Social Scientists classify the organizational structure of higher education institutions, especially decentralized, research universities, as “Organized Anarchies (OA).” Of the many differences between OA and traditional hierarchical organizations, the methods used for prioritization and decision making are the most meaningful.

The decision making process is called “garbage can decision making” because decisions tend to be more ad hoc, triggered when a problem, its solution, and resources are all available.

This differs from the “rational decision making” of traditional organizations where a problem is identified, various solutions are explored and only after a solution is chosen are resources applied.

Relationships are much more important in an organized anarchy than in an organization with rational decision making. Traditional influencing tactics such as rational persuasion perform very poorly while personal and inspirational appeals or exchanges work better.

- **Spend Time:** Since energy and information are scarce resources, those who find time to devote themselves to particular causes have a greater chance of shaping the organizational response.
- **Persist:** Decisions both for and against actions may not be final and could change if revisited in another context.
- **Exchange Status for Substance:** Create visible and prominent subgroups to attract attention to a substantive problem.
- **Facilitate Opposition Participation:** Include opposition voices in processes of choice introducing diversity of opinion and perspective.
- **Overload the System:** Introduce enough ideas such that at least some of them are selected for action.
- **Provide Garbage Cans:** Since many problems and questions in Higher Education are met with a barrage of inconsequential proposals and more high-level problems, provide garbage cans in order to redirect problems towards other venues.
- **Manage Unobtrusively:** Let the system go where it wants to go with only the minor interventions that make it go where it should.
- **Interpret History:** Use the interpretation of the past to justify and reinforce current actions.

**Influence Tactics & Outcomes**

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**CHOICES**

- RATIONAL DECISION MAKING
- GARBAGE CAN DECISION MAKING

**CHOICE OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT**

**Be Curious**
There is much that we don’t know and that others can teach us.

**Be Genuine**
Take an interest in what other people are doing; understand the part that they play at the institution and the value that they create.

**Be Transparent**
Having motives and an agenda is okay!
Share Information, Progress, Results... and the Credit
As in the collegial institutions where power is shared freely, sharing relevant information and credit for accomplishments cultivates trust and expand one’s referent power.

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