The Evolution of Decisionmaking Among Prison Executives, 1975–2000

by Kevin N. Wright

ABSTRACT

During the last quarter of the 20th century, the business of running prisons changed dramatically. Prison populations soared, resulting in considerable growth in the number of facilities, staff, and budgets. State and Federal prison systems went from relatively small State agencies to huge public bureaucracies. Attention from both within government and from outside increased. With growth and new attention, prisons evolved from independent, parochially administered local organizations to bureaucratically controlled systems with centralized policymaking and oversight. Modification in correctional philosophy and professionalization of prison administration accompanied and added to the reorganization process.

In this essay, I examine the changes that have occurred since 1975 and consider the implications of these changes for the administration of prisons and prison systems. I discuss how prisoners and staff have changed over the past two and a half decades. I explore the new activities and topics that must be addressed by correctional officials, and how technology and the use of information have altered prison administration. I also describe how changes in the private economy and management practices have influenced prison administration.

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With this backdrop, I discuss eight topics—external relations, standards and accountability, the prison workforce, inmates, technology, strategic management, privatization, and justice—to characterize the central issues faced by prison administrators today. I conclude the essay by describing the characteristics prison executives will need as they move into the next century.

ABSTRACT

Most of today's senior-level prison officials were just beginning their careers in 1975. The prison business was markedly different then. About 250,000 individuals were incarcerated in the Nation's institutions (Maguire and Pastore 1995, 540); that number has grown to well over 1 million prisoners today (Beck and Mumola 1999). The annual per-citizen cost of State prison operation averaged just less than $40 (Stephen 1999). Two-thirds of the American public favored rehabilitation over retribution as the preferred goal of incarceration (Flanagan 1996, 80–81). The Vietnam war was coming to a close and much of the workforce employed in prisons, and particularly in correctional services, were veterans. Not a single warden in the Nation owned a personal computer or a cellular telephone. The doors and gates were opened by keys. Few citizens in a State knew the name of the commissioner of corrections and the Governor's office seldom called him (they were all "him" back then). What was going on in prisons was almost never a topic on the floor of the legislature. CNN had not been created, and Bill Gates was just getting started. There was only one super-max, the Federal penitentiary at Marion, Illinois.

A lot has changed since then. The Nation has seen tremendous growth in the number of individuals incarcerated in its institutions, expanding four to five times in most States during the past quarter century (Beck and Mumola 1999). Corresponding increases in staff and institutions have followed, along with steady and steep escalation in expenditures for prison construction and operations. Prison operation costs per resident are now double what they were in 1975, now at $80 per citizen (Stephen 1999). Incarceration is a multibillion-dollar business nationally,[1] and that gets a lot of attention, from entrepreneurs seeing prisons as viable markets, to the legislative and executive budget analysts who scrutinize expenditures, to the media who find prisons dramatic objects for sensationalism.

The majority of the Nation's population now favors punishment over rehabilitation (Maguire and Pastore 1996, 177). This shift has not gone unnoticed by politicians, who frequently talk about the changes in prison policy they will make to address the public's concern about violence and desire for retribution (Blumstein 1995). One individual with whom I spoke in preparing this paper suggested that what goes on in prisons will not get a Governor elected, but it certainly could get him or her "unelected"—quickly. This politicization of prisons has lead to frequent communications with, and close scrutiny by, both the executive and legislative branches of government. Given the fanfare of their nominations and the frequency with which their names appear in the newspapers, many citizens now know the name of their commissioner of corrections.

Interestingly, even with all the growth and attention, relatively little has been written about the administration of prisons. Given this, my objective in writing

this paper is to explore the changes that have occurred since 1975 and to consider the implications of these changes for running prisons well. I examine what new activities and topics must be addressed by correctional officials today, and how prisoners and staff have changed over the past two and a half decades. I explore how technology and the use of information have altered prison administration and to what extent changes in free-world management practices have spilled over into prison administration. I examine the issues faced by senior-level prison officials—individuals responsible for running prison systems (i.e., commissioners, directors, and secretaries of corrections) and institutions (i.e., wardens and superintendents). I focus solely on the administration of public prisons, although I describe how privatization has influenced the administration of these publicly run facilities.

To set the stage, I describe prisons in 1975 and explore the major events that have influenced prison structure and operations since then. From this basis, I discuss the politicization of prison administration, interorganizational relations, changes in both prisoners and staff, the use of information, and the influence of technology. My ultimate goal is to provide the necessary groundwork to consider what is needed to run prisons well as we enter the 21st century, what issues administrators must be prepared to address, and what characteristics senior-level executives need.

To help explore these topics, I have turned to the leading experts themselves, men and women running the Nation's prison systems and major institutions. I conducted a series of interviews with senior-level prison officials throughout the Nation, individuals who have experience and whose insights are particularly informative. I drew on personal connections with prison officials to identify subjects, then asked for their suggestions for additional informants. My informants consist of: (1) two senior officials from the National Institute of Corrections; (2) two system heads, one Federal and one State; and (3) six wardens, two Federal and four State. Two of the wardens are administrators of super-maximum-security facilities. A list of the individuals interviewed and their titles and organizations is provided in exhibit 1.[2]

Interviews were conducted by telephone and usually lasted at least an hour. In most cases, I faxed the individual to be interviewed a set of questions ahead of time so he or she could begin thinking about a response. The interview proceeded through the list of questions in exhibit 2.

It is important to note that while the interviews with these officials provided guidance in exploring change in prison administration, the conclusions presented in this chapter are also based on an assessment of the literature as well as my own personal experience working as a researcher studying prisons for the past 25 years.

Exhibit 1. List of individuals interviewed

Gene Atherton
Superintendent, Colorado State Penitentiary
Canon City, Colorado

Joseph Bogan
Warden, Federal Medical Center–Carswell
Fort Worth, Texas

Robert Brown
National Academy of Corrections
National Institute of Corrections
Longmont, Colorado

James Bruton
Warden, Minnesota Correctional Facility–Oak Park Heights
Stillwater, Minnesota

Thomas Corcoran
Warden, Maryland Correctional Adjustment Center
Baltimore, Maryland

Keith Hall
Warden, Federal Correctional Institution
Marianna, Florida

Kathy Hawk
Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons
Washington, D.C.

Henry Risley
Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Corrections
Concord, New Hampshire

Morris Thigpen
Director, National Institute of Corrections
Washington, D.C.

Pam Withrow
Warden, Michigan Reformatory
Ionia, Michigan

The Prison Business in 1975

In 1975, prisons were at a crossroads, poised for dramatic change. My selection of the year 1975 is somewhat arbitrary, as the pressures for change were occurring at different rates across systems and individual institutions, but during the mid-1970s, institutions across the Nation began to undergo significant alterations in their mission, structure, and operations that would have a profound influence on their administration and administrators. Several important features led to this inevitable consequence: rapid growth in prison populations, modification in correctional philosophy, professionalization of prison administration, and centralization of policymaking and oversight.

Throughout the first 75 years of the 20th century, there was a growing commitment to the idea of rehabilitation as the predominant goal of incarceration.

Exhibit 2. Questions for prison administrators

1. Tell me how prison administration changed. How is it different today than when you began?
2. The number of prisons and prisoners has increased dramatically in recent years. How has that affected administration?
3. Has the growth affected external scrutiny? Do you spend more time today in external relations? Dealing with legislators and their staff, budget analysis, the central office, the media?
4. How has technology influenced prison administration?
5. Are employees different today? If so, do you manage them differently?
6. How about the inmate population? Has it changed?
7. How about the use of information? Is that different?
8. What about management practices such as strategic planning, TQM, etc.?
9. Other issues?

Most States and the Federal Government had some form of indeterminate sentencing in which offenders were sentenced to a period of incarceration that allowed for considerable judicial and executive discretion as to the actual length of time served. Judges set a range of time to be served, then correctional professionals determined how long an individual would actually remain in prison, based on judgments of the individual's reform and readiness for release back into the community (Clear and Cole 1997, 68–70).

In most States, the first stop for offenders entering the system was at a diagnostic center, where it was determined what types of programming would best assist the individual in making necessary life changes that would keep him or her crime free. Numerous programs and activities were available to assist prisoners in their individual reform. These included everything from educational programs to training in employable skills, to drug and alcohol rehabilitation, to counseling for particular psychopathologies. In its idealized form, rehabilitation was intended to change offenders so they would be returned to their communities as productive and law-abiding citizens. This, in turn, would reduce the incidence of criminal behavior (Clear and Cole 1997).

While incarcerated, individuals earned "good time," up to 2 days for every day served, based on their behavior while in prison. Paroling authorities reviewed the progress of individuals and made decisions about when offenders were ready for return to the community based on their demonstrated reform.

The heyday of the implementation of this philosophy occurred in prisons across the Nation during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This was a tumultuous period

in prison history. There was an infusion of professionally trained staff to support the rehabilitation process, but these new prison employees came into conflict with staff whose primary responsibility was the security of the institution. Custodial staff were generally less educated. They saw the principal mission of prisons to be punishment. Rehabilitation efforts were often seen as compromising custody and safety and, at times, as coddling criminals (McCleery 1961). Fully integrating the rehabilitation philosophy was probably never realized in any institution, and there was a constant tension between reform and custody that prison managers had to mediate.

All this began to change in 1975 as criticism of rehabilitation began to mount in numerous camps. One group of critics took exception to the "medical model" that was part of the rehabilitation philosophy. The medical model held that crime was a pathological problem that, if correctly diagnosed and treated, could result in a "cure" just as with any other disease. Offender groups took exception to the very premise that offenders were in some way "sick" and in need of treatment. They argued that they had committed crimes as a rational choice given their social and economic circumstances and advocated that they simply be punished for their deeds without having to play the "rehabilitation game" to convince the parole board they were cured (American Friends Service Committee 1971).

Equally critical was a group of legal scholars, led by Norval Morris, then dean of the University of Chicago Law School, who argued that rehabilitation was coercive and cruel and that it encouraged deceit. Offenders did not know when they would be released and were left confused and anxious. Significant disparities were found in the length of time served for similar offenses among offenders (Morris 1974).

Morris argued that for reform to occur, the individual had to be personally motivated and committed to change. Under the right conditions, prison programs could be useful in helping individuals to gain skills and make personal changes. However, program participation should not be mandatory, nor should release from prison be conditional on program participation and the subjective evaluation of correctional officials about individual reform. Norman Carlson, then Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, agreed with Morris' conclusion and set forth a philosophy that was adopted throughout most prison systems: "[W]e in corrections could not coerce or force change. We could facilitate change, however, and we had that obligation as part of our responsibilities" (Roberts 1997, 196–197).

Just as inmate rights groups and legal scholars were calling for the abandonment of mandatory program participation, Robert Martinson (1974) published

his findings that treatment programs failed to reduce recidivism (see also Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks 1975). Although he later backed off on this blanket condemnation of rehabilitation (1976), Martinson provided the justification for others to advocate a shift in prison philosophy.

Writing in a changing political environment, as the public was becoming disillusioned with the promises of rehabilitation to reduce crime, law-and-order advocates called for tougher laws and more stringent sanctions on criminals. Leading the way, writers such as James Q. Wilson (1975) and Ernest van den Haag (1975) called for mandatory incarceration for fixed periods of time for all convictions for nontrivial offenses and increased deprivation of liberty with subsequent offenses.

A third group began to write about sentencing practices just as those advocating both the abandonment of mandatory rehabilitation and tougher laws were making their pleas for change. These writers proposed the replacement of indeterminate sentencing with more structured sentencing. These advocates viewed indeterminate sentencing to be unfair to the convicted individuals because the punishment fit the individual rather than the crime and unfair to citizens because of the lack of truth in sentencing, as offenders seldom served the sentence given. They called for truth in sentencing and just deserts through determinate sentences (von Hirsch 1976).

The influence of these three perspectives was considerable, resulting in reform of sentencing in Federal and State systems over the next two and half decades. States and the Federal Government implemented structured sentencing, passed new mandatory incarceration laws, and lengthened sentences for certain offenses. These changes, along with a crackdown on drug offenders associated with the war on drugs initiated in the 1980s, resulted in tremendous growth in the prison population (Beck 1993, 32).

Between 1910 and 1970, there was steady but slow growth in the prison population. In 1970, an explosion in the prison population began that continues today. Nationally, the incarcerated population in State and Federal facilities grew by more than four times since 1970 (American Correctional Association 1995).

These changes impacted prison administration in several significant ways. First, the perceived or stated purpose of incarceration shifted from reform to punishment. Prisons refocused their mission to holding individuals as punishment rather than for individual change. Providing opportunities for reform remained an important component of prison operations, but no longer were offenders required to participate as a condition of release (Roberts 1997, 196–197). Second, as good time and parole were eliminated or restricted and sentences

became more structured—a change that most correctional officials welcomed as it eliminated confusion and deceit—how inmates were controlled had to be altered. The coercive threat of the loss of freedom could no longer be used to manage inmate behavior; this necessitated new strategies for maintaining order within facilities (Wright 1994).

The absolute growth in numbers of inmates, institutions, and staff led to other changes in prison administration. The prison bureaucracy necessarily increased. Many systems expanded from relatively small organizations in which the director, commissioner, or secretary of corrections was intimately knowledgeable and involved in the day-to-day operations of every institution to a situation in which he or she could not possibly have such personal access and oversight. This required new organizational forms to ensure that institutions were compliant with overall policy and standards of operation (see DiIulio 1991).

Growth also impacted personnel issues. The rapid expansion of new institutions created a need for many new personnel and expanded opportunities for advancement. In the past, prison systems could bring new employees into the organization and train and socialize them into the dominant culture of the system over a period of time. There were few enough new personnel to ensure proper selection and supervision of new employees. Now the entire process was accelerated. Time to first promotion was shortened. Organizations had to devise new, more formal ways of training and socializing employees and managers.[3]

This point provides an appropriate segue into another important trend that occurred in the mid-1970s that had a major influence on prison administration. Prisons had traditionally been operated as highly independent, parochially administered, and authoritarian-controlled institutions. Each institution tended to be operated as the private fiefdom of the local warden, who exercised considerable autonomy in the administration of the facility (Jacobs 1977).

Prisons tended to be built in isolated rural areas that, by their physical location alone, limited the possibility of oversight by public officials, the media, and the general public. The fortress-like design of most facilities further restricted public view of their administration. Public officials, as well as judges, generally held that the operation of such facilities was sufficiently unique that their administration should be left to individuals trained to do so. Because prison operations consumed relatively small amounts of public funds, they drew little fiscal oversight. Finally, as prisons held the worst of society's miscreants, there was little interest in or sympathy for what went on behind prison walls.

Operating within these parameters, the history of early prison administration was checkered at best. Early prisons were structured as paramilitary organizations

managed by highly autocratic administrative regimes. Examples of successful prison officials who provided incarceration that was both safe and humane can be found, but the history of prisons holds innumerable examples of abuses of power, brutality, and inhumane conditions of confinement (Bowker 1980, 103).

By 1975, we began to see major shifts in how prisons were being administered. Two factors contributed to this change: the professionalization of prison administration and the centralization of prison policy and oversight.

James Jacobs (1977) documented the emergence of a professional administration at the Statesville penitentiary in Illinois between 1970 and 1975. He notes that a highly educated elite took over the top administrative positions during this period. This group did not share the homogeneity of the guard force, nor did it foster an independent moral view of the operations of the institution characteristic of previous administrations, but it took on an ethos of public service.

One reason for the emergence of professional administration was the influence of the growing number of highly educated civilians who had come to work in treatment roles as the result of the focus on rehabilitation. These teachers and counselors were critical of authoritarian practices and their abuses. Their demands led to increased attention to how decisions were made and rules enforced.

Outside forces were also impacting correctional administration. Nationally, the mid-1970s saw growing interest in the professionalization of public administration. Throughout government, attention to improved professional practice through educated public servants was advocated. Prisons, as public organizations, simply joined this trend.

The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), created by an act of Congress in 1968 to enable the Federal Government to assist State and local governments in fighting crime, helped to support the professionalization of prison administration. The funding for LEAA continued until 1981 and reached its peak in 1975 (Cronin, Cronin, and Milakovich 1981). Particularly noteworthy and of significance to this discussion was LEAA's support of the education of criminal justice professionals through the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP). Stipends were available for both inservice and preservice personnel pursuing higher education degrees (Bartollas, Miller, and Wice 1983, 358). Veterans combined LEEP funding with their GI-bill support to obtain substantial financial assistance in pursuing college degrees. This led to a dramatic increase in college-educated prison personnel.

Along with increasing numbers of college-educated personnel, the mid-1970s saw the initiation of efforts to further professionalize prison administration through executive training. Tom Gilmore began bringing top-level prison staff from across the Nation to the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania for a program he called Strategic Management in Corrections. At about the same time, Bob Brown started the Management Development for Correctional Administrators Program on the West coast. Many individuals who occupied senior-level administrative positions in prisons participated in one or both of these programs. Almost every individual I interviewed participated in these programs. It was also at about this time that the National Institute of Corrections established its National Training Academy in Colorado to provide professional training for prison staff.[4]

As prison administration became more professional, a shift to centralized authority and oversight of prison operations and administration occurred in most State systems. Jacobs notes that this was accomplished in Illinois through the creation of the Illinois Department of Corrections. According to Jacobs, the department had "ultimate authority in the burgeoning and professionally oriented central administration" of prisons across the State. He described its influence as follows:

> The central office [had] virtually eliminated local autonomy by usurping the prerogative of formulating policy, by promulgating comprehensive rules and regulations, and by demanding ever increasing reports on more and more details of day-to-day activities at the local prisons. (1977, 73)

What occurred as a result of these changes was a modification of organizational form and structure. Prisons shifted from independent, parochially administered local organizations to bureaucratically controlled systems with centralized policymaking and oversight. Authority and control were transferred from local administrators to State officials. This shift increased uniformity across institutions and provided for systemwide monitoring and review of prison operations (Jacobs 1977).

This change was not simply a serendipitous event but coincided with the expansion of prisons. Oversight that had been vested in personal and informal relationships changed to more formal, uniform, bureaucratic, and professional oversight.

Another important factor in this change was the increased involvement in external oversight through the intervention of Federal courts. Courts that had been reluctant to interfere in the operations of prisons began to become involved in the investigation of allegations of abuses of power and inhumane practices in

the late 1960s and early 1970s. The courts agreed to hear inmate allegations and to require corrective action. Prisons and prison systems were found to be in the wrong, and Federal judges began to take over direct oversight of required modifications in prison practices. This action applied pressure on States to ensure compliance with humane practices to avoid Federal intervention (DiIulio 1991).

Where did this leave prison administration in 1975? "In transition" is the best answer. The focus on rehabilitation was being stripped away, leaving prisons with a clearer mission of housing inmates as punishment. Opportunities for reform remained an important function, but participation was no longer required as a condition of release. This meant that prisons had to devise new methods for managing and controlling the inmate population other than through the coercive threat of withholding release.

The Federal system began experimenting with unit management during the 1960s as a better way of delivering treatment but retained and retooled the practice as an effective method of inmate control after abandoning the medical model in the mid-1970s. Under unit management, the inmate population was divided into smaller, more manageable groups, and multidisciplinary teams were permanently assigned to these units. Units were small, self-contained living sections for approximately 50 to 120 inmates. The unit staff consisted of professionally trained personnel, including a unit manager, a case manager, correctional counselors, and a full- or part-time psychologist, who had administrative authority for all aspects of the inmates' day-to-day living and programming (Lansing, Bogan, and Karacki 1977).

Unit management increased institutional and inmate control by vesting authority and decisionmaking powers with those staff most closely associated with inmates. Increased and repeated interactions built continuity into staff/inmate relations and provided for better communication and understanding. Information collected about inmates from interactions and observations became cumulative and thereby provided a much richer source of knowledge about inmate behavior. Staff understood inmates better, knew what to expect, and could anticipate problems before they reached critical proportions. Dealing with the same staff allowed inmates to learn what to expect from staff, what staff expected of them, and where the limits were (Wright 1994, 53–54).

Implementation of unit management across all its facilities provided the Federal system with a new organizational arrangement to effectively supervise inmates. Many States followed the Federal example and installed unit management in their facilities.

It is important to note that unit management brought about significant modifications in how prisons were managed. A new functional area was created that would share power and authority with custody for decisionmaking about inmates. This new functional area was staffed with professionals who were trained in casework and interpersonal problem solving. Power and authority were shifted away from the traditional prison hierarchy and located lower in the organization. Under this new arrangement, administrators were forced to respect the ability of professionally trained staff to make sound judgments, and grant them the authority to do so.

With unit management and other changes taking place in correctional practice in the mid-1970s, the best-run prisons shifted to a new proactive approach to problem solving and management of inmates. The practice of management by "walking and talking" was institutionalized (DiIulio 1991, 41–43). Prison officials and staff in general were expected to be present within the facility, collecting information about what was going on and solving problems and taking corrective action before issues escalated to major problems (Peters 1992).

The move away from the medical model also allowed prisons and their administrators to reconsider what "good" correctional practice involved. Norman Carlson, with his fondness for three-word phrases, summarizes what he viewed as sound correctional practice:

- A good prison stresses care, custody, and control.
- Good prisons are safe, clean, and humane.
- Effective prison staff are characterized by pride, professionalism, and proficiency.

During his 18-year tenure as Director of the Federal system, Carlson stressed strict administrative controls and tight discipline while simultaneously promoting the provision of basic amenities (including good food and sanitary living conditions) and life-enhancing programs. Because Carlson believed "imprisonment itself is punishment," he intended prisons to be safe, civilized, and humane (Wright 1994, 5–6).

In 1975, prison systems throughout the Nation mirrored Carlson's Bureau of Prisons, in various stages of transitioning into more professionally managed organizations, but still retaining tight administrative controls. Supervision of facilities from the system level remained very hands-on and relied on personal knowledge. Directors, commissioners, and secretaries of corrections knew their senior-level facility administrators personally and were directly involved

in promotion decisions. Operations were being standardized through central policy. Audits of facility operations were becoming increasingly common.

Most institutions still were structured as paramilitary organizations. Many of the staff came with military backgrounds and thus were familiar with a structured chain of command. Most staff were white, and the vast majority were male. The best wardens attended to the details of running their facilities well. Their most important skill was the ability to talk to inmates and make sound judgments about their management. They needed strong people skills.

I would be remiss in describing prison administration in 1975 if I did not recognize the importance of one event—the 1971 riot at Attica State Prison in New York. Riots had occurred throughout the history of prisons, but Attica was different because the media made it a national news event. Forty-three people were killed during the riot and the assault to retake the facility. Clearly, mistakes were made in bringing the riot under control. Attica garnered national attention on the conditions of prisons in America. Racial strife festering throughout the Nation was brought into sharp relief as a significant problem in the administration of prisons. Inmates at Attica had become politicized and viewed the conditions of their confinement as unjust. The administration of the facility was not strong and was fragmented. The ensuing riot provided justification and the political environment to support change in prisons and external intervention in prison operations (Useem and Kimball 1989).

Significant Changes in Prison Administration

As previously described, prisons once operated in relative isolation with limited external scrutiny and influence. But the transitions that occurred in the mid-1970s opened prison administration to external influences. During the last quarter of the 20th century, several events transpired that had a significant impact on prison administration.

The "get tough" policy that began in the mid-1970s continued throughout the rest of the century. This trend not only contributed to a burgeoning prison population but also changed the composition of that population. Sentences were substantially longer than ever before so a large segment of the population became long-term residents (DiIulio 1990, 2). Not only did this group of long-term inmates require different management practices and programs, but these inmates are also becoming aged, frail, and infirm, requiring another level of care (see McCarthy and Langworthy 1988; Flanagan 1995).

Evolution into a post-industrial economy in the United States has had a direct impact on prison operations in five ways. First, it has influenced the type of person coming to prison. There was a time when a young person growing up in Pittsburgh could get a job in the steel mills, while someone living in Detroit could find work in the automobile industry, in Texas in the petrochemical industry, and in upstate New York in the high-tech defense plants. As the cold war wound down and industrial jobs disappeared as corporations sought cheaper labor offshore, the American economy became increasingly segmented into two areas—jobs in the information sector and service jobs. Individuals who find employment in the information sector receive a living wage, while individuals relegated to the service sector fare far less well. Individuals who lack economic opportunity all too often fall victim to the loss of hope and despair. Among these youths, the Nation has experienced high rates of substance abuse, the selling of drugs, violence, and gang membership. The result for prisons has been an increasing number of younger, street-raised youths who lack conventional middle-class norms and values (Simon 1993).

Second, the shift to a postindustrial economy and the globalization of the economy resulted in a less stable economic environment. Consider what happened to IBM. There was a time when IBM *was* computing. The corporation defined the very nature of computer technology; it dictated innovation within the field and controlled the market, its investors were guaranteed an annual dividend and its employees lifelong employment. With the advent of powerful microcomputers, information technology dispersed rapidly. Innovation shifted from staid traditional bureaucracies to smaller, flexible, and creative organizations. No longer did one company manufacture the product, but many were involved in the process—one produced the motherboard, another the monitor, still another the disk drive, and yet another assembled and marketed the product.

In highly competitive, turbulent economic environments, businesses had to become adaptable, responsive, and creative. Successful businesses anticipated what was going to happen and developed products to meet rising demands. The most successful organizations decentralized; decisionmaking was pushed down to the employee closest to the products and the markets. This change required a new form of management, one that gave employees much greater say in decisionmaking. As workers in other sectors came to expect autonomy and job control, so too have correctional workers. It is not accidental that the installation of unit management as an organizational practice in corrections coincided with organizational changes in the business world (Peters 1987).

Third, before the current economic turbulence in the American economy, employees and their companies shared loyalty toward one another. Companies offered lifelong employment to their workers in exchange for lifelong loyalty to

the company. To survive and adapt to global competition, mergers, acquisitions, buyouts, restructuring, downsizing, and reorganization occurred throughout American industries. Many workers found themselves without jobs or, at the very least, uncertain about the future of their employment. Workers adapted correspondingly. If companies were no longer offering loyalty to the employee, then the worker was no longer obligated to the company.

The new prison worker is cut from this cloth. Although perhaps more adaptive and creative than employees of the past, new workers lack the loyalty to the organization and the job that once was found among prison employees (Wright 1997).

Fourth, along with reorganization, many American businesses have slashed employee benefits in an attempt to remain competitive. Besides lifelong employment, workers received decent wages, attractive benefits including medical care and ample vacation days, and good retirements. Many companies have now limited or reduced these entitlements.

As the entitlements of American workers have been curtailed, citizens have begun to question the provision of public entitlements. The financial safety net for children and families has been pulled back with the reduction of social services and welfare benefits. Likewise, the public has begun to question the entitlements provided to prisoners. When families are struggling to educate their children, why should inmates receive a free education? When families cannot afford recreation, why should "undeserving" inmates be provided televisions, tennis courts, and swimming pools? This sentiment is fueled by the continued support of a get-tough crime control policy (Wright 1997).

Fifth, it appears that much of the Nation has weathered this transitional period in the economy. Economic productivity is increasing throughout the Nation, with the result of close to full employment in many geographic areas. This trend has implications for employment of high-quality staff. Prison work has never been held in particularly high esteem; given a choice, workers will seek employment elsewhere.

Just as alterations in business practices have influenced prison operations, three other trends during the last quarter of the century that are not directly the result of a changing economy have importance to correctional administration and deserve to be noted. First among these is the disinstitutionalization of the mentally ill. Beginning in the 1970s, facilities housing mentally ill individuals have been closed. The idea was that these individuals could be cared for in the community in far more humane and cost-effective ways. Unfortunately, adequate care in the community was frequently either not forthcoming or unsuccessful.

The outcome has been that increasing numbers of mentally ill offenders are ending up in prisons, thus posing a new administrative challenge for corrections (Clear and Cole 1997, 125).

Second, the AIDS epidemic and the increasing incidence of tuberculosis, hepatitis, and other infectious diseases have specifically affected the population of people who come to prison. Intravenous drug users and individuals who live on the streets with inadequate nutrition and medical care are at increased risk of contracting these diseases (Hammett et al. 1995). This, too, creates a new administrative problem for prison officials.

Finally, the end of the cold war resulted in downsizing of the military. This, along with the fact that the United States has not engaged in a major military conflict during the past 25 years, has led to a decreasing number of potential employees with military backgrounds. As a result, prisons have found it increasingly more difficult to recruit employees who, because of their military experience, could easily be transitioned into the traditional paramilitary organizational structures of prisons. New prison workers are more likely to resist obeying orders unquestioningly and to respond to crisis situations in a tactical manner (Josi and Sechrest 1998; see also Kauffman 1988).

The Job of Running Prisons

So, what exactly do prison administrators do? What is the substance of their daily activities and the decisions they must make? Although the roles of system heads and wardens vary considerably, operational issues have always dominated, and continue to dominate, the work of prison executives. Attending to those issues outlined by Norman Carlson (and listed previously) occupies most of these individuals' time, whether they head an entire system or run a single institution. They must assure that the custody is maintained, that control of the prisoners is sound, and that individuals under their supervision are given care. Safety, sanitation, and humane treatment are issues that must be consistently addressed. As with any organization, personnel issues are the bane and essential element of successful leadership. Ensuring that staff act as professionals and with proficiency is crucial. Across the 51 prison systems and more than 1,000 institutions in the Nation, there is considerable variation in the ability and success to run prisons well.

For system heads, active involvement in the political processes of government and legislative bureaucracy occupies large portions of the executives' time. They must respond to legislative and executive queries about prison policy, practices, and expenditures. This activity often involves understanding what

is being asked, working with staff to generate the necessary information to respond to the query, and educating the inquiring individuals and governmental bodies. Prison executives must be active lobbyists for their organizations. Executive and legislative actions set mandates for prisons, from the number of individuals who will come to prison to the way they will be treated. System heads must see that their institutions have adequate resources to carry out these mandates. Helping politicians understand sound correctional practice necessarily involves their time. This includes visiting the legislature, speaking with key individuals on the telephone, testifying before the legislature, and writing position papers. These activities require system heads to stay informed about the myriad activities and issues taking place in their large and complex organizations.

Setting correctional policy is a constant task. Most systems are policy driven now. Reviewing, redefining, and developing new policy are frequent topics of executive staff groups. A problem, disturbance, lawsuit, or media inquiry can spur the need to revisit an issue, rewrite policy, and redefine practice.

Making personnel decisions is another time-consuming and ongoing activity for senior-level officials. Deciding who will be made warden, associate warden, and regional director, who will be moved from one institution to another, are continual issues that require monitoring and reviewing the professional and managerial performance of many individuals.

Because many systems have become so large, maintaining adequate performance appraisal and review systems is essential. Keeping those systems operating and reviewing the information they generate is a daily activity.

Supervision and support of top central office staff, regional office staff, and wardens is another ongoing activity that involves visits to facilities, telephone conferences, and meetings.

For wardens, maintaining control of the institution is the most crucial issue. Most wardens begin their days with key staff, reviewing what transpired overnight and during the previous day. Incidents, breaches of security, fights, and disgruntled prisoners must be handled. Decisions must be made about disciplinary action, movement of prisoners, and how to respond to problems.

After that, most wardens like to get out into their institutions. By "walking and talking," they find out what is going on and can directly respond to staff and prisoners. They listen to complaints and then follow up by making inquiries of involved parties. By being in the facility, wardens indicate to staff and prisoners their personal concern about operations and are able to observe the conditions of confinement.

Addressing personnel issues is also a major activity for wardens. Deciding who will be promoted, taking corrective action, and resolving conflicts is a frequent task. Providing supervision and feedback and developing staff are important activities.

Prisons are complex organizations with many disciplines. Besides custody and personnel issues, decisions must be made about issues such as medical practices, emergency preparedness, hazardous chemicals found in the shops, educational programming, food services, the operation of the commissary, and staffing levels. To make such decisions, information must be collected, meetings must be held, and stakeholders must be consulted and informed.

Wardens spend time preparing for and responding to the audits conducted by central office staff. Quality assurance is now commonplace.

More and more, wardens are spending time outside their institutions dealing with community relations. They must facilitate work with other law enforcement agencies. They respond to media queries.

Although their missions differ, most senior-level executives, whether they are hospital administrators, university presidents, or prison officials, spend most of their time and decisionmaking addressing day-to-day operational issues. Surely, they all spend some of their waking moments reflecting on the hospital's contribution to health care, their institution's role in higher education, and whether they should be treating or incapacitating criminals, but the reality of their job is to keep their organizations running.

Leadership Issues Facing Senior-Level Prison Administrators in the New Century

With this backdrop, I am now ready to explore the major issues facing prison officials as they embark on running systems and institutions in the new millennium. In 1975, if you needed a new hammer, some nails, or a can of paint, you stopped by the local hardware store. These small businesses were likely to be owned and operated by a single individual or family. Today, if you have the same needs, you trek down to a huge store with prepackaged items and electronically controlled inventories. Lowe's Hardware and Home Depot are corporately owned, with the look and practices of selling hardware uniform throughout hundreds of stores across the Nation. Gone the way of the mom and pop hardware store, the organization and administration of prisons has changed dramatically in the past 25 years. Clearly, running prison systems and institutions has become

more complex, more susceptible to external scrutiny and influence, and more demanding.

I describe and discuss eight topics—external relations, standards and accountability, the prison workforce, inmates, technology, strategic management, privatization, and justice—in attempting to characterize the changes in prison administration over the past quarter of a century and in depicting the practice of running institutions today. Each of these issues impacts the administrative practices of both heads of prison systems and the leaders of individual institutions; however, most of the issues influence officials at the two levels in different ways.

External relations

Without exception, all the prison officials I spoke with described significant changes in prison administration that have resulted from scrutiny, oversight, and influence by external agents. Before the 1970s, prison systems were sufficiently small and politically unimportant enough that they received relatively little attention. In many States, the central bureaucracy was relatively small and often fairly weak. Although there was considerable variation among systems to the extent to which centralized policy existed and was influential in the operations of local institutions, for the most part, local wardens enjoyed considerable autonomy and self-rule in the administration of their institutions. The riot at Attica, involvement of the Federal courts, growth in prison populations and expenditures, and the politicization of crime and punishment dramatically altered this situation.

The political climate of the Nation in the early 1970s was liberal. There was considerable interest in and concern for the rights and plight of the poor and disenfranchised. This concern was extended to prisoners by many political activists, who raised issues with the denial of human and civil rights by the conditions of confinement (see Mitford 1973). Not only was the riot at Attica fueled by these sentiments, but the riot also served to raise national concern about these issues. The coverage by the national media of the riot at Attica began to open the doors and lower the walls of prisons to public scrutiny (Useem and Kimball 1989). Interestingly, although public concern shifted away from the plight of prisoners to desire for more punitive conditions in the decades to follow, Attica paved the way for greater scrutiny and oversight.

Not only the public at large but the judiciary was more liberal in the 1970s. The Nation saw a period of considerable judicial activism in which Federal judges, in particular, altered their long-held practice of not intervening in prison affairs to becoming highly active in this arena. They began to accept prisoners' legal complaints, to review the conditions of confinement, and to demand corrective

action (Jacobs 1983). A review of the breadth of these interventions is beyond the scope of this paper, but two cases are noteworthy and will illustrate the impact of judicial involvement.

One of the people I spoke to, an individual who has worked in prisons since the early 1970s, identified these two cases as particularly influential. In *Wolff* v. *McDonnell* (418 U.S. 539 [1974]), the Supreme Court reviewed prison disciplinary practices. Before *Wolff*, when an inmate was charged with violating prison rules, there was a hearing but every accused inmate was found guilty. The Court decided that while prisoners do not have full due process rights as in criminal prosecutions, disciplinary proceedings had to be fair, and prisoners had the right to know the charges, could present evidence, and could call witnesses. Suddenly, prisoners had legal rights. This was new to prison officials, who were now being held accountable by external agents—Federal judges—for the treatment of inmates.

Two years later, in *Estelle* v. *Gamble* (429 U.S. 97 [1976]), the Supreme Court set forth that prison systems and their administrators could be held liable for damages when the health and welfare of inmates was treated with "deliberate indifference." Now not only were prison officials subjected to external review, but they could be held personally responsible for not attending to the basic human rights of prisoners. This action raised the bar significantly regarding prison practice.

Interestingly, 25 years later, many legislatures have restricted the access of inmates to the courts but have replaced judicial intervention in prison operations with legislative intervention (Tonry 1995, 169). Legislatures in recent years have passed laws to ensure that incarceration is indeed punitive. The Federal "no frills" legislation is a good example of this practice. The liberal activities regarding prisoners' rights and judicial activism of the 1970s initiated external access and involvement in prison operations, so as the political climate shifted toward "getting tough" and prisoner populations and expenditures began to soar, external agents already had gained legitimacy in being involved in the scrutiny and oversight of prisons.

According to the prison officials with whom I spoke, the chief executive of a correctional system (the director, commissioner, or secretary of corrections)

Twenty-five years ago, most system heads saw their job as carrying out the legislative mandate. Now, chief executives must involve themselves in developing public policy and participate in the public debate regarding incarceration.

will spend about 70 percent of his or her time away from direct correctional practice, involved in the political processes of interacting with the legislative and executive branches of government, the press, and concerned citizens. Individuals who were outstanding wardens or deputies may be ill suited for senior executive positions if they are not prepared to engage in the political process. My informants used the metaphor of a good warden needing to be able "to talk to inmates" to suggest that wardens must attend to sound correctional practices. In contrast, the chief executive of the system must "walk the hallways of the legislature."

Twenty-five years ago, most system heads saw their job as carrying out the legislative mandate. Now, chief executives must involve themselves in developing public policy and participate in the public debate regarding incarceration. This involves understanding the political process, networking with elected officials, educating them regarding sound prison practices and potential implications of changes in prison operations, and being tactical in influencing the process.

The need for chief executives to protect prison industries nicely illustrates this issue. In the current economic and political climate, prison industries are frequently attacked by labor unions and entrepreneurs who claim that the practice takes jobs and business from law-abiding citizens. Unions and business owners lobby legislators to abolish prison industries. The chief executive must counter these attacks to ensure the survival of this important prison program. Good information is necessary; being able to demonstrate the benefit to prison security and in preparation of inmates for release as productive citizens is essential. But good data alone will not win the battle. Chief executives have to know influential legislators and be able to sway their opinions.

An important lesson is that not all battles will be won. Politics is a give-and-take process. I recall an incident that took place a few years ago in the Federal system. Several members of Congress were proposing legislation to establish a boot camp for Federal prisoners. The Bureau of Prisons produced data that showed that the Federal population contained few young offenders with nonviolent crimes, the constituency for whom boot camps are typically designed. Michael Quinlan, then director of the Bureau, went to Congress to lobby against the legislation, arguing that there was not really a need for such a program within the Federal system. However, the Act supported the political agenda of congressional proponents of a Federal boot camp and was passed. The Bureau responded by creating a program to accommodate its older prisoner population. Compromise is essential to the process of being political.

In the past, the primary activity for chief executives regarding funding was to appear at the annual appropriations hearing to present the prison budget and

answer questions. Now, lobbying key legislators to assure adequate funding to accommodate the burgeoning population and to ensure the safety of the public, staff, and inmates is an ever-present task. Changes in criminal sanctions have led to steady growth in the population; however, capital and operational funds to respond to this growth have not always kept pace with the expanding prisoner population. Certainly, expenditures for incarceration have grown in all States, but, in most cases, they have not equaled growth. Prison systems and their institutions have been expected to do more with less.

Prison systems now compete with other State agencies for limited State resources. One executive lamented this fact, noting that the financing of prisons took away resources from education and social welfare. As States spend more public funds and a greater percentage of public funds for incarceration, there are fewer public dollars available for those functions that support children and their families, which may in turn create more crime and necessitate even greater expenditures for incarceration.

Working with the press is much the same. Journalism changed significantly in the past 25 years. Watergate invigorated investigative reporting. Hungry journalists actively seek stories of improprieties, be they accounts of prisons coddling criminals or indications of abusive and inhumane practices. Whereas prison officials could safely distance themselves from the media in the past, in today's journalistic climate, a chief executive who does not work with the press runs the risk of reporters portraying a negative image of prisons. Executive staff must respond to media queries and work to educate journalists about sound prison practices.

Furthermore, the huge 24-hour news monsters, CNN and MSNBC, did not exist when the riot at Attica took place. Now, whenever the smallest disturbance occurs, the big van may roll in. Dealing with the media and the control of information must now be an element of any tactical maneuver to retake control of an institution.

The Freedom of Information Act had not been passed 25 years ago. Public access to information about prisons, their operations, and prisoners has created yet another time-consuming and vital function for prison administration.

More external constituencies exist than in the past; other law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and judges, victims and victims rights groups, and special interest groups have vested interests in what happens to inmates. The demands and needs of these groups must be recognized and responded to accordingly.

Clearly, modern prison system executives must be astute political creatures. They must have an understanding of the political process and a willingness and

an ability to participate in it as never before. Several of the respondents talked about the need for the senior system executive to see the big picture. Simply being an expert on prison operations is not enough. Chief executives need to understand the role of corrections within the broader political agenda and how external political, economic, and social forces currently and in the future will impact correctional policy.

The political responsibilities of chief prison executives raised an interesting divergence of opinion among the officials I talked to regarding the necessary backgrounds of people selected for senior-level positions. Some individuals argued that the need to be a political player is so great that the key characteristic of the chief executive is a background in politics and that the individual does not necessarily need correctional experience or expertise. Bill Merton, current Commissioner of Corrections in the State of Michigan, illustrates this position. Merton, a former State trooper, was a member of the State legislature, followed by a period in which he headed up the State lottery. As a seasoned political actor, he has been an active representative of the Michigan Department of Corrections in the political process.

Other officials argued that knowledge of and adherence to sound correctional practice is essential for chief executives. Although only 30 percent of the senior prison official's time may be spent in attending to correctional practice, the ability to formulate policy and oversee its implementation is critical.

The ultimate success of a chief prison executive may depend less on his or her specific qualifications and background than the individual's leadership abilities. Given the complexity of managing huge prison bureaucracies within even more complex political environments, no single individual can or will have the knowledge and ability to address every issue—both political and practice. The ability of the senior executive to surround himself or herself with a knowledgeable interdisciplinary team to support efforts to respond appropriately to the myriad of tasks will determine success.

In addition to the political constituencies that must be reckoned with, chief executives now face a new set of external agents with the power and authority to influence prison operations. Legislative and executive budget analysts have fiscal oversight and responsibility for prison expenditures. These individuals have financial rather than functional expertise yet can require prison executives to justify how funds are spent and to show that expenditures are producing desired results.

Earlier, I described how global competition in the marketplace has led to significant changes in corporate America. To remain competitive, businesses have had

to become highly efficient. This requirement has led to considerable attention to bottom-line management and reducing expenditures to produce the same or greater results. It did not take long for attention to economic efficiency in the private sector to spill over into the public agenda. Throughout the last quarter of the century, politicians have called for greater efficiency and accountability among public agencies. Frequently, this move has been championed under the title of reengineering government. The demand for efficiency and cost-effectiveness has led to increased activity, authority, and power among the fiscal agents of the state. Managing prisons is now a budget-driven activity.

Standards and accountability

The role of warden is substantively different from the role of the chief executive of a prison system. Wardens occasionally must respond to the requests of local representatives and address the media on matters relating to their institutions. However, for the most part, responsibility for external political and media relations is vested in the chief executive of the system and is handled by that individual and central office staff. This does not mean that administrative practices of prison wardens have been unaffected by the increased oversight and involvement by external agents.

Wardens have always been judged by their ability to maintain control of their institutions. One of the reasons for this evaluative criterion was that institutional control is necessary to accomplish the more fundamental objective of protecting public safety. If inmates escape or riot, the safety of the public and prison staff are jeopardized. A more cynical twist on the reason for the criterion of maintaining control would suggest that the accomplishment of this goal protects wardens' bosses—the chief executive and the Governor—because they, too, are judged on their ability to provide for public safety.

Twenty-five years ago, wardens were expected to "keep the lid on" things. This meant they controlled their institutions so that no incident occurred that would draw the attention of politicians, the media, or the public at large. Without the external scrutiny of the courts, the media, and other interested parties, wardens enjoyed considerable freedom in running their institutions and generally maintained their institutions with rigid and frequently autocratic control.

Now that the doors have been opened and the walls lowered to external scrutiny, the goals of institutional control and protecting the bosses have not changed, but the methods have. No longer is the criterion of keeping the lid on things sufficient. Prisons must be run in ways that are "unassailable." Because a variety of external agents now monitor what prisons do, from law-and-order advocates to defenders of civil rights, from budget analysts to unions, from victims to the

national news media, wardens must make sure that their practices are defensible. They must ensure that staff and inmates are safe. Criminals must not be coddled nor can they be abused. All the while, wardens must continue to make sure that escapes and disturbances do not occur.

In this regard, prison systems no longer are willing to leave the success of individual institutions up to the warden's ability to maintain control. Instead, over the past two and half decades, we have seen a steady increase in systemwide oversight of institutional operations. Centralized policy and procedures now specify standards of practice and how prisons will operate. Monitoring through audits, program reviews, and direct oversight is commonplace. In other words, system executives are not leaving anything to chance and have established supervisory and regulatory mechanisms for policy compliance and quality assurance.

The wardens I spoke with still believed they were in control of their institutions. One warden likened his job to that of a ship's captain. However, they all agreed that systemwide monitoring now occupied a significant portion of their time. Without exception, they agreed to the value of this practice, but many complained that things had gone too far. They felt inundated by new procedures and auditing practices. Generally, they viewed the oversight and centralized control exercised by senior-level system officials as appropriate and reasonable, but they described the actions of lower level system officials to be too stringent, overly demanding, and intrusive on time and resources.

Correctional workforce

The individuals I spoke with perceived the correctional workforce as different than in the past in two important ways: Employees are more diverse and possess a different philosophy about their work and careers.

Prison workers 25 years ago were predominantly white males. By 1975, the majority of the inmate population were members of minority groups. The strain created by a lack of cultural understanding and the political implications of whites incarcerating minorities was a significant issue in the riot at Attica in 1971. Prison systems and institutions have worked hard over the past two and a half decades to increase minority representation among correctional workers and supervisors, with considerable success in many systems. However, some of the wardens indicated that their institutions had not been as successful as they would like in diversifying the workforces. Rural facilities in predominantly white communities still struggle to attract nonwhite staff.

Without exception, the individuals with whom I spoke described the increased diversity among the staff as having a positive influence on correctional practice. Not only have minority staff proven to be effective in working with inmates, especially minority inmates, but these new workers have broadened the perspective of correctional practice. When all workers come from similar backgrounds, an organization gets a relatively narrow view of how things should be done and a range of options for decisionmaking and problem solving. With a more diverse group analyzing a particular problem, there are simply more viewpoints about issues and how they should be addressed.

The prison officials also described how the presence of minority staff had helped them personally and helped their institutions as a whole to understand issues of diversity and cultural difference. With this new knowledge, they have greater understanding of race as an important influence and how discrimination and prejudice affect individuals.

In a substantively different but equally positive way, the presence of women in the correctional workforce has had an important influence on the prison environment and correctional practice. Many of the individuals I talked to suggested that female staff had a calming influence on the institutional climate in male facilities. Both inmates and male staff members act differently with women around.

Although the individuals were careful to note that they were generalizing, several individuals stated that female correctional workers tend to handle confrontations differently, and more effectively, than male staff. Young male staff have a tendency to respond to a defiant inmate aggressively by attempting to impose their authority. The outcome of such confrontation can be an escalation of the incident to the point that the inmate will become physically aggressive and then must be subdued, whereas female staff are more likely to try to calm the inmate; they listen to the individual and attempt to resolve the problem.

Another common observation among the prison executives was that female staff, like minorities, has improved decisionmaking and problem solving. As one warden described, in the past, corrections excluded half the population. By including women in the workforce, prisons doubled their talent pool.

The individuals I spoke with indicated that accompanying the positive change of enhanced competency, increased representation of women and minorities in the correctional workforce had led to other, sometimes negative, outcomes. Two individuals noted that cultural cohesion had been reduced. When everyone saw things the same way, there was greater bonding among the staff. Both individuals used the employees' club and staff functions to illustrate their point.

In the past, there was much greater involvement and larger turnouts to staff functions.

Some wardens reported that diversity had brought about new staff conflicts. When the staff was mostly male, there were fewer incidents of sexual harassment. One warden reported now having to mediate conflict arising around male/female relationships and two males in conflict over a female staff member's attention. Having to address overt racism and the use of racial slurs was also mentioned.

Most of the individuals interviewed indicated that their facilities and systems had engaged in considerable training regarding culture difference and gender and race relations. They claimed that a cultural shift had occurred and that they now could maintain a policy of intolerance regarding sexual harassment and racial conflict. One warden stated that the facility used to operate as a "good old boy" system, in which promotions were made on the basis of informal relations and where discrimination occurred. That warden described efforts to break down that system and expressed satisfaction in being successful in that effort.

According to the individuals interviewed, the correctional worker of today is different than that of the past. However, the prison officials varied in how they characterized these changes. Some described the difference in pejorative terms. They characterized the new correctional worker as being less loyal and committed to correctional service. Rather than seeing prison work as a career, new staff view their employment as a job for the moment but not necessarily as a lifelong career. The new worker was described as having a attitude of "What's in it for me?" rather than coming to prison service with an attitude of "How can I serve others?"

Importantly, all the prison officials with whom I spoke indicated that correctional workers today are more competent than ever before. Individuals are more educated, many now having some college experience, if not a college degree. They are better trained.

Another slant on this perception of younger, new staff was the view that they are less compliant and more independent. My informants told me that younger staff are more likely to challenge and break the rules.

Old ways of supervising staff no longer work. New employees are more likely to reject positional authority. They want feedback to be specific. As one warden stated, "You can't be the authority figure up in the administration building any longer." Staff expect the warden to be available to them and to have an

open-door policy. Wardens must be in the facility, get to know staff, work with them, and consult with them. Wardens have to model the values they endorse; they have to "walk the talk."

Another aspect of the change in correctional workers is how they are choosing to live their lives and integrate their employment into their broader lifestyle choices. Employees who once would accept overtime without challenge are now indicating they prefer to attend their child's softball game instead. Prisons are having to recognize that employees have lives outside their jobs. With greater commitments to family obligations, the need to accommodate dual wage-earner families, and increased recreational opportunities, the personal lives of staff must now be recognized and accommodated.

Importantly, all the prison officials with whom I spoke indicated that correctional workers today are more competent than ever before. Individuals are more educated, many now having some college experience, if not a college degree. They are better trained. Twenty-five years ago, many systems did not have academies or, if they did, the training period was short. Now, new employees undergo weeks of training before entering prison service. Once on the job, training is systematic and ongoing. There is greater movement across disciplines, and cross-training is common.

Institutionalization of accountability procedures, audits, and program reviews, discussed in the previous section, has altered decision making regarding personnel. Decisions about who gets recognized and promoted are more likely to be based on performance rather than interpersonal relations.

Not all the individuals I interviewed agreed that the new correctional worker is significantly different from personnel in the past. One individual said prison employees have always desired the same things—adequate pay; to be safe; to be recognized and have the opportunity to do something well; guidance; and integrity, honesty, and fair treatment from their supervisors. These two perspectives are not necessarily incompatible. The values of workers outlined by this warden are likely to be consistent over time, irrespective of whether individuals today are more independent or desire greater respect for their other commitments. The difference may simply reflect whether the respondent chose to highlight differences or similarities in his or her perspective of correctional workers.

Another important change in the prison workforce identified by many individuals was the greater presence and influence of unions. Many prison employees now belong to a union, and those unions demand a voice in decision making. Wardens and system officials indicated that they now consult with union

representatives before making important decisions and work with representatives to keep them informed about what is happening. Several individuals stated that some prison officials resist and have bad feelings about the increase in influence of the unions. One person said that some wardens, after working so hard to get to the top, resented having to share decisionmaking with union officials. Others stated that among some prison officials, there was an attitude that too much had been given up in recent contract negotiations. However, not a single one of the individuals interviewed indicated that they had personally experienced any difficulty in relating to the unions or were reluctant to work with them. They simply described this activity as a new responsibility for them as administrators.

I also asked about how rapid growth of the prison industry had influenced the workforce. I queried respondents about whether the need for additional workers in the face of close to full employment in some areas had created a situation in which they had to now accept workers who are not as qualified as in the past. Generally, this was not believed to be a problem. One system had purposely located new facilities in areas of economic decline, so there was an adequate workforce of qualified employees. Another system experienced the greatest amount of growth during a period in which the State was experiencing economic decline, which allowed the system and its facilities to continue to recruit high-quality entry-level personnel.

One informant indicated that the facility had been forced to hire younger employees who were less mature. This required the facility to provide more training for new employees and better, perhaps more intensive, supervision of new staff.

The other arena in which growth has impacted administrative practices has been in the promotion of employees. With expansion, time to promotion has been greatly reduced. The result for prisons has been that the time to observe performance, evaluate proficiency, and socialize the individual into the prison's operational culture has been constricted. The officials with whom I spoke did not seem to feel that this had presented a major problem; they had simply instituted new systems to train and initiate new managers more rapidly.

Some correctional officials and observers believe that although the tide of expansion in most systems has not yet crested, it will in the near future. States and the Federal Government simply cannot afford to incarcerate ever-increasing numbers of individuals. With this, I queried whether rapid expansion had had a positive influence on staff morale and whether they thought the reduction of growth might reduce staff morale. Surprisingly, most of the individuals I talked to did not view promotional opportunities as having a major impact on staff

morale. I did not really understand this until one warden offered the following assessment of the impact: Twenty-five years ago, when a smaller proportion of the staff received promotions, an individual could look at who was being advanced and conclude that the individual had put in his or her time and was a superior performer. With greater numbers of individuals advancing, that same individual might question why he or she was not being advanced. So, for those individuals not receiving promotions, rapid expansion has a deleterious effect on morale. Only those individuals getting promotions feel better.

Inmates

I asked if inmates were different today than 25 years ago. The most striking change reported is that there simply are more of them; most systems have seen their inmate populations quadruple. Many systems have not been able to build prisons fast enough to accommodate this growth. Institutions have been forced to double bunk, when in the past they placed individuals in single cells, or they have tripled bunked in cells built for two inmates. They have expanded the numbers of individuals housed in dormitory spaces. They have violated their classification systems, placing individuals in whatever space was available. As a result, even if inmates had not changed, the circumstances of their incarceration have been altered in ways that influence inmate management. The simple fact that facilities have greater numbers of individuals to come into conflict with one another, compounded by the stress created by more concentrated confinement, has impacted the task of controlling the population.

Most of the wardens and system executives also observed important changes in the composition of the prisoner population. Today, many more offenders are serving long sentences. Some of these prisoners have 20- and 30-year sentences; a few are sentenced to life without parole. The wardens running facilities housing these long-term offenders expressed both humanitarian compassion for these individuals as well as a need to address the correctional problem of helping them develop healthy and acceptable ways of doing their time. One warden observed that you can watch long-term prisoners go through the stages of grieving, from denial to anger to negotiation to acceptance. Helping inmates progress through these stages of loss and devise meaningful lives for themselves was considered to be essential.

Although the wardens differed in the programming models provided, all described efforts to create and maintain hope among long-term inmates. There was a belief that if these offenders were left to languish in prison, they would spend their time planning how they would assault staff. If they were provided with the opportunity for self-improvement and the chance to create meaningful

lives, they were much more manageable. Working with the inmates on behavior management and on making decisions about how to live their lives in order to move out of highly secure confinement (locked down in a super-maximum facility, for example) and to gain freedom was considered to be an useful and effective strategy.

Another difficult group to manage and one growing in numbers is mentally ill offenders. These individuals are frequently the prey of other inmates and are at high risk of victimization. They are also uniquely dangerous because of their unpredictability. Efforts to stabilize their behavior and get them into safe environments were considered to be of utmost importance.

The prison officials also noted an increase in sex offenders within the population. Although these individuals tend to be relatively docile prisoners, their treatment is costly and the success rate of treatment is low. Many States have enacted legislation mandating lengthy sentences for these offenders. They, too, require special attention in planning programming to assist them in adapting to long-term confinement.

The offender group mentioned by most of the respondents as problematic was the growing numbers of younger, more violent prisoners. A few criminologists have suggested that there is a new breed of street offender. These individuals are characterized as "superpredators" and are depicted as an entirely new offender type that is more violent and disrespectful of authority.

Most of the prison officials I interviewed did not seem to think this new offender type exists; rather, there are simply greater numbers of young, predatory, and violent offenders. These individuals have always come to prison but now are coming to prisons in greater numbers. These offenders were consistently described as people who had grown up with little parental care or attention. Their families were highly dysfunctional, and the individual experienced considerable violence in the home. As a result, these young people, men for the most part, have grown up on the streets. They are tough and have learned to survive by exploiting others and by being aggressive and violent. Several respondents described them as lacking middle-class values.

One informant indicated that there has been an increase in offenders who have committed violent acts because they have been disrespected. These are individuals who have been insulted in some way, then go get a gun and shoot the offending party. These offenders then import this way of relating to others into the prison environment.

One warden suggested that many of these young offenders suffer arrested development and are locked into behavioral patterns characteristic of 2- or 3-year-old

children. Helping them mature and learn ways of behaving other than exploitation and violence was described as an important strategy for controlling them.

Whether or not an institution targeted these offenders for special programming, wardens and system executives were consistent in identifying this group as especially difficult to manage and in need of increased supervision and security.

A related observation among the individuals interviewed was increased gang presence in prisons. Institutions have always struggled with prison gangs. Among male inmates, there is a propensity to form social groupings to resist the authority of prison staff. However, prisons today experience a growing number of offenders who come with street gang affiliations. This gives the inmates a jump on forming affiliations in the facility to fight with one another and to resist and attack staff. Furthermore, these individuals retain their ties to outside criminal associates. Controlling their criminal activity both in the facility and in the community adds an additional security responsibility.

Greater gang presence has required prisons to transport prisoners more often to prevent them from forming strong in-prison networks; to maintain an effective intelligence system to identify affiliations and to understand their activities; to monitor behavior, plans, and criminal activities; and to segregate prisoners to prevent their involvement in gang-related activities. Prison officials are having to interact with and cooperate with law enforcement officials in the community. Control of "threat groups" seems to vary considerably among systems, particularly in terms of the use of segregation and other methods of suspending freedom, but all prisons are having to consider how to manage this segment of the population, often at greater costs.

In this environment and with the changing prisoner population, one warden suggested that, at least for maximum-security institutions, there are six measures of success:

1. The number of homicides in the facility.
2. The number of escapes.
3. The presence of drugs in the facility.
4. The availability of weapons.
5. The control of gangs.
6. Safety in the facility (i.e., whether it is safe to walk around the compound).

Interestingly, nearly all the prison officials talked about how important it is to care about inmates. They spoke about how staff must listen to inmates, assist them in resolving problems, and help them cope with incarceration. The essential need to treat inmates with respect and dignity was stressed by many.

Clearly, this list represents a different set of criteria of success than that of 1975, when offender reform and rehabilitation was stressed.

Interestingly, nearly all the prison officials talked about how important it is to care about inmates. They spoke about how staff must listen to inmates, assist them in resolving problems, and help them cope with incarceration. The essential need to treat inmates with respect and dignity was stressed by many. Not only were these values considered to be the right thing to do, but they were also described as fundamental to sound correctional practice.

Technology

The proliferation of technological advances to support correctional practice has been great during the past 25 years. Modern facilities are built with centrally controlled security systems where a single officer opens and closes all doors and gates electronically at a control panel. Perimeter security is maintained with fences and razor wire combined with sophisticated electronic monitoring equipment to detect movement within the perimeter area. New equipment is available for positive identification of both staff and employees. Technology has provided for sophisticated monitoring and surveillance of drugs and other contraband. Consequently, prisons are better able to prevent escapes, to control drug trafficking and the introduction of other contraband, to reduce weapons availability, to respond more rapidly to aggressive and potentially dangerous situations, and to control disturbances.

Many individuals with whom I spoke were quick to add that technology is only a tool. It is not a panacea. It helps make prisons safer and enhances security, but correctional administrators who rely on it will get into trouble. People are still the key to good correctional practice; human interaction is the essential component to managing inmates well. Prison executive after prison executive stressed to me the importance of high-quality staff/inmate communications. Staff must listen to inmates and solve problems proactively. They must let inmates know that they care and are there to support them. An administrator who relies on the security systems to maintain control of the facility will find that interpersonal problems, conflicts, and grievances will escalate to the point that no system, no matter how fail-safe, will be successful.

In this regard, several of the executives expressed concern about the supermaximum facilities. The monitoring and security systems successfully suppress violent behavior, but without human contact the needs of the individual are not addressed. Individuals may suffer mental anguish, experience deteriorating mental health, and become increasingly violent and aggressive. Several administrators talked about the need for effective programming to assist high-security inmates in maintaining hope, developing behavioral controls, and making plans for transferring to less secure settings.

A couple of individuals mentioned difficulties in maintaining the sophisticated security systems. With full employment in their area, they had trouble recruiting and retaining staff with expertise to maintain and operate these systems.

The technological advance that interviewees identified as having the greatest impact on their administrative practices was the computer. The computer has made it possible to manage the burgeoning prisoner populations. Administrators rely on the computer for time computation, maintaining inmate records, tracking incidence reports, and making decisions about designations based on programming needs, threat levels, and known crime affiliates and enemies. A warden can click on a file and obtain a photograph of the inmates along with his or her entire personal, criminal, and institutional histories. Computers are used to manage visits.

A key function for many of the wardens and system heads is the use of computers for communications. E-mail allows them to know what is going on in other institutions and to discuss such matters as the transfer of difficult inmates. As systems have grown, communication through the computer allows facilities to operate in consistent and integrated ways. Policy and procedures are discussed and can be disseminated quickly. The ability to transfer data electronically supports systemwide monitoring and maintenance of accountability systems.

Several individuals suggested that the ability and willingness to use computers over the past couple of decades determined which administrators would successfully adapt to the modern world of prison management and which administrators discovered that they could no longer function effectively in the changing administrative environment. Growth of the system, the professionalization of correctional management, and the focus on accountability have added a new function to prison administration, that of being an information manager. To fulfill this task, administrators must use computers.

Other communication devices were also mentioned as influencing prison management. The cellular telephone, beepers, and voice mail were identified as helpful, although sometimes overbearing, aids in staying informed and effectively communicating in the facility, among facilities, and with the central office.

Strategic management

Another important change for prison executives has been the introduction of strategic management. Most of the individuals I spoke with had been trained in the leadership programs offered by Tom Gilmore at the Wharton School, Bob Brown at the University of Southern California, and/or the National Institute of Corrections' National Training Academy. They had been introduced to strategic management and adopted the practice personally and implemented it in their various positions.

When I asked them about specific techniques such as strategic planning and total quality management (TQM), their responses generally did not exhibit a great deal of enthusiasm or commitment to these activities. A typical response was, "Yeah, strategic planning is important, but . . ."; then they would quickly shift the conversation to focus on the need to be forward looking and globally oriented. They spoke about how the institution or the system had to be mission driven and how they had to be systems managers. One warden reflected that one has to stop sometimes and reflect on where things are going. The warden and the staff must have a vision of how they want the facility to operate. They must be future oriented and be looking at the longer term, thinking 3 to 5 years into the future.

Another warden commented that you have to think about how you want things to operate, then, given the scarcity of resources, develop contingency plans. This particular warden illustrated contingency planning by describing how sound correctional practice dictates that inmates be out of their cells and productively involved most of the time. However, the budget of the institution was not sufficient to staff the facility to allow for this practice all the time. Alternatives had to be devised. Once a month, the institution was locked down over the weekend. The reasons for this practice were explained to the inmates, and they were compensated for the loss of freedom with special meals, good movies, and plenty of activities to do in their cells.

Privatization

Many of the individuals interviewed mentioned that privatization had influenced administration of public prisons. A common sentiment, which was colorfully

expressed by one warden, was the view that, "It is good to have a wolf at your door." Officials indicated that privately run prisons had forced them to be more cost-aware and -efficient. Because of the competition, they, too, now closely watch the bottom line.

Most of the individuals went on to express their concern about the ability of privately run prisons to protect public safety and provide sound correctional programming. The largest item in the budget of almost any organization, prisons included, is personnel costs. Privately run prisons gain cost advance through cheaper labor. They pay employees less and provide fewer benefits than public institutions; consequently, they have higher staff turnover and a less professional staff. As instability is the greatest threat to institutional security, the respondents expressed concern about the ability of private prisons to provide high-quality, safe incarceration.

One person provided a particular poignant observation about the problem of competition between public and private prisons. This individual views private providers as playing an indispensable role in the prison business. Private organizations fill in and meet unique correctional needs. Community institutional corrections—the provision of halfway houses and specialized drug treatment centers—are good examples of where private providers can complement public prisons. The existence of private prisons helps the larger public systems manage ever-growing populations. Excess population awaiting the construction of new facilities can be shifted to privately run facilities.

In the past, private providers cooperated with public prison officials to determine how they could complement the public systems. Now private providers are going directly to the legislature and lobbying for prison business. Unfortunately, legislators sometimes make decisions about incarceration without including and consulting with public prison officials. The consequence of such decisions, which are being made for political reasons, is that they fail to consider the implications for public safety or the impact on the much larger public system. Competition has transformed what used to be a collaborative process to best meet the incarceration needs of the State or the Federal government into an antagonistic relationship that fails to address the best ways to provide incarceration.

Justice

I did not ask the individuals with whom I spoke about their views concerning whether incarceration had become more unjust or less humane during the last quarter of the century. However, many of the prison executives raised concerns about issues of justice. They expressed and illustrated their concerns in different

ways, but these senior-level executives are troubled with the direction in which incarceration policy and practice are headed.

Many of the individuals spoke about running facilities in an era of harsh punishments. Public sentiment has shifted during their careers. When they started their jobs, there was concern about prisoners' rights and individual reform. They were attracted to prison service because they cared about people. Now, the public exhibits little concern about prisoners' welfare and desires that prisoners be treated harshly. Legislators and those seeking office compete to be toughest on crime and criminals.

The senior-level officials I spoke with recognize that to run prisons well, to maintain control, and to be humane, prisoners must be treated with respect and dignity. The staff has to sincerely care about the welfare of prisoners and to support them. Maintaining a sense of hope is essential. Opportunities for self-improvement, to have a future, and to maintain a healthy existence while incarcerated are crucial. The enactment of harsh prison policy and the installation of harsh prison administrators, system heads in particular, threaten sound correctional practice.

One official believes that current draconian sentences are unjust; the punishment does not fit the crime. Federal sentencing regarding crack cocaine and powder cocaine is unjust and racially biased. How prisoners are treated is legal but not always just. This individual is concerned about whether corrections can continue to control a population in an increasingly unjust system. Sadly, this administrator stated that he (I use the male pronoun so the sentence will flow properly but it should not be misconstrued to reflect the gender of the respondent. The individual may have been either male or female) had always been proud to have chosen correctional service as his career, and to be part of the criminal justice system. He remains proud to be a correctional worker but is increasingly shamed by the injustice of the system.

Prison organizations, whether they are institutions alone or entire State or Federal correctional systems, have been transformed from relatively insular entities to complex organizations with considerable external attention, scrutiny, and influence.

Another individual raised a different issue. The person expressed concern about the indifference now shown to the death penalty, the State's ultimate decision. This correctional official believes the frequency with which the sentence of death is being imposed has desensitized people to the meaning of this ultimate act.

Another individual expressed a concern about societal priorities. Because of its growth, the prison industry now competes with education and social services for public resources. Inmates have better gymnasiums and classrooms than children in the community. This administrator was not saying that prisoners should not have good recreational facilities or educational opportunities. On the contrary, the individual was expressing concern about how prison growth had stripped away resources from other important public functions.

Conclusions

The findings of this study have been influenced by two important factors. The individuals interviewed are unique. I sought prison administrators who were particularly thoughtful and reflective about correctional practice. I wanted to speak with senior-level executives who could describe for me what changes had taken place during the past 25 years and what effective prison administration is today. In selecting and getting suggestions for such individuals, I have likely interviewed high performers, individuals who are among the best prison administrators. In reporting their views about correctional practice, I have probably reflected best practices. I am certain there are prison administrators who are not strategic thinkers, who do not believe that inmates need to be cared about nor supported, and who do not view increased external influence and demand for accountability as having a positive influence on their ability to govern institutions.

With this qualification, I still think it safe to say that prison administration has changed dramatically during the last quarter of the 20th century. Prison organizations, whether they are institutions alone or entire State or Federal correctional systems, have been transformed from relatively insular entities to complex organizations with considerable external attention, scrutiny, and influence. The growth of prisoner populations, staff, and the number of institutions; the professionalization of prison administration; the politicization of incarceration; the centralization of policy making; and an emphasis on cost efficiency and accountability have colluded to render parochial administrative practices obsolete. Prison officials at both institutional and system levels spend considerable time in interorganizational relations.

The most common theme discussed by the respondents is that they now operate in environments where accountability is a central theme. Twenty-five years ago, most prison systems had a small policy and procedures manual. Now they are governed by sets of thick volumes outlining standards of practice.

Prison administrators must communicate with and listen to staff and inmates, they have to be a presence in the facility, and they must walk the talk. Perhaps, these two issues boil down to the requirement of prison executives to act with a high degree of personal integrity and commitment to running prisons well.

The individuals with whom I spoke still believe they have considerable authority and responsibility in their positions. They believed that they retain the autonomy and power to determine organizational operations and correctional practice within their facilities or systems. However, the most common theme discussed by the respondents is that they now operate in environments where accountability is a central theme. Twenty-five years ago, most prison systems had a small policy and procedures manual. Now they are governed by sets of thick volumes outlining standards of practice. Compliance is carefully monitored and audited.

One warden described, perhaps even lamented, how an administrator now lost part of himself or herself as the individual moved up in the organization. He described the loss of individual discretion about how institutions will be run. Expectations about organizational operations and correctional practice are now more prescribed and uniform. To be successful and move up in the organization, an administrator must comply with the system's standardized vision of how prisons should be run.

Prison administration has become systems administration. The correctional process is more complex. More individuals, internal and external to the organization, vie for a say in decisionmaking. Administrators must juggle the responsibilities of consulting with a variety of constituencies while maintaining a perspective on the whole to build coherence in their organizations. The individuals with whom I spoke seem to enjoy that challenge. Each day presents a new set of problems surrounding how to maintain coherence in organizational operations and correctional practice.

Two related issues have not changed. There is still a need to attend to sound correctional practice and a set of core values that support that goal. Prisons need to be safe; staff and inmates need to be treated well, with respect and dignity; illegal behavior by either prisoners or staff cannot be tolerated; prisons should be clean; and hope must be fostered. How to attend to these values brings us to the second issue—success depends almost entirely on relationships. Prison administrators must communicate with and listen to staff and inmates, they have to be a presence in the facility, and they must walk the talk. Perhaps, these two issues boil down to the requirement of prison executives to act with a high degree of personal integrity and commitment to running prisons well.

Prison Administration in the New Millennium

To be successful, prison executives will need a unique set of characteristics as they move into the 21st century. The attributes apply to both chief executives of systems and wardens, although the exact nature of those attributes will vary with the position.

Political savvy

The business of running prisons has become more political in the past 25 years. Whether an individual is a system head or a warden, he or she must participate in a political process that extends beyond the perimeters of the organization. This is particularly true for chief executives of systems. They must be engaged in the legislative process, getting to know key legislators, working to educate them about sound correctional practice, and lobbying for sufficient resources.

Wardens, too, must be politically astute and involved in the political process. They must interact with a variety of interested parties—local politicians and community leaders, community organizations, a variety of interest groups, the media to some extent, prosecutors, victims and victims' rights groups, human rights advocates, unions, and law enforcement agencies.

The skills for being a successful interorganizational leader are different from the skills for being a successful intraorganizational leader. The distribution of authority and power is less well defined in external relations. Some external agents have considerable direct power, and consequently influence, over prison operations; others have less power but still possess either the right or ability to influence prison practices. The leader has several roles in this process—to keep external agents informed, to educate them about sound correctional practice, and to negotiate differences. Twenty-five years ago, prison officials could choose not to participate in this process; this is no longer an option.

Knowledge of sound correctional practice and prison operations

This attribute has not changed during the past two-and-a-half decades, nor will it ever. There are fundamental values that define sound correctional practice—safe prisons; staff and inmates treated with respect and dignity; zero tolerance for illegal behavior by either prisoners or staff; clean prisons; and the fostering of hope. How to achieve these goals may vary from system to system and facility to facility; modifications may occur over time as new practices are developed and technological advances become available. However, the fundamentals of running prisons well remain consistent.

To be successful, wardens must be highly knowledgeable about correctional practice and institutional operations. The best prepared wardens come to their senior positions with experience in a variety of roles and disciplines. Diverse experiences prepare them to understand the activities of running complex and multifaceted organizations.

System-level executives may not need to be as thoroughly versed and experienced in institutional management. Here, the scale is tipped toward expertise in the political process. A chief executive who has considerable experience in working with the legislature may effectively represent the prison system. However, in these cases, the senior staff must have correctional and operational expertise. Otherwise, where will this political leader take the organization; for what will he or she advocate? The individual will have to build a strong and participatory team to be effective.

A strong concern expressed by several officials interviewed was that individuals are being selected for senior-level positions by the political process on a single criterion—a strong punitive orientation toward corrections and prisoners. There was a belief that a highly punitive orientation to incarceration is dangerous. When hope and a sense of justice are stripped away, it is extremely difficult to manage prisoners. It is inconsistent with sound correctional practice.

Global perspective

Importantly, it is no longer enough for prison executives to understand corrections; they must have a much broader perspective. They need to understand government, how corrections fits in it, and the political process. They must be knowledgeable about economic trends and what is going on in the business world to anticipate how changes may influence crime and prison management. They must understand global trends and the impact of those trends on correctional practice. For example, the crime trends and the entrenchment of the Russian mafia as the result of political and social changes in the former Soviet Union is having a far-reaching effect on crime throughout the world. Prison executives must be informed about cultural diversity and how race affects the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of staff and inmates.

Individual after individual with whom I spoke stressed how prison executives must be big-picture thinkers. Contemporary prison officials have to "get out of the box" to conceptualize the complexity of issues and to anticipate the future. Prisons are no longer isolated entities but exist and operate in complex social, economic, political, and cultural networks. Prison executives must be able to place their organizations in those complex contexts and make decisions considering the myriad of external forces pressing on the more permeable boundaries of prison organizations.

Forward-looking perspective

For prison administrators, the goal of keeping the lid on things is gone. Prisons must be mission driven and accountable. To achieve their goals and maintain sound correctional practices, prisons must consider where they are going and how they are going to get there. Highly structured and institutionalized practices such as strategic planning and TQM may assist in this process, but being forward looking goes beyond that. It involves a philosophical commitment to evaluating current operations in light of future considerations.

With increased external scrutiny, prisons must now justify what they are doing. To receive funding for a new program or to continue a long-standing practice, executives must prove to external agents that the program or practice is effective.

Prisons will continue to be budget driven. Figuring out what can be done with constrained resources will be essential. Doing well with less will continue to be an operational necessity. Devising cost-effective ways to control the institution and to support prisoner reform will be required. A longer timeframe to accomplish goals and contingency plans will be necessary. All this requires executives to keep a vision for the organization in mind when directing current operations and planning for the future.

Critical analysis skills

In a climate of accountability, prison executives must have strong critical thinking skills. Twenty-five years ago, wardens had to produce an annual written narrative describing what was going on in their facilities. Now, there is constant auditing of prison operations. The evaluation of success has shifted from being mostly qualitative to mostly quantitative and exact. How many dirty urinalyses have occurred in the past month? How many assaults on staff have taken place? Is a particular program complying with policy and adhering to procedures? Executives must be able to analyze and document what is going on in their institutions.

Furthermore, with increased external scrutiny, prisons must now justify what they are doing. To receive funding for a new program or to continue a long-standing practice, executives must prove to external agents that the program or practice is effective. For example, with the constant political attacks on prison industry, correctional officials must be able to prove the benefits of such programming to protect the program from elimination.

As correctional practice and prison operations have become more complex, so have the problems associated with them. Executives have to lead their staff in analyzing these problems and devising creative solutions to them.

Systems management skills

Prison executives to a much greater extent than in the past are no longer free agents with considerable autonomy. Instead, they are participants in much larger bureaucracies that, when working well, act as well-integrated systems. Executives must recognize their roles in these systems and act accordingly, participating, contributing, and considering the much greater whole and the interrelationship of the parts.

As such, prison officials have to be more participatory, consulting with others both within the organization and external to it. They have to build coalitions and get people to buy into what they are trying to do. Management is about relationships, creating a vision and getting people aligned with that vision.

Strong people skills

Successful prison administrators must be able to relate well with others—to seek them out, speak with them, and listen to their ideas, complaints, and suggestions. Gone are the days when a executive could sit in his or her office in the administration office and dictate policy and practice. First, the task of running prisons well is much more complex than in the past; more minds than one are needed to solve problems and devise creative solutions. Second, workers expect, perhaps even demand, to be consulted. They tend to be less compliant and willing to follow rules unquestioningly. Luckily for the modern executive, correctional employees are more competent than ever before. So why would a leader not tap into that expertise?

Integrity

As the ultimate exercise of the state's power over individual freedom, law enforcement has always had the obligation to act in lawful, moral, and just ways. In corrections, that means that staff and inmates should be treated lawfully and with respect and dignity. Unfortunately, as we all know, that has not always been the case.

Today, more than ever, prison executives must act with integrity. One reason is that it is simply an organizational reality. With increased external scrutiny by central office staff, the media, external interest groups, and the courts, prison practices are now closely monitored. Keeping the lid on things is no longer sufficient to prevent criticism and external intervention; assuring that operations are unassailable to legal and moral scrutiny is essential.

This is not an easy task in a highly punitive era. Moral and just treatment of prisoners may be difficult. However, prison administrators can help inmates

understand why they are doing what they are doing, can support and care about offenders, can maintain hope, and can treat prisoners with dignity and respect.

The same goes for staff. Nearly all the officials interviewed stated that one has to walk the talk. Senior executives must personally subscribe to and support the values they espouse. If an administrator wants a clean facility, he or she must be vigilant in attending to cleanliness. If corruption is to be curtailed, surveillance must be maintained and swift and consistent corrective action must be taken.

Senior executives define what matters not only by their words but, more important, by their actions.

Senior executives define what matters not only by their words but, more important, by their actions. What gets inspected gets attended to. The executive serves as the principal role model for the organization.

Enthusiasm

Finally, a prison executive needs to enjoy his or her job. When they get up in the morning, they need to be excited to get to work, to solve problems that await, and to work toward sound correctional practice and quality operations. When an executive loses his or her edge, others notice. If things do not matter to the bosses, why should they matter to anyone else?

As one warden told me, he asks himself each day what he can do for someone else. He said, "That's what it is all about. If I walk around all day with a smug look and yell at someone, I might as well stay in my office." Perhaps the role of the prison executive has shifted from being the head of an organization, the ruler of a little fiefdom, to being a servant of that organization, working each day to help others realize the organizational goal of sound correctional practice and quality operations.

Ten extremely busy individuals took time out from their demanding jobs to speak with me about prison administration: Gene Atherton, Joe Bogan, Bob Brown, Jim Bruton, Tom Corcoran, Keith Hall, Kathy Hawk, Henry Risley, Morris Thigpen, and Pam Withrow. I thank them for their kindness and assistance.

Notes

1. Annual expenditures among the States totals more $22 billion (Stephen 1999).

2. In reporting results, I did not link comments to specific individuals, refer to their institutions or organizations, or use pronouns to indicate the gender of a respondent.

3. This statement is based on descriptions provided by several respondents.

4. This description was provided by one of the respondents.

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