Building Trust in Higher Education:
Applying Stephen M.R. Covey's *The Speed of Trust* to Academic Leadership

How trust can enhance leadership in academic settings, build stronger teams, and improve overall institutional outcomes.

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"Trust is the one thing that changes everything." – Stephen M. R. Covey.

The Role of Trust in Higher Education Leadership:
- Importance of trust in faculty-student relationships, administration, governance, and broader institutional success.
- Higher education is a trust-driven environment where leaders need to create transparent, reliable, and collaborative spaces.

The Economic & Leadership Case for Trust in Academia:
- High trust accelerates decisions, enhances collaboration, and reduces costs (e.g., compliance measures, conflict resolution).
- Low trust creates inefficiencies, misunderstandings, and increased skepticism among faculty, students, and staff.

Trustworthy	**X**	**Trusting**	**= Trust**
(Trust is Earned)		(Trust is Given)	

Cultural Norm-Start with Suspicion-Distrust (The Leader Goes First)

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Trust Presentation in 4 Parts

- **Part 1:** The Trust Tax and Trust Dividend in Higher Education

- **Part 2:** The 5 Waves of Trust in Academic Leadership

- **Part 3:** The Four Cores of Credibility in Academic Leadership

- **Part 4:** *13 Behaviors of High-Trust Leaders*

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Part 1: The Trust Tax and Trust Dividend in Higher Education
The Trust <u>Tax</u> in Academic Leadership:

- **Key Concept**: Low trust leads to inefficiencies in academia, such as excessive bureaucracy, delays in decision-making, faculty turnover, and student disengagement. Transactional costs.

- Example: Low trust between faculty and administration can slow down curriculum changes or campus initiatives.

- Case Study: A situation where miscommunication or lack of transparency led to a breakdown in trust and increased organizational costs.

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The Trust Tax and Trust Dividend in Higher Education
The Trust <u>Dividend</u> in Academic Leadership:

- **Key Concept**: High trust reduces the need for excessive oversight, increases collaboration, and accelerates progress in academic programs, research, and student outcomes. Trust is the new currency of our time.

- Example: A high-trust environment between faculty and administration leads to more innovative academic programs and student retention efforts.

- Case Study: An institution where trust-building efforts among leadership, faculty, and students led to improved faculty satisfaction and student performance.

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Part 2: The 5 Waves of Trust in Academic Leadership

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Self Trust

- **Key Principle**: Credibility in leadership.

- How integrity, intent, capabilities, and results are crucial for an academic leader's credibility. In *Part 3*

- **Example:** An academic leader being honest and transparent in decision-making, which builds trust among peers, students, and administration.

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Relationship Trust

- **Key Principle**: Building trust through behavior.
- Trust between provost, deans, chairs, faculty, staff, and students.
- **13 Behaviors**: Key behaviors for building trust in higher education (e.g., showing respect, practicing accountability, communicating openly).– *In Part 4*
- **Example:** Trust within academic committees, leading to more efficient governance and decision-making processes.

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Organizational Trust

- **Key Principle**: Creating alignment within the institution.
- Leadership must ensure alignment of values and practices across departments.
- Trust in the institution through shared governance, consistent communication, and transparent policies.
- **Example:** Faculty trusting the administration when it comes to budget allocations or curriculum changes due to a culture of open dialogue.

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Market Trust

- **Key Principle**: Building a strong institutional reputation.
- Universities rely on external trust—whether it's from potential students, funding bodies, alumni, or partner institutions.
- **Example:** When an institution is trusted for academic excellence and integrity, it attracts top talent, donors, and collaborators.

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Societal Trust

- **Key Principle**: Institutional contributions to society.

- Universities contribute to societal trust through their role in research, public service, and educational equity.

- **Example:** Engaging in ethical research, environmental sustainability, and fostering public dialogue builds the institution's societal trust.

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Part 3: The Four Cores of Credibility in Academic Leadership
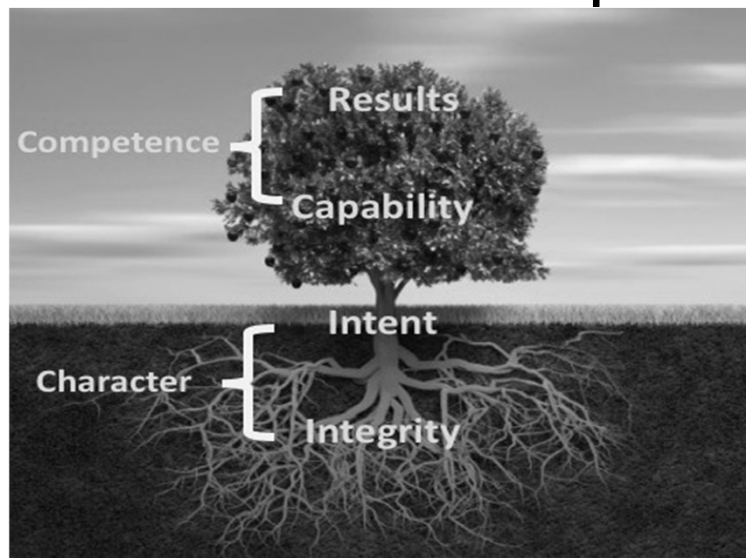
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Integrity

- Acting consistently with academic values, ethical standards, and personal principles.
- For academic leaders: Aligning actions with institutional mission statements, being transparent with faculty and students.
- **Example:** Integrity in academic decisions—upholding ethical standards in faculty recruitment or promotion decisions.

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Intent

- Demonstrating genuine concern for students, faculty, and staff's well-being and success.
- Transparent motives build trust: Do academic leaders act in the interest of the entire community, or is there personal gain involved?
- **Example:** A leader explaining their rationale for program cuts or resource allocation to show fairness and transparency.

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Capabilities

- Leaders must be competent in navigating the complexities of higher education—curriculum, faculty management, and external relations.
- Continuous learning and adapting to new educational challenges (e.g., technology in education, diversity initiatives).
- **Example:** A university president with the strategic vision and communication skills to navigate institutional crises (e.g., budget deficits, enrollment challenges).

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Results

- Academic leaders must consistently deliver results in areas such as student outcomes, research output, and institutional goals.
- Maintaining trust through evidence of achievement (e.g., improving student success rates, securing research grants).
- **Example:** Trust is solidified when a dean delivers on promises to improve faculty resources or enhance academic programs.

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Part 4: Stephen M.R. Covey's *13 Behaviors of High-Trust Leaders*

1. Each focuses on actions that can foster or erode trust in relationships.
2. Each behavior has its opposite and its counterfeit (a deceptive action that seems like the behavior but undermines trust).
3. Understanding these opposites and counterfeits helps leaders avoid trust-damaging behaviors and cultivate genuine trust.

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Character-Based Behaviors (1-5)
1. Talk Straight

- **Definition**: Be honest, straightforward, and transparent. Tell the truth and avoid ambiguity.

- **Opposite**: **Lying or deceiving.** This destroys trust outright by providing false information.

- **Counterfeit**: **Spinning information or withholding key details.** Appearing to tell the truth while omitting crucial facts misleads others and undermines credibility.

- **Application**: Academic leaders should be clear in their communication with faculty, students, and staff. For example, when addressing difficult budget cuts or policy changes, being straightforward builds trust.

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Character-Based Behaviors
2. Demonstrate Respect

- **Definition**: Show care and concern for others. Treat everyone with dignity, fairness, and kindness.

- **Opposite**: **Showing disrespect or rudeness**. Dismissing others' opinions, acting condescendingly, or treating them as inferior destroys trust.

- **Counterfeit**: **Fake respect or insincere politeness**. Pretending to care or respect someone without genuine concern can be manipulative and is easily recognized, leading to a loss of trust.

- **Application**: In higher education, respect can be shown by valuing diverse perspectives and recognizing the contributions of both junior faculty and students. Leaders should acknowledge the work of others openly and frequently.

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Character-Based Behaviors
3. Create Transparency

- **Definition**: Be open and clear about your motives and actions. Share information freely. Transparency fosters trust by eliminating hidden agendas.

- **Opposite**: **Hiding or covering up information**. Concealing facts or withholding important information causes distrust.

- **Counterfeit**: **Sharing selectively or pretending to be transparent**. Offering some information but omitting important parts makes it seem like you're being open when you're really not.

- **Application**: Transparency in decision-making processes, like tenure evaluations or curriculum changes, helps build credibility. Faculty trust administrators more when they understand how decisions are made.

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Character-Based Behaviors
4. Right Wrongs

- **Definition**: Make things right when mistakes occur. Admit your mistakes, apologize sincerely, and correct the problem/fix the damage caused.

- **Opposite**: **Denying or covering up mistakes**. Refusing to acknowledge errors or shifting blame damages trust deeply.

- **Counterfeit**: **Justifying mistakes without fixing them**. Offering insincere apologies or excuses without taking real responsibility leaves people doubting your integrity.

- **Application**: Leaders should acknowledge when decisions were incorrect or when processes were unfair. This could mean addressing grievances from faculty members about workload distribution or handling a student conflict poorly.

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Character-Based Behaviors
5. Show Loyalty

- **Definition**: Give credit to others and protect their reputation. Speak about people as if they were present.

- **Opposite**: **Gossiping or betraying others**. Speaking ill of people behind their back or taking credit for their work is a breach of trust.

- **Counterfeit**: **Fake loyalty to manipulate or curry favor**. Pretending to be loyal while harboring hidden agendas undermines trust when revealed.

- **Application**: Publicly recognize faculty and staff achievements. Academic leaders can build loyalty by advocating for their team's success rather than taking credit for themselves.

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Competence-Based Behaviors (6-10)
6. Deliver Results

- **Definition**: Perform and achieve the expected outcomes. Get the right things done.

- **Opposite**: **Failing to deliver or not meeting expectations**. Consistently underperforming erodes trust in your abilities and reliability.

- **Counterfeit**: **Delivering only symbolic results or focusing on quick fixes**. Doing the bare minimum to appear productive without addressing core issues or taking credit for minor achievements can erode long-term trust.

- **Application**: If a department chair promises to improve resources for research, delivering on that promise strengthens their leadership credibility. Faculty trust leaders who consistently fulfill commitments, from funding initiatives to addressing faculty concerns.

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Competence-Based Behaviors
7. Get Better

- **Definition**: Continuously improve your skills, knowledge, and capabilities. Seek feedback and stay current. This shows that you are competent and can adapt to changes.

- **Opposite**: **Staying stagnant or refusing to learn**. A lack of growth signals incompetence, leading to diminished trust.

- **Counterfeit**: **Claiming improvement without actual change**. Making superficial efforts at self-improvement (like attending a seminar but not applying what you've learned) gives the appearance of growth but doesn't yield real progress.

- **Application**: In academia, learning is ongoing. A chair or dean who consistently pursue professional development and adapts to new challenges (such as integrating technology into the classroom) demonstrates trustworthiness by staying competent and relevant.

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Competence-Based Behaviors
8. Confront Reality

- **Definition**: Address difficult situations directly, even when they're uncomfortable. Face the truth head-on. Don't shy away from tough conversations or problems.

- **Opposite**: **Avoiding or ignoring difficult issues**. Pretending problems don't exist, avoiding conflict, or sweeping issues under the rug fosters distrust.

- **Counterfeit**: **Partially addressing problems**. Tackling only part of the problem or framing issues in a way that avoids the core challenges can lead to unresolved issues and erode trust over time.

- **Application**: When a university faces financial challenges, avoiding the issue will erode trust. Instead, leaders who directly confront the reality of budget cuts, underperformance, or declining enrollment build trust by tackling problems transparently.

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Competence-Based Behaviors
9. Clarify Expectations

- **Definition**: Clearly define and communicate expectations. Avoid misunderstandings by ensuring everyone knows their role and responsibilities.

- **Opposite**: **Leaving expectations unclear or ambiguous**. Failing to set clear guidelines creates confusion, frustration, and distrust.

- **Counterfeit**: **Setting vague or unrealistic expectations**. Pretending to clarify while keeping expectations broad or impossible to achieve sets people up for failure and can lead to mistrust when they feel misled.

- **Application**: Clarifying what is expected from faculty in terms of research, teaching, and service helps prevent frustration. For example, when evaluating tenure, ensuring that expectations are well-communicated leads to a fair and transparent process.

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Competence-Based Behaviors
10. Practice Accountability

- **Definition**: Hold yourself and others accountable for actions and outcomes. Don't shirk responsibility or place blame. Take responsibility for actions and ensure others do the same.

- **Opposite**: **Avoiding responsibility or shifting blame**. Failing to own your mistakes or letting others avoid accountability undermines trust.

- **Counterfeit**: **Holding others accountable but not yourself**. Acting hypocritically by demanding accountability from others while not practicing it yourself erodes respect and trust.

- **Application**: A department head who takes responsibility for a failed initiative rather than shifting the blame to faculty or external factors earns respect. Similarly, holding others accountable, like ensuring that committee work is completed on time, builds trust.

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Character & Competence-Based Behaviors
11. Listen First

- **Definition**: Seek to understand before trying to be understood. Listen attentively and empathically to others without interrupting.

- **Opposite**: **Ignoring or dismissing others' opinions**. Not listening or cutting others off during conversations shows disrespect and diminishes trust.

- **Counterfeit**: **Pretending to listen while waiting for your turn to speak**. Offering surface-level attention without truly engaging can make people feel disregarded.

- **Application**: In an academic setting, leaders who listen to faculty and student concerns demonstrate respect and value their input. When creating new policies, consulting with those affected builds a foundation of trust and ensures better decision-making.

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Character & Competence-Based Behaviors
12. Keep Commitments

- **Definition**: Do what you say you will do. Fulfill your promises and agreements. Keeping commitments builds trust faster than anything else.

- **Opposite**: **Breaking promises or failing to follow through**. Inconsistent behavior or neglecting commitments is one of the fastest ways to lose trust.

- **Counterfeit**: **Making excuses for not keeping commitments**. Rationalizing or explaining away broken promises, rather than owning up to them and fixing the situation, diminishes trust.

- **Application**: A provost who promises additional resources for faculty development and follows through creates a sense of reliability. Trust is eroded when commitments—whether big or small—are broken.

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Character & Competence-Based Behaviors
13. Extend Trust

- **Definition**: Place trust in others and give them opportunities to prove their trustworthiness. This includes empowering others with responsibility.

- **Opposite**: **Withholding trust**. Refusing to delegate or micromanaging others communicates a lack of faith in their abilities, which undermines their confidence and trust in you.

- **Counterfeit**: **Extending trust irresponsibly**. Blindly trusting someone without assessing their capability or readiness can lead to failures that erode trust.

- **Application**: In higher education, trust is extended when department heads give faculty the autonomy to lead projects, make decisions, or manage course designs. When students are trusted with leadership roles in student government or research projects, they rise to the occasion, furthering mutual trust.

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Importance of the 13 Behaviors in Academic Leadership
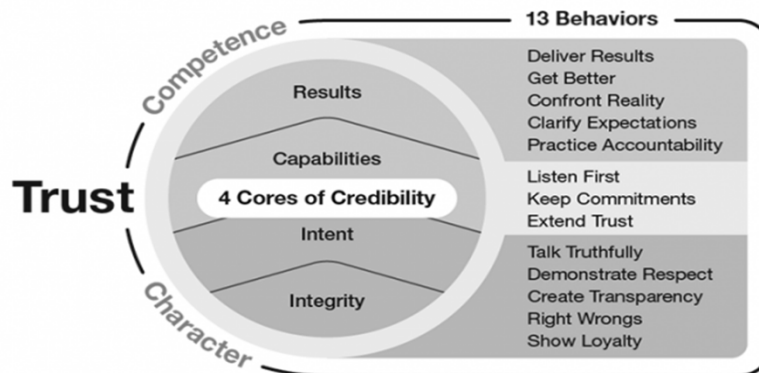
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Conclusion and Call to Action

Summarize the Key Points:

- Trust as an accelerant for institutional success (trust dividend) versus the cost of mistrust (trust tax).
- The five waves of trust applied to academic leadership.
- The four cores of credibility as the foundation for personal and institutional trust.
- Covey's *13 Behaviors of High-Trust Leaders*

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Call to Action

- Reflect on personal credibility—are you demonstrating integrity, intent, capabilities, and results in your leadership role?

- Focus on building trust in your relationships with faculty, students, and administrative peers by practicing Covey's 13 Behaviors of Trust.

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10 Phrases Leaders Can Use To Build Trust

- I've noticed a change
- Thank you for letting me know
- I want to check in
- What do you think?
- I've been there, too
- Let me share what I know and don't know at this point
- How can I help you make progress?
- I need your help
- This is a challenge for all of us
- That's my mistake

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6 Ways Leaders Can Build Trust and Avoid Breaking It

1. Be truly open to hearing about and, when appropriate, accommodating your direct reports' lives outside work.
2. Gracefully step in when direct reports are the target of a client's or another leader's frustrations.
3. Recognize and appreciate people's work, even in the smallest ways.
4. Handle conflicts between team members fairly and effectively.
5. Help set and support realistic career development expectations.
6. Know when to assist versus coach—and how to do both without making people feel inadequate.

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Closing Quote
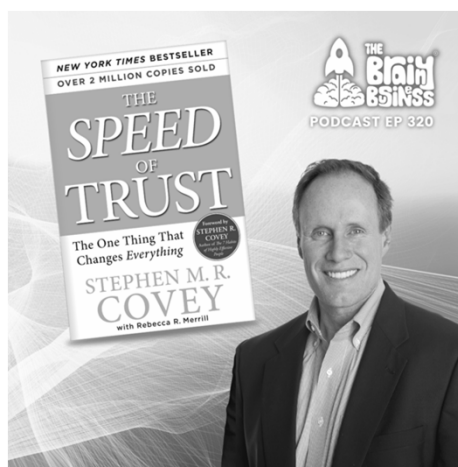
"The ability to establish, grow, extend, and restore trust is the professional and personal competency of our time."

Stephen M. R. Covey.

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