

Research Proposal:

What effect does divisional structure have upon  
leadership styles and management techniques within the UNC System?

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### **SPECIFIC AIMS**

Following several leadership transitions within The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, including the appointment of an Acting Chancellor (J. Aguiar, UNCG Staff & Student communication, March 23, 2015); the discontinuing of an “at will” contract with the Associate Vice Chancellor overseeing Human Resources (J. Aguiar, UNCG Faculty & Staff communication, April 16, 2015); and the recent resignation of the Associate Vice Chancellor overseeing public relations (Staff Reports, 2015) the question of leadership hangs heavy over one campus within the UNC system. Coupled with this is impending resignation of the current president of the UNC system, Tom Ross (Brown, 2015). One is left to wonder not only what leadership and management looked like during the tenure of these individuals in these politically and structurally powerful positions, but also, what leadership and management will look like as the UNC system moves forward.

Situations like these, across broad swaths of organizations are not often examined outside of autobiographical lenses in relationship to the individual, and even more rarely researched within the scope of leadership and management as a social phenomenon; the same can be said of the structure of the organization. The relationship between organizational structure and the leadership styles and management techniques of its employees seems an untapped resource for the deeper understanding of the organizational life cycle and the efficacy of organizational design, particularly within academic institutions.

It is this curiosity, centered around North Carolina’s largest state-wide educational system, that prompts the investigation of divisional, or de-centralized,

structure and its effect on leadership styles and management techniques; executed, this research provides a starting point with the potential to contribute to more specific leadership and management development as well as valuable insights into the practical application of organizational design within post-secondary academic institutions.

## **BACKGROUND**

Organizational design has developed several approaches to the management of organizations through specific functions, including a structural approach based on several assumptions (Bolman & Deal, 2009):

1. Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives.
2. Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor.
3. Suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh.
4. Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures.
5. Structures must be designed to fit an organization's current circumstances (including its goals, technology, workforce, and environment).
6. Problems arise and performance suffers from structural deficiencies, which can be remedied through analysis and restructuring.

As a result, it is assumed that maintaining a focus on the structure of an organization can create optimal conditions for achieving the goals or mission of that organization.

Following this logic, the effect of structure upon leadership styles and management

techniques should be evident, but current literature tells a different story: the connection does not exist.

Within the scope of leadership and management literature, the phenomenon of leadership is seen as separate from the organization—something unique to each individual with the potential to learn or craft responses to systems and situations. Though Hales & Tamangani (1996) find that there are structural effects upon managers' techniques, their work is limited to the concept of management, only one part of leadership that exists within an organization. In their study, Hales & Tamangani (1996) correlate the structural limitations within an organization to the role of the manager within the unit, but make no direct connection to the manager as a functioning individual within the system. Tiller (2012) also hints at the connection between structure and strategy as they form the core of a company's ability to function, but individuals within the systems are disregarded, alluding to a flaw in the assumptions of a structural approach in organizational design: systems might dictate policy, but they cannot determine choices.

In considering this idea, the most tangible connections between organizational design and leadership are made. Baesu & Bejinaru (2013) consider leading change within organizations and find leadership playing a pivotal role in restructuring, but isolate their phenomenon in such a fashion as to eliminate any individual influence upon the decision to change. Aligning with Bolman & Deal's (2009) fifth assumption, Baesu & Bejinaru (2013) accept that needed organizational change is a result of factors outside of the individuals leading the change, but is that really the case?

Leadership literature indicates two large functions of leaders within organizations: transactional and transformational (Schmid, 2006; Spreier, Fontaine & Malloy, 2006);

within these two functions lay the elements of style that denote how an individual handles processes and interactions within the system. Cloke & Goldsmith (2003) outline the need for transcendent techniques that revolve around the relational quality of work. Baesu & Bejinaru (2013) clearly indicate that transformational functions and supportive styles are most likely utilized within de-centralized organizational structures, much like those of the institutions within the UNC system. It is ultimately this finding that provides the backdrop for this research: does the de-centralized structure create transformational leaders or is there no accounting for organizational design's impact upon the leadership function within the academy?

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

For the purpose of this research, an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach (Cresswell, 2014) will be employed. The explanatory phase will serve to identify potential connections between leadership styles and management techniques as they emerge within the de-centralized structure of a random sampling of 9 institutions within the UNC system, which consists of 17 public campuses of varying size and diverse structures. Following the explanatory phase, heavily weighted toward the quantitative, qualitative methodologies will be employed to assess the validity of the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: Within de-centralized structures, there are preferences of leadership styles and management techniques as a result of current leadership and evaluation methodology.

H<sub>2</sub>: How the organization manages change plays a significant role in leadership styles and management techniques.

This study will span three to four years with the intent to track organizational perceptions and behavioral changes within sample units and departments. A longitudinal study structure can assist with accounting for confounding and intervening factors like leadership training, Human Resource functions within each institution and employee turnover.

**Data Collection: Survey**

- a) *Sampling.* Large-n sampling for surveying will consist of at least two divisions from each sample institution to be identified through organizational charts as in Figures 1 through 3. A single-stage sample will be sufficient due to presumed equal access to potential study participants. A minimum sample will be determined in conjunction with the UNC System Office of Institutional Research, based upon a percentage of total faculty and staff contributing to the North Carolina State Employee Retirement System; this participant population is assumed to have a vested interest in system-wide as well as localized improvement of work conditions.
- b) *Gathering data.* Depending upon access to resources, Qualtrics or Google Forms may be used to gather respondent answers; this method will assist with creating a low-risk, anonymous environment for respondents.
- c) *Questions.* The survey, composed of original statements, will utilize a Likert scale to assess perceptions of the organizational structure, leadership activities and management techniques in a 360-degree fashion, in the role of both subordinate and supervisor to provide information regarding external interactions and internal bias. Additionally, respondents may opt to provide demographic information to

further provide data for potential limitations within the study. Sample statements, aligned to catalog the dependent variables of leadership style and management techniques, are available in Appendix B.

- d) *Volunteering for further study.* Respondents will also be polled about willingness to participate in additional stages of the study, including open-ended and/or semi-structured interviews.
- e) *Field-test.* Field-tests can be administered in leadership development-based curricular programs, including Peace and Conflict and Business Administration to determine the validity of the measurement tool.

#### **Data Analysis: Survey**

- a) *Exploratory analysis.* Data analysis will begin with inspection of data with descriptive statistics and graphical displays, evaluating central tendencies and measure the spread to develop the standard deviation of the scale; this will be particularly important in identifying any trends that might occur within sample populations.
- b) *Comparative data.* Data gathered at this stage will be kept intact to verify further qualitative findings.

#### **Data Collection: Interviews**

- a) *Sampling.* Based upon volunteer survey sample, open-ended interviews will be conducted. Utilizing the process of self-selection allows for a reduction in bias toward protecting oneself or one's job.
- b) *Training assistants.* There is potential, at this point, for additional help; assistants utilized will be trained in interviewing techniques and transcription.

- c) *Questions*. Sample questions are available in Appendix B.

### **Data Analysis: Interviews**

- a) *Transcription*. Transcription of interviews in a timely fashion will be necessary for accurate analysis.
- b) *Discourse analytics*. Analysis of interviews will utilize discourse analytics, coding key terms across respondents to identify frequency and behavioral patterns around key concepts tied to leadership style and management techniques. Such terms might include leadership style descriptors (authoritative, democratic, etc.), relationship-building techniques, bureaucracy and so on.

### **Data Collection: Case Studies**

- a) *Unit of study*. Two units of study are proposed: a division and a department. Within random sample institutions these are corresponding structures, which should be easily identified within the overall organizational structure.
- b) *Methods*. Examining for the structural assumptions, quantitative data including financial impact, production output and services rendered can be catalogued; qualitative data, including performance reviews, meeting minutes and office communications can be gathered as well.

### **Data Analysis: Case Studies**

- a) *Analysis*. Analysis of case studies will align with the explanatory sequential methods, quantitative data used to inform the seeking for qualitative data. This may be especially useful if there is sample coincidence within the case studies but should be heavily scrutinized to avoid researcher bias.



## **SIGNIFICANCE**

This research is important because it explores a potential relationship that has not been fully examined, particularly within academic institutions. It can provide insight into the static nature of academic institutions as living organizations in the ever-changing landscape of our times. Additionally, it may provide the potential for deeper investigation into the external influences on leadership styles and management techniques, a relationship only nominally investigated within the current body of literature.

## **RESEARCH TIMETABLE**

This is intended to be a longitudinal study to account for multiple factors within organizations and individuals:

- Shifting perceptions of work environments
- Knowledge gained through work experiences
- Employee turnover.

## **FEASIBILITY**

Though there are large investments in time from participants and investigators, the capital resource used would be nominal. Most direct challenges would tie to bureaucratic policies and potential backlash from disclosing uncomfortable information. Though the state of North Carolina and the federal government have protections available, it could be difficult to convince potential respondents to take the risk to be authentic at any point in the research process.

While this is an issue, the benefit to organizational design, leadership development and management training is clear and relevant to today's economy.

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## APPENDIX A

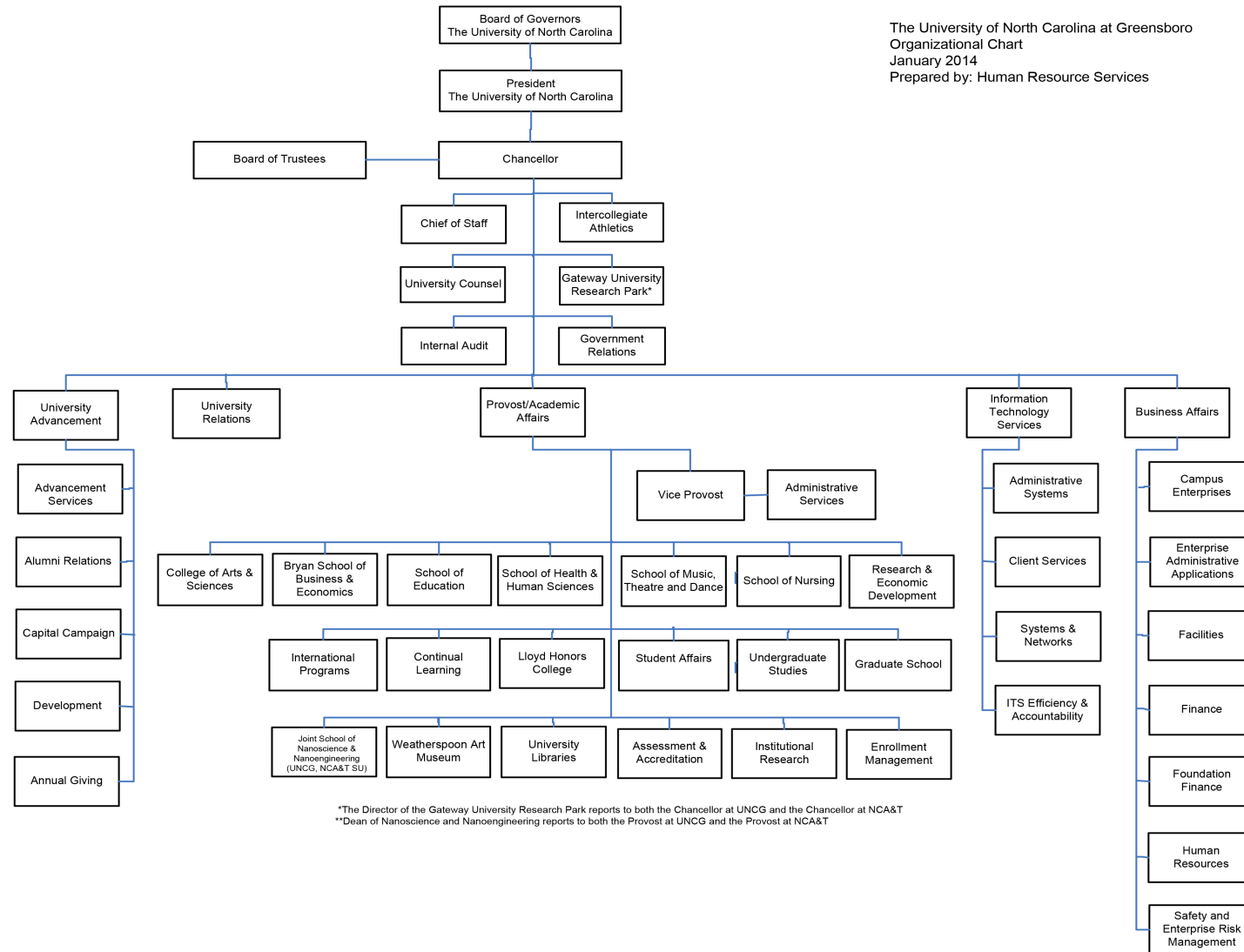
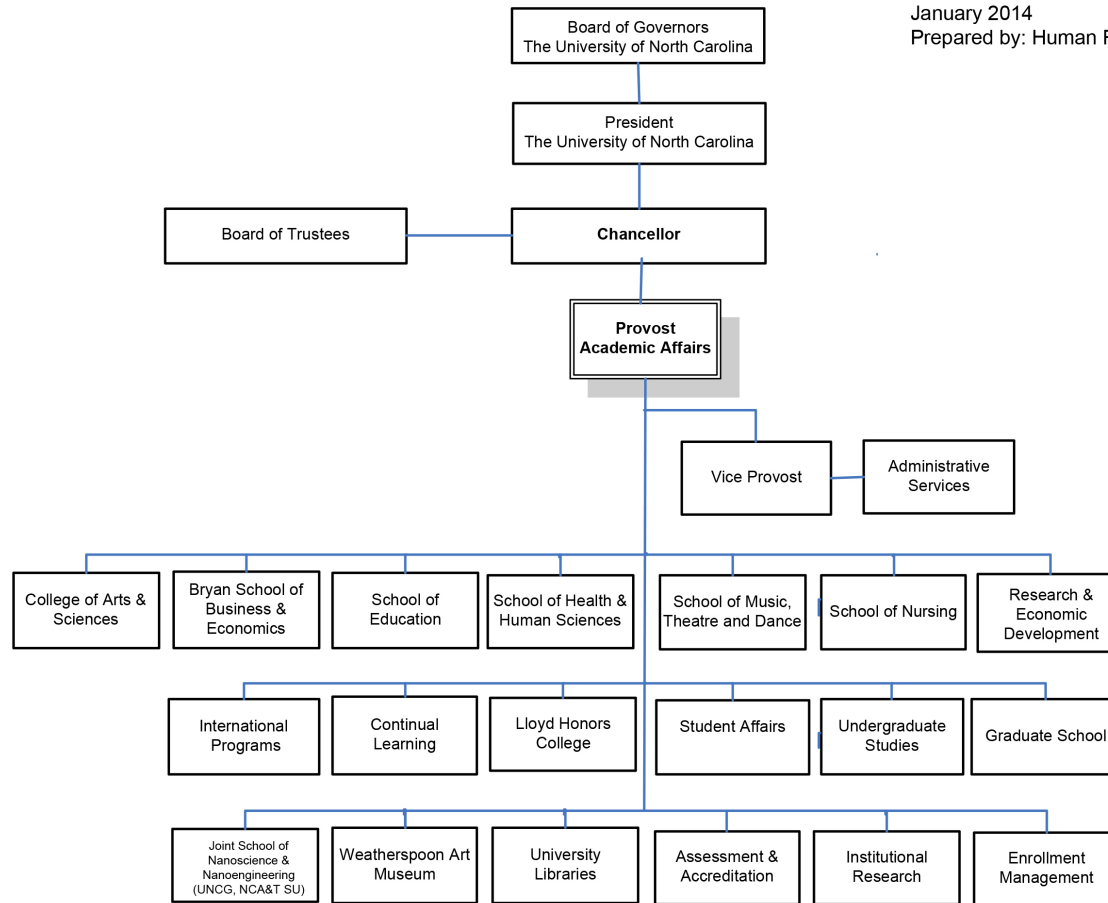


Figure 1. Sample Organizational Chart to assist with random sampling for survey.



\*The Director of the Gateway University Research Park reports to both the Chancellor at UNCG and the Chancellor at NCA&T  
\*\*Dean of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering reports to both the Provost at UNCG and the Provost at NCA&T

**Figure 2. Organizational chart for sample division within a UNC institution.**

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Organizational Chart

**Business Affairs**

November 12, 2013

Prepared by: Human Resource Services

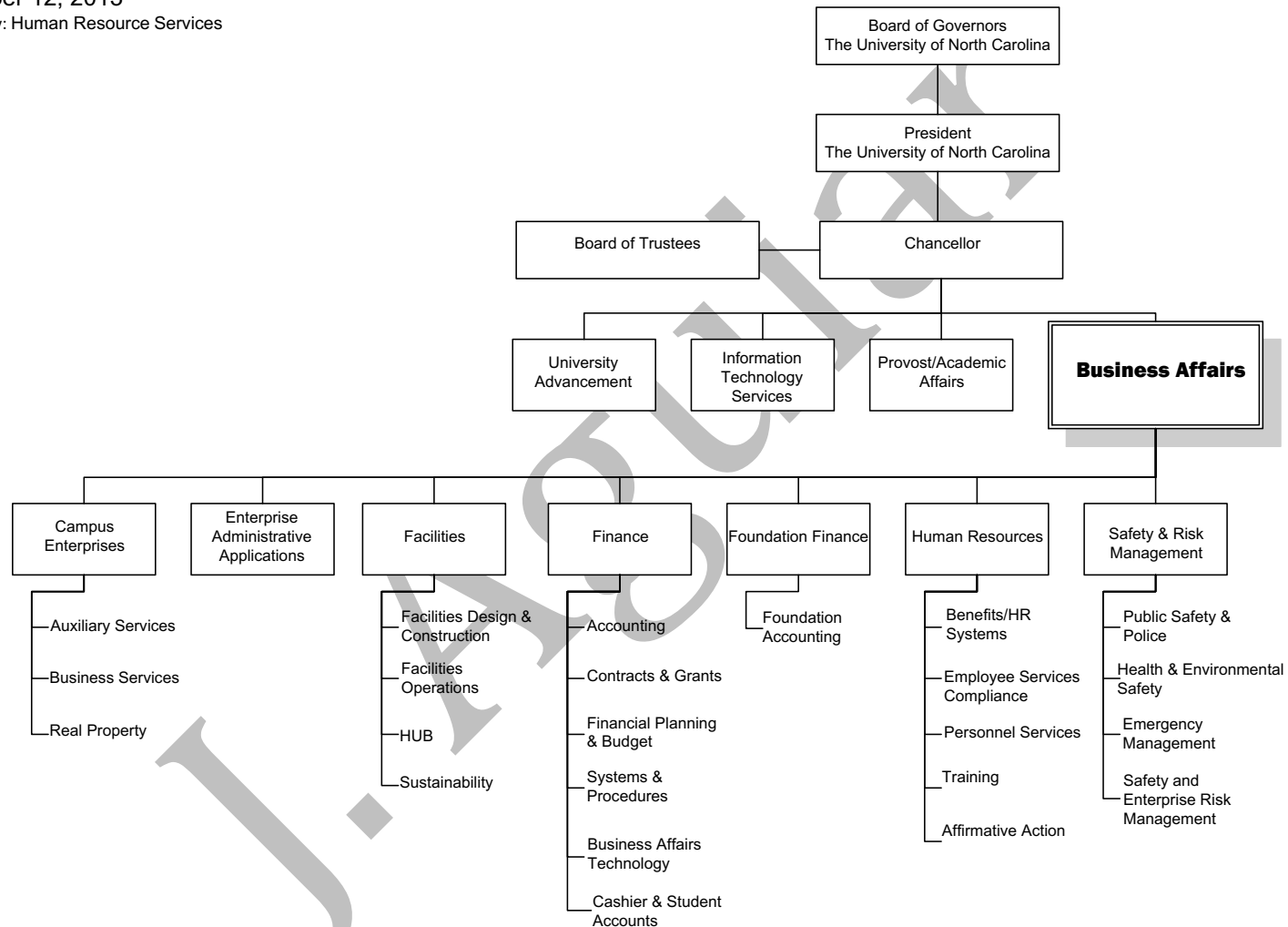


Figure 3. Sample divisional chart for UNC institution

## APPENDIX B

## Sample Survey and Interview Questions

**Instructions:** This questionnaire contains statements about organizational behavior and leadership. Next to each question indicate how rarely or often your organization displays each behavior using the following scoring system:

	Almost Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always
1. Things get accomplished around here because employees fear for their jobs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Most employees do not leave this organization because it provides a lot security.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Managers display real leadership traits and are respected by the employees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. There is a real feeling of teamwork.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Only management is allowed to make decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Although the employees are happy and contented, they give only passive cooperation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Both managers and employees want to create better job performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. There is a partnership between managers and employees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Although people obey their leader, they do not respect the leader.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Management's main concern is to make money.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Employees feel they are part of the organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Employees feel a real responsibility to make things work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. When things go wrong, the main concern is to fix it, not to lay blame.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Running head: ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

- |   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 14. There is enthusiasm among the employees to better job performance.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15. Employees feel they are recognized for their work.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. Management does not expect the employees to give more than minimal performance.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 17. Employees are part of the decision-making process.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. Managers retain the final decision-making authority within my department or team.                                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 19. Management includes one or more employees in determining what to do and how to do it.                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 20. Management creates an atmosphere of mutual trust.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 21. Management demonstrates honest, ethical behavior in all transactions.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 22. Management communicates a clear vision with recognizable goals for the organization and its people.                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 24. Organizational goals are translated practically and meaningfully for people from the lowest level to the highest level. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 25. Managers implement innovation as a method to improve performance.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 26. Managers appropriately provide authority to others to make decisions.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



- |  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 27. The organization demonstrates through leadership support and efficient management of personal stress levels.                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 28. Management supports and demonstrates balance between leadership responsibilities, family, and outside activities.              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 29. Management supports and facilitates efficient cross-functional communication that results in few project or production delays. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**Sample Follow-up Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about your working relationship with your supervisor. How would you characterize that relationship?
2. Do you supervise any employees or students?
3. How do you respond to issues surrounding job performance?

