



Decentralized Budgeting and the Academic Dean: Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Responsibility Center Management

Linda Kosten

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Responsibility center management (RCM) is a university budget management model that decentralizes revenue and expense to the unit level. Academic deans play a key role as unit leaders within this model. The central issue explored by this study was the lack of an evidence-based understanding of RCM and how effective this budget model is from the perspective of academic deans. A survey instrument was designed and administered to deans at 27 doctoral universities using RCM. Positive outcome scales investigated overall effectiveness, accountability and entrepreneurialism, empowerment, and fiscal awareness. Negative outcome scales investigated increased competition among colleges, a negative impact on interdisciplinarity, fiscal priorities superseding academic considerations, and college priorities overriding university priorities. Data analysis examined results using institutional, college, and individual demographic characteristics. Implications and recommendations for university administrators are provided, as well as reflections on the impact of corporate models like RCM on the culture of higher education.

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