests that because oxygen is a cure for stress, we should hug a tree each day. *Science News* writes that stress suppresses some immunity to disease. Others write of VIP burnout, parent burnout, childhood stress, vacation stress, the stress of country life, family life, working life. Not to be outdone, *Time* acknowledges in one article "the burnout of almost everyone."

In academic journals sociologists have reported on stress and burnout in a variety of service professions, including police officers, correctional teachers, child-protective service workers, wardens, and nurses. One team studied the "Stages of Disillusionment in the Helping Professions." These studies acknowledge the idealism that led many workers to enter their professions and the ultimate frustration they feel because there is little they can do about the causes of the problems they must deal with every day. In discussing corrective measures, the authors focus on the quality of reward systems for workers, profit sharing, participatory decision making, flexible working hours, and active programs for health and leisure—policies designed to enable workers to feel better about themselves and the institutions for which they work.

The problems of service professionals are similar to those of factory workers whose jobs were seen, even in the early stages of industrialization, as extensions of the machinery they used. In Chaplin's *Modern Times*, the figure of perplexed innocence overwhelmed by automation on the assembly line can still evoke pathos because it speaks to us of our need to maintain control over what we do—our work—and to have that work recognized and valued. Acknowledging this need, some leaders in business and industry have changed their concepts of management and labor in order to improve the quality of their product and the quality of their workers' lives. In the automobile industry, Volvo's innovations regarding worker pride, job satisfaction, ownership, and profit sharing have been in the bank of common knowledge for years, and though its example has not been widely followed, there are some similarities in the emerging practice of worker-owned industries. Workers who are now buying out their mills are more concerned with job survival than with the quality of life (though they do agree that having a job is better than not having one). However, public reports of worker-owned mills suggest that pride and a determination to succeed are feelings widely shared in this risky business. Workers know that

the quality of their performance will be recognized and rewarded.

Whatever the mill hands, business executives, and sociologists may have learned about stress and burnout, academic analysts do not seem inclined to apply that knowledge to their own world. Perhaps because we like to imagine that our working lives are different from those of the general population, we talk about burnout only in other sectors of society. We see it and experience it in our world, but we have not yet identified it clearly enough to deal with it effectively.

We too work in a service industry. We already have flexible working hours and forums for participatory decision making, though they sometimes don't work very well. But there is widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of academic life. The causes are complex, some similar to those in other industries, some unique to our own.

One obvious reason for our dissatisfaction is that most of our salaries are lower than those of employees with far less education who teach in the public schools, work in the steel mills, or drive city busses—a clear signal that society does not value our work as much as it claims that it does.

Another cause is the ongoing tension between the institution and its parts, the faculty members who give the institution its character, who want to depend on its patronage without giving up what they perceive as their individual rights. Institutional protection of the freedom of inquiry may be basic to university life as we know it, but it has never worked easily. We all expect the institution to nurture our teaching and research, and many of us expect to exercise our right to help make the institution function as we believe it should. Somehow, things never work out the way we expect them to.

If we try to imagine the service professions, including our own, as extensions of the machinery they operate, repair, or represent, we can begin to recognize that we have high expectations of the services that they, and we, perform. We expect the machinery or institution to function well, and we hold its representatives responsible for any breakdowns. Our notions about machines and institutions are not entirely realistic. In fact, they are downright romantic: we always seem surprised when they do *not* work, and when that happens, we take our disappointment, frustration, or anger to the nearest service representative—usually, in our profession, the department chair.

It would be simplistic to argue that many academics feel like worn-out parts of a machine that doesn't work very well, but much of the frustration is expressed in these terms, whether they are young and productive scholars or older faculty members who are merely waiting out their years. Their desperation or malaise indicates a belief that they can do little or nothing to make the machine work better. At a recent three-day confer-

ence for administrators at my university (from chairs to the chancellor), I heard many variations on this theme. Granted that such meetings encourage us to ventilate our frustrations, this one reminded me that these problems are not unique to liberal arts departments.

The causes of faculty dissatisfaction that I have already described affect the university as a whole, and they have been around so long that most of us feel helpless to do anything about them. We can do something about others, which have become more prominent in recent years—namely, our unreasonable publication requirements (especially for humanists) and the problems of aging.

Faculty members in the humanities are even more susceptible to burnout than those in the sciences, I believe, because their power and influence have been diminished since those days when a liberal arts education had recognized and legitimate value both in and out of academic institutions. Despite the rhetorical support that university administrators give to dealing with the literacy crisis, building core curricula, and requiring second language skills, their real priorities are reflected in their budgets. Humanists are rarely high on the list. Although it is rumored that some of our more famous colleagues now receive salaries of a hundred thousand or more, most of us are among the lowest-paid members of our institutions, and support for special programs in the humanities is minimal.

To some extent we have learned to live with the diminished position of the humanities and the centrality of science and technology, but the side effects of this power shift have done considerable damage. In seeking the status and prestige of science and technology, we have tried to emulate the productivity, or production rate, of faculty members in those fields, and the comparison is all wrong for us.

By age thirty-five, scientists and athletes have their most creative achievements behind them. By then they know either that they have the right stuff and have used it or that they haven't and won't. As humanists we have a different natural pattern in our creative lives. Although we expect to be enlightened by some of the work of young scholars, we are supposed to be concerned with the wisdom of the ages—in the traditions we study as well as in the contributions we make, including the work of our creative writers, which we expect to develop progressively. But we now find ourselves on the same rack with scientists, athletes, and even rockets. We are expected to go off at an early age. I am arguing that we share the responsibility for the position we are in, that by accepting institutional pressures to emulate the pattern that leads scientists to succeed, we have imposed a scale of production on ourselves that is guaranteed to make us fail.

We know that much of what is published in our own fields should never go into print. We know that many books by young scholars, including those revised dis-

sertations said by their advisers to be ground-breaking, are not worth reading. We know in our academic hearts that the best will usually be thought and said by humanists in the ripeness of experience. In spite of this knowledge, we have begun to evaluate scholarly work by asking whether it is on the “cutting edge” of a particular field, though we should realize that *discovery* does not mean the same thing for humanists that it does for scientists.

Most departments in major universities require a book for tenure. Others require a series of “significant” articles in refereed journals. A friend at a prestigious university glibly told me that her department now requires two books for tenure. The practice didn't seem to bother her, but I ask myself to imagine the kind of person, friend, or colleague who, during the first six years on the job, is able to prepare and teach classes well; to become a working member of the department; to establish a reasonably satisfying personal life, having finally shrugged off the prolonged adolescence of graduate study; and, above all else, to write and publish two books that even ten people will want to read in five years. What I see in such a person is a candidate for early burnout, and though the example is extreme, the trend it represents is fairly typical now, even in third-rate universities. To support the acceleration of our publications against our own common sense is irresponsible. It is also professionally self-destructive, for our best and brightest young minds are wearing themselves out prematurely.

In addition to the unreasonable publishing demands we make on junior faculty members, we have added many others as well. In reviewing job candidates, we look for those who are outstanding in their individual fields, but we also ask for expertise in composition, technical writing, computer use, or other areas of particular need in our departments. We expect job finalists to have been active in professional conferences. We expect them to have already published an article or two, preferably in a prestigious journal. A critical book review or a short piece in *Notes and Queries* no longer enables a new PhD to stand out in the crowd. Soon after new criteria are initiated by one school, they become standard in many others. The ante goes up every year.

No one wants to admit that the machine is moving too fast. Instead, we tend to applaud and envy the intense productivity of junior faculty members who are desperately trying to save their professional lives. Privately, however, friends with and without tenure regularly discuss the need to do something about the killing effects of tension. They change their diet, they exercise, they take vacations or find other means to “get away,” but so far no one has successfully attacked the primary cause of overwork—the accelerated production we have imposed on ourselves.

Burnout among senior professors is somewhat different. Universities have always had faculty members whose interests in teaching and writing got lost along the way. That phenomenon is not new, but their numbers have

grown at an alarming rate. In some cases, senior faculty members have grown weary, albeit guilty, from watching the accelerated production of their junior colleagues. They do not wish to work at a similar pace, often because they believe that their seniority gives them the right to slow down. Some wish merely to continue their own work and claim not to understand what all the fuss is about among their junior colleagues, though they alone have the power to control the criteria for achievement.

Other kinds of burnout have more to do with the general problems of aging than with anything else. Because of the higher retirement age, the oddities of the job market in recent years, and the choice of nonacademic employment by many among the smaller number of PhDs we graduate, departments tend to become predominantly middle-aged and to experience the psychological problems inherent at that time of life.

Equally complicated is the fact that the idealists attracted to our profession are by middle age often frustrated idealists who must alter their professional expectations in order to face their students and their mirrors every day. Some argue that middle age is much like adolescence because it forces us to answer the question, What am I going to do with the rest of my life? Some faculty members totally revise their research interests before they turn fifty, but others stop publishing and become zealots at bridge or coin collecting, seeking a source of enthusiasm and vitality in something other than their work. Some manage to maintain themselves professionally, though with less interest in academic achievement than they previously had. Others simply wait out their last years, watching their class notes and enrollments fade while they wonder why they are no longer appreciated. Their fuel may not have been exhausted by the demands of accelerated production, but the result is the same—a waste of human resources.

Some universities are hoping to make early retirement attractive enough to clear the burnout cases from the upper ranks and hire young blood. Although this practice may have some function, we should find better ways to recycle the interests and experience of some senior colleagues. The major deterrent to any effort to deal with burnout among senior faculty members is their belief that seniority confers unusual privilege, including the right to contribute very little in their last years. In the past, the privilege of seniority seemed clearer. Usually (there were always exceptions), our senior colleagues had earned the status of their rank because their superior achievements as scholars and teachers enabled and obligated them to assume responsibilities attendant to their positions. We expected them to guide the professional development of junior colleagues and to help PhD candidates produce significant dissertations. The declining number of English majors and PhD candidates and the challenges to educational policy and practice during the last fifteen years have worked together to diminish the sense of pride and gratification that many senior faculty

members have, or expected to have, in their work at this time of life. But privilege must be earned in the academic world, not merely inherited. With fewer majors to teach and dissertations to direct, senior faculty members must find or accept other work that is central to the life of their departments, which usually means teaching required undergraduate literature and composition courses, jobs they have traditionally thought beneath them, though they expect their junior colleagues to take such assignments without question. Instead of looking back with regret to those years when they taught rooms full of majors, they should accept the enormous challenge of teaching students of science and technology, even the less literate, to understand the values of humanistic study.

We do want to find satisfaction in our work, even the most disgruntled among us, and we should find ways to tap this need that are useful to us as well as to our institution. A program of incentives (e.g., fractional time off for new course development) and of equitable work loads (with points earned for various kinds of labor) will help, but individual faculty members must also take some initiative in these matters. If times have changed in the academic world, we must change with them to maintain our self-respect.

The central issue in dealing with faculty burnout is the willingness of institutions to recognize it and deal with it openly. Because an institution is the sum of its parts, we all share this responsibility. I have indicated some of the ways in which faculty members can think about the problem and address it in their departments and professional organizations. We must also have the support of university administrators who see the wise conservation of their human resources as a real advantage to their institutions.

Some universities, for instance, recognizing the debilitating effect of personal problems on their staffs, have established employee assistance centers, already known as EACs. An article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (16 May 1984) notes that nearly 150 colleges have established these centers to provide free or low-cost counseling and referral services for personal problems, which may not initially seem job-related. Administrators who support EACs consider them an important means of improving job performance. An individual's behavior can be seriously affected by a personal problem that the department administrator may not know about—the terminal illness of a family member, a teenage child's drug problem, alcoholism, divorce, the tensions of a commuter marriage, the scarcity of tuition money for college-age children. Even if these problems are known, they are often beyond the department administrator's power to act on, except with common sympathy. Although most universities have offered similar assistance to students over the years, the EAC is a bold and imaginative innovation in the services provided for faculty and staff members.

What can we as department administrators do about burnout? Avoid it personally if possible, and try to initiate policy changes that will enable our colleagues to rekindle the flame. The curious thing about our position, however, is that none of us was prepared for the job by our graduate education. On the contrary, as faculty members we assume that many of our colleagues are potentially able to do the job—that's one reason we support the practice of rotation. Rotation is a good thing, we argue, because no one can maintain other kinds of professional activity while chairing a department. The pressures of the job make that impossible. In addition, many do not like to stay in a job that they know their colleagues do not ultimately respect, even though that work is crucial to the department's well-being. Both new and experienced chairs must learn to live with their colleagues' strange ambivalence about university administration, one of the factors that make the job difficult.

During my first year as chair, a neighbor of mine who teaches a political science course in administrative systems at another university told me that I would spend about eighty percent of my time "stroking." She said that faculty members, like employees everywhere else, need regular assurance that their work is valued. Naturally, I thought, but who needs a sociological study to figure that out? As she went on, it became clear that by "stroking" she meant soothing the irritations that emerge daily in an institution because neither its systems nor its parts work at maximum efficiency.

After my first year as chair, I recalled the conversation and decided that, even if she might seem to be right, what had happened to me was probably the result of my inexperience. After my second year, I knew she was right, for the pattern had not changed.

When I began my first term as a department chair, I recognized a degree of uncertainty and confusion in the profession at large, which was still trying to identify the serious questions left in the rubble from the sixties. Many of our members stood vigorously by traditional literary modes and values; many worked hard to incorporate what they believed were important changes. And, rather suddenly it seemed, critical theories like deconstruction, an institutionalized form of rebellion whose leaders wore three-piece suits instead of the army fatigues and flowered jeans of their predecessors, began a serious attack on the nearsighted modes we had inherited from New Criticism. As in the past, we looked to another country, this time to France, for new and better answers to many of our perplexing problems, instead of focusing our energy and imagination on our own backyards. We keep busy that way, but we seldom get around to the basic problems of our own text.

Still, it had been an exciting time of serious and challenging questions. I believed that if I improved the organization of our rather large department, developing better communications that would build a sense of trust and fairness in the way we handled our ongoing

business, my colleagues would be freer to spend their time trying to find answers to those serious and challenging questions.

I was wrong about that. Not so wrong that I would change my approach, for I still try to implement what I set out to do. But wrong in believing that anything I did could give faculty members that much freedom. Many of them simply do not want it, and nothing I can do will change that. In addition, current administrative policies do not encourage growth. They are policies of contraction—fewer funds and resources—that gradually hack away at the spaces faculty members need for creative pursuits. In many institutions, economic restrictions have been devastating. At worst, faculty members with or without tenure are not retained. We do not say fired or laid off, but that's what "not retained" means and that's what it feels like. Most of our departments are not in such an extreme position, but nearly all of us have experienced reduction in money for travel and other professional activities, for office operations (including Xerox and phone charges), for graduate-student support, for salary increases. At the same time, we are expected to make more efficient use of our resources, to increase the faculty-student ratio, to teach higher course loads than many of our colleagues in other departments, to serve on university committees that contemplate the implementation of these changes, and to find time to increase the number and quality of our publications. There seems little space left in which our minds can wander freely—though creative thinking is supposedly one of the things we are expected to do.

One result is that the nervous systems of the institution and of its members are in terrible shape. People sometimes behave as if they had been cast in an adult version of *Lord of the Flies*, remembering primitive survival tactics they didn't know they still had. They fight over the bones of academia as if they had looked death in the face. Others reach burnout. I can still hope that the scrappers will come to their senses after whatever fight at whatever meeting and realize that there are other things they can do with their energy. Those who reach burnout may never come back.

One advantage of being a department administrator is that your range of vision goes beyond your own scholarly interests. To do your job well, you must be able to understand the needs and interests of your colleagues and to see your department in the larger context of your institution and the profession at large. The major disadvantage of the job is that, however clear your vision, you have much less power to act than your faculty will ever believe. A recurrent problem for many chairs is identifying the limits of their responsibilities.

A dean once told me that you never have to do anything about problems you don't hear of firsthand or in writing. I thought him unwise, because I believed that a good administrator should create an environment that precludes certain kinds of problems, that allows issues

to surface and be addressed before they become problems. To a certain extent I have found that this approach works, but after seven years, I continue to be surprised by the time I have to spend putting out brushfires—problems that emerge because faculty members are careless or irresponsible about the practical details of their professional lives. I had expected my job to focus on problem solving, but I imagined that most problems would have something to do with educational policy and planning. In fact, I spend about eighty percent of my time dealing with personnel problems—hiring, contract renewal, tenure, promotion, and the conflicts that individuals have with one another or with the institution. During the rest of my workday I have planned and chance meetings with those I supervise (program directors and staff) and with those who supervise me (mostly the dean; occasionally someone from budget, space, or advising; and rarely the provost).

The business of running a large department is never over, and it is never routine, except in the sense that there are always ongoing problems. It is always difficult, often impossible, to find enough time to read, to spend time in the library, to prepare classes, and to participate in other ways in the central work of our profession. Balancing these demands is a primary challenge in an administrator's job, and it can be the primary source of frustration that leads to burnout.

The problems most likely to throw an administrator off-balance are those that occur because of the carelessness or irresponsibility of faculty colleagues. As in a domestic quarrel, it is the little things that mount up, though they are sometimes symptomatic of larger issues.

Item: Faculty member Q requested a seminar room for fifteen students and later signed special permission slips for four additional students. Now he is upset to find that he needs a larger room or five more chairs, since he also needs to sit at the table. All the other seminar rooms are taken. He wonders what is wrong with the system.

Item: Faculty member E proclaims, when hired, that he will serve on no departmental committees because he considers them trivial in the greater scheme of things. He is a committed political liberal, he says, and he will spend his time teaching, writing, and working on community politics. He is in fact so busy with politics during his tenure review that he ignores some of his responsibilities in preparing his tenure file. He later claims that the department was irresponsible in this regard and that he was unfairly treated. He can imagine no other reason that he was denied tenure, though his publications had been judged inadequate.

Item: Faculty member D has published two articles in twelve years, rarely works in departmental committees, and privately admits he has lost interest in teaching. He is usually the first to question the fairness of departmental procedures and decisions, including his failure to receive a merit increase for several years.

In addition to Q, E, and D, there are predictable nagging complaints:

Item: Why wasn't I informed of that meeting? Answer: The notice was in the departmental memo, on the bulletin board, and in all faculty mailboxes.

Item: Why can't I have a summer course? Answer: The deadline (posted as above) was three weeks ago, and all the spaces are taken.

Some faculty members laugh when they realize that the glitches were in their systems, not in the department's. Some are embarrassed, even apologetic. Some leave in a huff, still convinced that if I had done something differently, they would not have had any problems. Some complain only in the halls, and no administrator can do anything about that.

An administrator can be a bureaucrat, a cynic, or an idealist with organizing skills. I like to think I am still the last, but I recognize the weary cynicism in many of my administrative colleagues as a symptom of burnout, and sometimes I feel that symptom creeping up on me. In discussions at a recent ADE meeting, I found that many of us agree that significant changes in our discipline's education policies are imperative. We even agree about what some of those changes should be. I was not surprised to learn, however, that many experienced administrators, those with the wisdom and insight to initiate change, could hardly wait for their terms in office to be over.

I still disagree with the dean who advised me to wait for problems to happen, but I believe I understand why he came to have that opinion. His advice is either realistic or cynical, or perhaps a bit of both. It comes in part from the recognition that you will never have time to solve all the problems in your department or school and that to avoid burnout you have to stay out of the office at scheduled times in order to do your own work. You need to acknowledge that your administrative work will never be finished. The dean's advice assumes that the worst problems will get to your office sooner or later, and once they get there they have a prominence that is hard to overlook. Someone can always ask why you didn't answer that memo or return that phone call. These problems become prominent because someone was aggressive enough to bring them to your attention. There may be others just as bad that continue to exist because no one has decided to do anything about them, and even if you know about them and consider them significant, you may not have had time to get around to them. Your agenda is formed by the demands the faculty members are interested in making, and you may not have time for anything else. This position also assumes that no matter what you try to do for your faculty colleagues, they will never be happy with what you have done.

In the realistic mode, that advice acknowledges the nearsighted selfishness of individual faculty members but assumes an institutional responsibility for nurturing their creative development within reasonable bounds,

a responsibility that should include the initiation of policies and practices that make creative development possible. In the cynical mode, that advice is reductive in the worst sense of the word because it fosters administrative practice that merely responds and seldom, if ever, initiates anything. Cynicism, after all, implies not merely skepticism but contempt for the possibility of human endeavor. Yet the mode of the cynic is a false one. It is a pessimistic but comfortable pose because it allows the individual to do nothing but complain about what others are doing. For academic administrators it is the worst kind of burnout. That dean is not a cynic, or he would not still be trying to do his job. But if his mode is cynical, he is nearing burnout, and he is dangerous.

One of my favorite characters in academic administration, a former vice-chancellor of a medical school,

is fond of saying that educational planning is impossible because of unpredictable changes in the known and unknown variables with which we must deal. That knowledge did not stop his work as a creative administrator. Rather, it gave him an edge, a reminder that the best-laid plans may not turn out as we intend. I try to remember him when the flames of discontented faculty members begin to surround me, or I think of Truman's advice to those who couldn't stand the heat.

If we begin to acknowledge burnout in the academic world, we should be able to alleviate some of the pressures that cause it among faculty members and administrators. We cannot afford to ignore it or merely to live with it, especially now when the economy dictates that we make the most of our human resources.

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