

The Role of University Vice-Chancellor (President): Success Factors

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- Self-confidence (which will be perceived by some as arrogance).
- Assert the authority and power of the office (may also be perceived as arrogance).
- Maintain absolute integrity.
- Don't act against your better judgement.
- Know how universities work (previous experience as PVC, dean, VP, etc.).
- Develop charisma based on superior knowledge of higher education scene.
- Have the ability to scan the environment to detect trends, threats and opportunities.
- Strong identification with the particular mission of the university but ready to implement it differently.
- Implement a strategic planning process that blends 'bottom up' and 'top down'.
- Ensure there is a mission-related technology strategy.
- Cultivate a teaching or research area that your university can be uniquely good at.
- Show genuine admiration for the academic staff and interest in their individual work.
- Communicate good news (e.g. promotions to chair) to individuals yourself and in person.
- Don't always have people come to you – it's a different psychology if you go to their offices.
- Never badmouth the university or its staff when off campus.
- Maintain distance – no close buddies on campus.
- Maintain strong relationship with council chair – and council members generally.
- Make your own good luck – and be ready to exploit it.
- Maintain good relations with politicians in both government and opposition parties.
- Maintain good contacts with government bureaucrats and don't worry too much about hierarchy.
- In a public institution: see that the university helps government to implement its various policies.
- When threatened – call the bluff.
- Take the centre seat and, where possible, stand when you speak.
- Eat in the cafeteria from time to time but sit at random (not with the same group each time).
- Visit the student residences on the first day of term and then stay away from them.
- Be available to students but demand mature behaviour from them.
- Cross the picket lines, with a cheery word to striking colleagues, during labour disputes.
- Be friendly to the campus staff (gardeners, cooks, maintenance, etc.) they are great allies.
- Insist on keeping the campus tidy and well maintained.
- Get graffiti removed immediately.
- Be a good colleague to other VCs but devote energy to your own university (not national VC bodies).
- Take all opportunities to speak about the university on and off campus and always push the mission.
- Don't be too impressed by Harvard, Oxford, etc.
- Have fun! If you don't enjoy being VC you are in the wrong job.

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