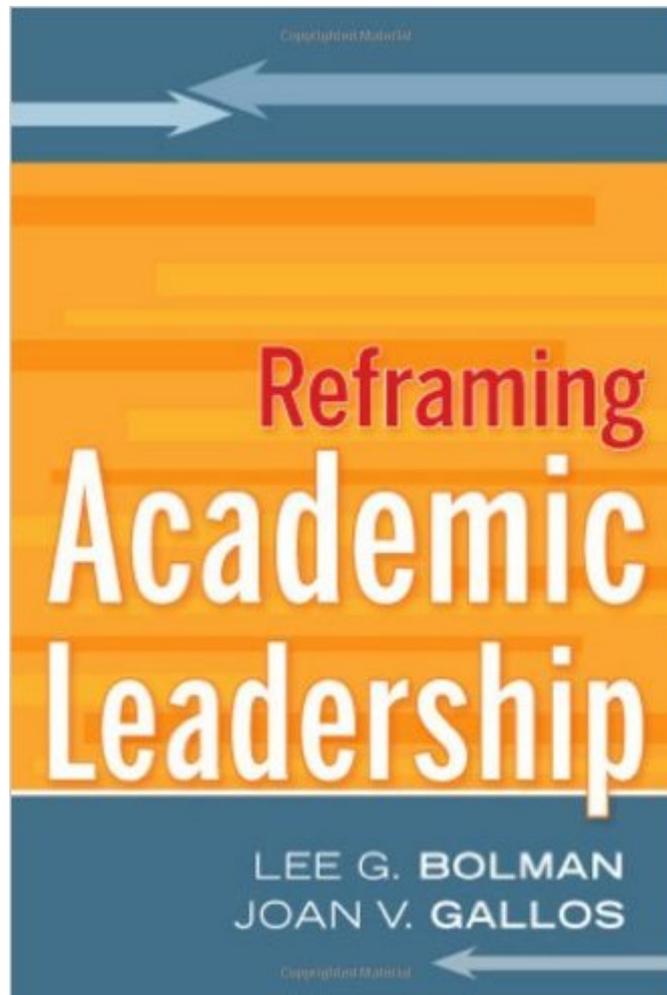


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# Reframing Academic Leadership



## Synopsis

Reframing Academic Leadership is a no-nonsense guide for academic administrators at all levels in colleges and universities and for those who seek to understand the unique challenges and opportunities in leading institutions of higher education today. Bolman and Gallos speak to those who care deeply about higher education, appreciate its strengths and its imperfections, and are committed to making it better. Colleges and university administrators who strive to be leaders with impact and significant forces for good will find in this book a readable, intellectually provocative, and pragmatic approach to their work and its possibilities.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book takes the same four-frame schema as Bolman and Deal's well known Reframing Organizations, but specifically in the context of higher education. The first few chapters do seem like a rehash of the other: structural, political, and so on ... but then the examples became infused with something that is very unique to academia. That is the rift that often develops between faculty and administration. "Faculty can see staff as unduly constrained and bureaucratic," they explain. "Staff often wonder why they have to track their hours and vacation days when faculty seem to come and go as they please." Working within a discipline or - more often - sub-discipline is not very amenable to hierarchical control. The focus for faculty is within their specific areas - a "silo" mentality. It's not easy for faculty members to see or appreciate the complex institutional machinery required to assemble groups of inquisitive youth in rooms, on schedule, like clockwork, year after

year, in a fluid and unstable environment. Meanwhile, academic administrators (unlike those running a factory or grocery store), cannot understand what actually happens at the other end of the hierarchy. They simply do not have the expertise. There's a built-in volatility which is difficult to control. The popular Bolman/Deal book, now in its fourth edition and widely used as a text in management and leadership classes, only went so far as to compare universities to hospitals. That's an interesting thought - doctors there are the counterpart to faculty members here. But they go much farther in this book. Faculty members' reference group, for example, may not include the administration or staff, colleagues in other departments, or even colleagues in their own area.

Reframing Academic Leadership is chock full of good ideas about leading in an academic environment. The authors base the idea of reframing on the notion that the academic environment presents very particular leadership challenges. Power is dispersed through the institution, and it is difficult for any single person to control anything. Faculty play a role in governance, and administrators find themselves caught in the middle of the often conflicting interests of faculty, students, and other administrators. Leaders are under pressure to initiate change and adopt an entrepreneurial mindset. In this environment, leaders may fail in one (or both) of the following ways: they fail to notice cues in their environment that should act as guideposts, and try move things in the wrong direction; and they fail to carry their people with them. Reframing is a habit of strong academic leaders. It means looking at a situation from multiple perspectives, understanding it in new ways, and developing new strategies for moving ahead. This is a challenge, say Bolman and Gallos, because while administrators new to an institution "step midstream into institutions that have evolved distinctive histories, cultures, and traditions," (p. 18) they tend to frame situations to fit familiar patterns. Under pressure to initiate change, "they are off and running before they're even sure what's most important and where they should really be heading" (p. 19). They may exhibit skilled incompetence, which is akin to expertly hitting everything with a hammer - not the solution to most problems.

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