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Our University – Killing Integrity, the Seven Deadly Sins

Walter V. Wendler

Southern Illinois University Carbondale, wendler@siu.edu

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Our University – Killing Integrity, the Seven Deadly Sins

Last in a series of eight on integrity

Killing integrity is a slow, predictable process. Here are seven deadly sins.

One - Lower standards to increase the perceived desirability of the university and grow enrollment. Treat students as commodities and get the dough. Nobody really understands higher education; people can be fooled, most of the time. A suit filed against the State University of New York claims the university lowered admission standards to generate enrollment and revenue, according to *Inside Higher Ed*, December 2, 2009.

Two - Encourage trustees and regents to engage in business relationships with people who bid for work on the campus. This is one of the benefits of serving the university as leaders. A property right if ever there was one. Interference in operational matters is old news according to a story in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on December 19, 2003, "*Grambling Regains Its Accreditation; Auburn Put on Probation for Trustee Meddling.*"

Three - Hire friends who do not have the qualifications, experience, skill, disposition, or passion to work at the university. Return political favors. In a New York Times story from April 4, 2006, "*Report Finds Patronage Rife at a University*" David Kocieniewski says that, "*Patronage hiring was so pervasive at New Jersey's State Medical school that job applications were marked with a numeral indicating the potency of the applicants' political connections, according to a report released on Monday by a federal monitor.*"

Four - Countenance double- and triple-dipping in hiring and re-hiring retired people. (I am not talking about a faculty member who comes back for a designated period of service.) Employ people already the beneficiary of over-promised, under-funded, bankrupt pension systems for government employees. "*Washington state's higher education system is hurt when well paid administrators game the system to receive their pensions while still working and collecting a salary*", suggests Ryan Blethen in a Seattle Times editorial on July 6, 2010.

Five - Barter pay raises for union faculty to avert the challenges of tenacious bargaining. Have union contracts that never mention quality or excellence. Progress in universities may be defined as making sure someone else doesn't get what you don't have. In a June 2008 piece entitled "*Faculty Unions Versus Academic Legitimacy - Unionization Sends Schools into Academic Mediocrity*" in *The Freeman*, Charles Beard, an economist makes a damning observation about the California Faculty Association, a faculty union, "... and academic standards at the College had been allowed to decay in favor of keeping nonproducing faculty

happy and quiet (that is, not filing complaints with the CFA) and boosting student enrollment."

Six – Have no plan for the future that holds out excellence and positive change as the measure of all things. If there is a plan, do not promulgate it as it may require accountability. In a report for the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents, Kathleen A. Paris offers this insight, *"Strategic planning can be risky in that deliberate decisions are made to focus or refocus the organization. This means that 'something has to go' or at the very least, 'something has to change'."*

Seven - Be bullet-proof. Make sure political ducks are in a row so that any storm can be weathered. Hunker down. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "hunker down": *"Squat, with the haunches, knees, and ankles acutely bent, so as to bring the hams near the heels, and throw the whole weight upon the fore part of the feet"*. And World Wide Word makes this observation, *"The advantage of this position is that you're not only crouched close to the ground, so presenting a small target for whatever the universe chooses to throw at you, but you're also ready to move at a moment's notice"*. If accused of impropriety, make sure to stack the deck to get the desired response.

These seven sins kill integrity.

The frail nature of university work, the development of human potential, ideas and creativity is so delicate, that nothing matters more than a sense of integrity in the execution of our duties at our university.