

Five Steps to Oblivion

It has come to my attention that some college and university geographers remain untutored in the techniques that ensure a program's demise. These parlous times in academia would seem to guarantee that any program harboring the slightest death wish would soon be accorded martyrdom, yet some college and university administrators remain stubbornly convinced of the intellectual value of geography despite the lackluster performance of their geography programs.

I therefore offer a sure-fire prescription for overcoming administrative resistance to closing a geography program. It will work even in the most refractory cases.

1) Elect and re-elect a weak chair who cannot lead the faculty to consensus on an appropriate program mission, and who cannot articulate the program's contributions to campus colleagues and to administrators who allocate resources. (This is a critical step; success here virtually assures that several subsequent steps will follow automatically.)

2) Lose several of your most productive colleagues, upon whom much of your program's intra- and extra-mural reputation depends. Do not replace them with individuals of comparable accomplishment and prestige. University administrators will never compare the program's past glory with its present status when they decide how to allocate scarce resources.

3) Eschew undergraduate education and majors; they are clearly beneath your program's dignity. The preoccupation of university officers with statistics on undergraduate instruction is typical administrative bean counting. If those pesky undergraduates persist in trying to enroll in your program, assign your largest courses to your worst instructors or to marginal graduate students who need to learn how to teach. Make sure advising is slipshod and callous.

4) Forego participation in campus governance, which is well known to be a complete waste of time. A quality program consisting of thoughtful scholars will never need friends in key campus positions. Curriculum committees are especially noxious; avoid them like the plague.

5) Glory in bitter ideological and personal vendettas. Never--*ever*--fail to denounce your opponent(s) to your dean and provost. They have infinite patience with internal bickering and they will never conclude that *both* sides of the dispute have correctly assessed their adversaries.

Any three of these steps will normally place a program on the endangered list. Four should suffice even where administrators really value geography. All five will normally overcome any reservations held by even the most ardently committed dean or provost. Yet there are, unfortunately, instances in which extreme measures are necessary.

6) When all else fails, war against your dean. There is no chance that he or she will prevail against a mighty program like yours.

--R. Abler