

Academic Receivership as Alien Rule

Gail Dubrow and Debra Friedman
University of Washington

Academic receivership – a relatively rare event in which a departmental chair is imposed from the outside by a dean or provost when the department is judged unable to govern itself effectively – is an instance of alien rule within the academy. In this paper we explore the question of what aspects of identity make an academic leader “alien”, the conditions under which outsiders are chosen to lead academic departments, the reasons for departmental preferences for leaders of “one’s own kind”, and why the disciplinary affinity of a leader might matter. Additionally, we explore the question of why there is such a truncated market for academic leadership of departments. To inform our analysis, we draw upon case studies of receivership at a small number of universities.