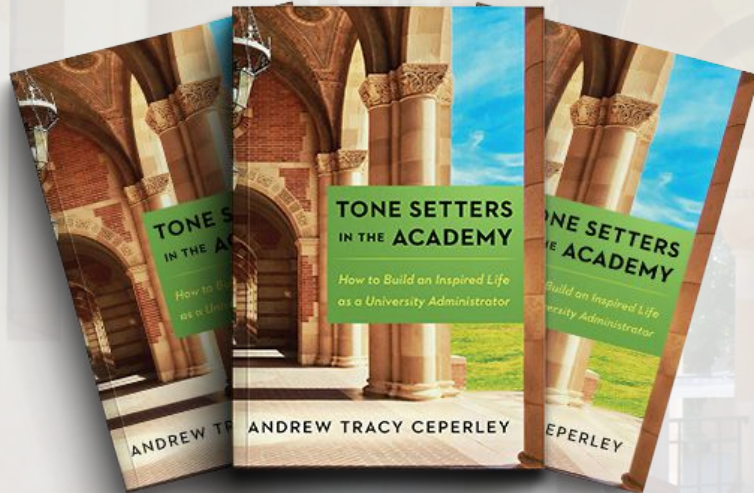


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# Review of *Tone Setters in the Academy*

By Bill Chamberlain



While consultant and former career services administrator, Andy Ceperley's new book, *Tone Setters in the Academy*, is explicitly addressed to university administrators, all NALP members, many of whom are middle managers within their schools or legal employers, will find much value here. Within his larger focus on 'setting the right tone,' Ceperley addresses the common joys (students/new hires) and struggles (budgets, advancement) of anyone who works in a management role. His focus is on those who are not managing partners or university provosts or presidents but rather on the frontline who work directly with students or recruits and usually have at least a few direct reports.

Ceperley's style is warm, positive, and focused on the practical. He relies on his experience both as a consultant with various schools as well as his years as a higher educational professional. He also references a bevy of outside sources from psychology, philosophy, and poetry to provide shape and background for his practical suggestions.

## Breaking it Down

Over the course of eleven concise and well-written chapters, the author focuses on various

pieces of the tonal puzzle. Setting the right tone, in the larger sense, means finding greater satisfaction in our jobs, improving our teams, and in doing so, improving the larger institutions for which we work.

Each chapter follows a similar and useful structure. He titles each section with a particular topic, such as Transition, Purpose, Time, or People. Each chapter begins with an example from one of the many university campuses with whom the author has worked, followed by a helpful (and healthy) series of "mindsets" or what we all know, less usefully, as "best practices." He ends each chapter with a question that moves the reader forward and is intended as an action item or a spur toward growth.

"Tone" in Ceperley's book means many things – yes, tone of voice, but also character, dedication, being an amazing colleague, doing what is best for the students, and more. He encourages his readers to know and understand the institutions they work for and to avoid becoming siloed; and he wants us to explore how our sense of purpose and our values align with the jobs we do. He encourages us to pursue growth opportunities. He speaks of how to use time and how to communicate better with co-workers.

## Setting the right tone, in a larger sense, means finding greater satisfaction in our jobs, improving our teams, and in doing so, improving the larger institutions for which we work.

He provides suggestions for dealing with perceived and actual limitations in our roles and workplaces, such as being under- or over-utilized; feeling like an imposter; or dealing with other employees with fixed mindsets. He has us confront the potential for stagnation in our jobs and what can help us move forward; and shows us how to re-find the joy or make the difficult decision to move on. Finally, he discusses how to handle transitions in one's workplace and/or in one's career and ends with finding the wisdom which forms the basis for character.

His practical suggestions or 'mindsets' can help break down the problems we face in the workplace and help us develop new solutions. For example: Spend only 20% of your time on administrivia. Become a data geek. Practice listening. Look outside your office to give yourself a chance to breathe and discover whatever interests you might have (in your current workplace or beyond), seek opportunities to learn new skills, and do something for which you will not receive recognition.

Read this book. Ceperley is that wise and experienced friend who gives you new ideas and support. Whether you are a career or a recruiting professional, you will find in *Tone Setters* a voice that understands both your struggles and your joys and that will keep you moving forward.+



**Bill Chamberlain** ([chamberlain.bill@gmail.com](mailto:chamberlain.bill@gmail.com)) has been a NALP member since 1997 and has served on the NALP Board of Directors as well as in other NALP leadership roles. He is a proud member of RAN, NALP's new alumni group.

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