Setting the Stage for Teaching and Learning in American Higher Education: Making the Case for Faculty Development

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Introduction

In American higher education, past history and current practice are often foundational to future innovations. Through the past several decades, the academy has experienced numerous adjustments or institutional shifts as societal needs and student expectations have changed. Many institutions have embraced these shifts voluntarily and welcomed new operational paradigms while other colleges and universities have struggled to maintain time-honored patterns of educational structure and procedure. To be sure, the manner in which scholars and practitioners in the field of teaching and learning have led their institutions to respond to these challenges has marked the difference between a thriving organization and one that is struggling simply to survive.

Because the faculty is crucial to a dynamic and growing educational enterprise, faculty development should be viewed as a necessity, not a nicety. For higher education to manage societal shifts of near epoch proportion, faculty must be fully prepared and fully engaged. The faculty must be ready through ongoing enhancement of their abilities and intellect to answer the call to lead their prospective institutions through the morass of uncertainty brought about by cultural, national, and even worldwide current and future realities.
To that end, it seems appropriate at the beginning of a monograph dedicated to enhancing faculty development to review at least a few of the major shifts facing higher education today. These forces, along with others both unmentioned and to this point unknown, have shaped and will continue to transform the practice of teaching and learning. To understand these issues is to be better prepared to address them in a manner befitting the dignity of the teaching profession and indicative of the innovative spirit of American higher education.

**From “Chalk and Talk” to “Point and Click”**

In 1997 business management mogul Peter Drucker said, “Thirty years from now, the big university campuses will be relics.” Citing the rising cost of higher education that rivaled the rising cost of health care, Drucker told interviewers Robert Lenzner and Stephen Johnson “such totally uncontrollable expenditures, without any visible improvement in either the content or the quality of education, means that the system is rapidly becoming untenable. Already we are beginning to deliver more lectures and classes off campus via satellite or two-way video at a fraction of the cost. The college won’t survive as a residential institution. Today’s buildings are hopelessly unsuited and totally unneeded” (Drucker 1997, 127).

Over a decade later, at least one aspect of Drucker’s prognostication has come to reality: A digital divide now exists in the academy. The chasm is not between socioeconomic levels within the college-going public. It is not necessarily even generational. The digital divide now present in the academy is pedagogical. The lecture system, developed as a primary delivery tool of the seventeenth century forward, where the instructor is the major provider of information, may not be the best medium for reaching students of the twenty-first century. New student populations of digital natives have created challenges for college professors who may or may not have experience and/or training in educating these new higher education clienteles. Faculty members tend to teach as they were taught and accordingly have little experience with new instructional pedagogies and delivery systems.

Yet presenting what was presented, teaching what was taught, is a luxury higher education purveyors no longer can afford. Addressing the nature of this cultural shift, authors Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown said, “For most of the twentieth century our educational system has been built on the assumption that teaching is necessary for learning to occur. Accordingly, education has been seen as a process of transferring information from a higher authority (the teacher) down to the student. This model, however, just can’t keep up with the rapid rate of change in the twenty-first century” (Thomas and Brown 2011, 34). Thomas and Brown argued convincingly the traditional teaching model that transfers information “presumes the existence of knowledge that both is worth communicating and doesn’t
change very much over time” (Thomas and Brown 2011, 40), a presumption the every changing world reality has begun to question. Rather than teaching “about the world,” Thomas and Brown advocated systems that “focus on learning through engagement within the world” (Thomas and Brown 2011, 38). In this new culture of learning that relies on constant connectivity and utilizes unlimited data via digital access, even the approach to student assessment changes. Instead of requiring students to “prove that they have received the information transferred to them,” for example, grading, students are encouraged “to embrace what [they] don’t know, come up with better questions about it, and continue asking those questions in order to learn more and more, both incrementally and exponentially” (Thomas and Brown 2011, 38).

This view of the changing nature of higher education is enjoying increased acceptance. In describing digital natives, individuals born after 1980, authors John Palfrey and Urs Gasser said, “One thing you know for sure: these kids are different. They study, work, write, and interact with each other in ways that are very different from the ways that you did growing up. They read blogs rather than newspapers. They often meet each other online before they meet in person. They probably don’t even know what a library card looks like, much less have one; and if they do, they probably never used it. They download their music, legally or illegally, rather than buying it in record stores. They’re more likely to send an instant message (IM) than to pick up the telephone to arrange a date later in the afternoon. They adopt and pal around with virtual Neopets online instead of pound puppies. And they’re connected to one another by a common culture. Major aspects of their lives—social interactions, friendships, and civic activities—are mediated by digital technologies. And they’ve never known any other way of life” (Palfrey and Gasser 2008, 2).

Furthermore, the repercussions of this societal shift are felt far beyond the ivory-covered walls of higher education. Don Tapscott, author of Growing Up Digital (Tapscott 1999) and Wikinomics (Tapscott and Williams 2008) has now published a sequel to his earlier works. Grown Up Digital was the result of a $4 million research project, not sponsored by higher education but by corporate leaders who recognized the nature of the workforce has changed due to these shifts and who understood their future productivity, if not very existence as ongoing business concerns, was dependent on coming to terms with the distinctively new behavioral patterns and work habits of the Net Generation (Tapscott 2009, xi).

Yet the sobering truth of the matter is many faculty members do not have the expertise or auxiliary clerical assistance to make a transition to these twenty-first-century skills. What is even more troubling about this reality is that the simultaneous explosion of students attending higher education has exacerbated this situation. Practices regarding open-door admission policies, focused recruitment of nontraditional students, guaranteed governmental financial aid programs, a focus on gender and race equity in
enrollment, as well as the rise of the “near-to-home” community colleges, and online educational programs and institutions have swollen the ranks of those seeking higher education, many of whom are underprepared for the academic rigor of university life.

Students who are underprepared academically are at particular peril in the current digital divide between traditional and emerging pedagogical methods. In their case, they neither understand the subject, algebra for example, nor do they understand the means by which the faculty member is explaining algebra. These students are adrift with respect to the factors of a polynomial and are frustrated because their instructors are not “tweeting” the answer. These students may need more faculty “hand holding” and mentoring to be successful, and sheer numbers of such students may make this an impossible faculty task.

Given this overwhelming shift, the academy must embrace new student populations and participate in faculty development activities that develop and enhance Net Generation–specific teaching and learning methodologies.

From the Trivium to Career Preparation

While the comparative in this second major shift admittedly spans a large segment of history, basically the whole of Western thought to be exact, the intent in doing so is to call attention to the inevitability of the curriculum to change. What started as trivium (“three core studies”) and quadrivium (“the four ways”) has become an academic smorgasbord that Barry Schwartz has termed the Tyranny of Choice. Where the Greeks studied grammar, dialect, and rhetoric followed by advanced studies in arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy, “the modern university has become a kind of intellectual shopping mall. Universities offer a wide array of different ‘goods’ and allow, even encourage, students—the ‘customers’—to shop around until they find what they like. Individual customers are free to ‘purchase’ whatever bundles of knowledge they want, and the university provides whatever its customers demand” (Schwartz 2004, B6).

The reality of this transition has been hastened during the last few decades by a growing public dissatisfaction with higher education. Legislatures insist on greater accountability, lower cost, and enhanced access while parents express their perennial concern, “Will little Johnny be able to get a job?” Higher education and the curriculum that drives it certainly have come a long way from the time Milton described the purpose of education as “to fit a man to perform … all the offices, both of private and public, of peace and war” (Milton 2003, 632). Today’s career-focused, highly specialized curriculum may have inadvertently robbed society of John Newman’s educated person “who has learned to think and to reason and to compare and to discriminate and to analyze, who has refined his (or her) taste, and
formed his judgment, and sharpened his mental vision . . .” and can take up any occupation or vocation “with an ease, a grace, a versatility, and a success, to which another is a stranger” (Newman 1982, 125). What follows is a discussion of specific educational issues higher education must now face as a result of this shift in educational purpose.

In many colleges and universities, the broad course of study that emphasized the information base every educated man and woman should know is fading away or is perhaps already a distant image. Common throughout the academy has been the reduction of the general education core in favor of courses whose intended outcome is the preparation of students for specific careers in the world of work. In keeping with this change, career-focused majors have been instituted, many times simultaneously with alternative delivery systems leaving faculty members, many of whom are steeped in traditional teaching methods and educational programs, to decide if these trends are lessening the value and prestige of the degree or if they represent an opportunity to meet the needs of a new generation of learners.

These shifts in what constitutes the curriculum not only question what will be taught but also by whom it will be taught. To be sure, not all faculty members have the same skill sets. Some teach lower-division survey classes well while others excel in the delivery of upper-division and graduate classes, and still others in research and public service. Should only “junior” faculty be relegated to teaching general education or core classes? Is it important that students be challenged by material gleaned from faculty thesis and dissertation projects or should undergraduate and graduate material be clearly distinguished and segregated? Would not the learning environments on many college campuses be enhanced by matching faculty with such teaching strengths, and courses-of-study with material that is relevant and broad-based within the discipline? For this system to work, good teaching matched to student learning needs to become a primary focus in the academic assignment procedures and encouraged by inclusion in the tenure and promotion process.

In a good-faith effort to address the aforementioned learning styles of digital natives and the growing number of adult learners returning to higher education, alternative delivery systems are being developed and implemented that largely eliminate the in-class student-teacher experience. Many of these blended or totally online classes and/or degree programs can be and are student friendly, financially enhancing for the sponsoring institution, and focused on increasing higher education opportunities to additional populations. Unfortunately, many of these educational endeavors have been developed without ensuring student learning outcomes are equal to or greater than those in a traditional delivery system, that faculty members are appropriately prepared and supported to deliver the content to this population, and that students have the ability to access the Internet both on and off the campus.
These and other curricular issues are complicated when institutions remain inexorably entrenched in a traditional academic calendar. Courses must fit a fall, spring, and summer delivery model. Because federal financial aid is distributed on a per-year basis rather than a per-degree basis, students dependent on aid are forced to spread out their education over four-plus years rather than concentrate their learning into a shorter period. In a similar fashion, many institutional scholarships are paid based on two payments during a twelve-month period. Such regulations have the consequence of rendering most university faculties and campus facilities underutilized or even idle for one-third of the calendar year.

Furthermore, each class must fit a three- or four-credit-hour delivery unit. One might believe the Carnegie unit (the underlying definition of 800 in-class minutes of instruction per one hour of academic credit) was included in Hammurabi’s law code or came down the mountain with Moses on a stone tablet! Defining what constitutes the faculty’s per-term, full-time load may discourage an institution from allowing and encouraging such educational enhancement experiences as yearlong faculty-student research projects, self-paced learning activities, directed studies/focused learning not offered in the prescribed curriculum, or civic involvement and engagement experiences.

In the face of these dichotomizing or polarizing issues, higher education would be well advised to remember “a liberal education is not job training, although it will of course have career outcomes. It is not just broad learning across various arts and sciences. Nor is it just an introduction to the heritage of our past: great events, great people, and great ideas. Education helps shape people, cultivating abilities that last throughout life and transfer to a myriad of tasks” (Holmes 1991, 4). Such a balance, in the face of so many competing forces and factors, will only be accomplished as the faculty is at its best. Faculty development must assist in preparing faculty to accomplish just such a task.

From In Loco Parentis to Living and Learning Communities

When higher education in America was young, those who entered the academy looked to university officials as surrogate parents, a responsibility bequeathed to officials by trusting parents. It is no wonder that Charles William Eliot, president of Harvard from 1869 to 1909, said in his inaugural address, “There is no place so safe as a good college during the critical passage from boyhood to manhood” (Eliot 1969, 44). How troubled indeed would Eliot have been to hear Stanford University professor Lewis Mayhew say only a century later, “Colleges are not churches, clinics, or even parents. Whether or not a student burns a draft card, participates in a civil-rights march, engages in premarital or extramarital sexual activity, becomes pregnant, attends church, sleeps all day or drinks all night, is not really the concern of an educational institution” (Mayhew 1968, 40).
On almost all campuses, the death of *in loco parentis* began a major change in the relationship of the institution and the student, especially in the areas of discipline and cocurricular activities. This change was further reinforced by the passage of laws, in most states, reducing the age of majority from twenty-one to eighteen. Students began to see themselves as citizens of the greater community versus just the campus and began depending on the community versus the college to meet many of their varied social needs.

As student populations have changed on the less traditional campuses, more students now live at home or in off-campus apartments than in residence halls. Clubs and organizations that were once considered important to the collegiate experience have become less so. The student newspaper, yearbook, and intramural activities are less important to building and maintaining the campus culture because campus culture has become less important to maintain. For many, working is more important or more necessary than having a traditional collegiate experience. Once regulated as an “upper-classman privilege,” having a car on campus is a freshman reality and a requirement of the highly mobile student population.

While many traditional student services tend to be waning, others have taken on greater import. Examples are placement, internship, counseling, and financial aid offices as well as focused locations such as child care and ethnic centers, plus organizations directly related to majors that allow students to interact with practicing professionals, and finally honors groups that can be listed as resume builders.

With this shift in the basic role of the campus, student expectation has also changed drastically. The inclusion of formally underserved populations, the change of focus of the college curriculum, and new directions in campus life have presented both new challenges and opportunities to higher education leaders, requiring a complete reevaluation of teaching methods that best enable student learning.

Students of today seem to prefer entertainment over challenges to learn. Fewer enrollees expect to spend time in study outside of class. Gone is the concept of two hours of external work for every one hour of teacher contact. The library is a place to visit electronically versus physically and all needed resources should be online. Plagiarism is neither an understood nor avoided practice. Seeking both part-time and full-time employment, students plan their classes around their work schedules. For many, employment and socialization take precedence over learning about *Gulliver’s Travels*, civilizations of the Nile Valley, or the noble experiment of modern American democracy.

In order to attract students in sufficient numbers to meet revenue requirements, colleges and universities offer services previously provided by the student’s family or community. These expected services frequently include child care, reproductive health information and products, and medical clinics. Institutions are now federally and state mandated to provide a
safe environment, and colleges and universities maintain and support such divisions as campus police and emergency first responders. While important, such activities may increase institutional liability and definitely divert limited funding away from the core mission of the institution. Nonetheless, these services are viewed by a variety of campus constituencies as an essential part of a modern academic life.

Yet just as higher education adjusted to the absence of *in loco parentis*, the environment shifted again as the academy moved from little or no expression of “parental oversight” to what may be called a “kinder, gentler” version of *in loco parentis*. As the new millennium was dawning, higher education began seeing “the proliferation of living-and-learning communities, which aim to eradicate the boundaries between the life of the mind and recreation, between intellectual and social life” (Altschuler and Kramnick 1999, B8). According to Cornell University faculty members Glenn C. Altschuler and Isaac Kramnick, colleges and universities are routinely moving “to create a unified living-and-learning experience for sophomores, juniors, and seniors, regardless of their major (freshmen will soon be housed together on a separate part of the campus). The idea is to give undergraduates opportunities for close daily contact with faculty members and graduate and professional students, by offering residence-based classes, seminars, class sections, and study groups, as well as advising and career services in the residences. Faculty members and graduate students will live and eat in the dorms. The goal is to have students realize that learning and intellectual inquiry are not limited to classroom interactions” (Altschuler and Kramnick 1999, B8).

The implementation of such initiatives seems to indicate that while untenable in its original form, *in loco parentis* helped higher education accomplish its academic purpose. Faculty are realizing a college education regularly catches a young adult in what Michael Oakeshott called the “strange middle moment of life when [the student] knows only enough of himself and of the world which passes before him to wish to know more.” Furthermore, intuitive faculty realize that when properly motivated, and with an appropriate safety net, this same student can “stretch [his/her] sails to the wind” and benefit from “the opportunity of education in conversation with his teacher, his fellows and himself” (Oakeshott 1989, 100–102). Such efforts allow faculty to accomplish what Woodrow Wilson sought to achieve at Princeton when he said, “The real intellectual life of a body of undergraduates, if there be any, manifests itself not in the classroom, but in what they do and talk of and set before themselves as their favorite objects between classes and lectures” (Bundy 1959, 12).

All of these changes, with their multitude of nuance subtleties, present higher education with the opportunity to shape society by shaping the future leaders of society. Through faculty development, members of the academic community come to understand that the academic environment on most campuses has changed, and these changes require new ways of
looking at the role of education in the twenty-first century. The academy must realize that the role of campus life has changed and requires the faculty to be committed to understanding the new campus culture and be prepared to meet student needs.

**From Ivy-Covered Walls to Corporate America**

The last quarter of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century ushered in a pervasive and all-encompassing operational change in higher education. Economic realities and an increasingly competitive educational landscape drove college and university leaders to diminish, if not entirely abandon, the model of the professor/president. Harvard president Derek Bok summarized this development by noting “the antebellum philosopher-presidents gave way to entrepreneurial leaders who built modern research universities” (Bok 1990, 67). Other institutions, pressed by accreditation requirements to document institutional effectiveness, adopted corporate strategies such as Management by Objectives (MBO) and W. Edwards Deming's Quality Improvement Process (QIP). According to A. Bartlett Giamatti, Yale president from 1978 to 1986, the end result has been “universities that ten years ago were run in a collegial fashion now completely structured to look from the outside as if they were manufacturing or banking firms, with tables of organization replete with executive vice presidents, vice presidents, lawyers; all the appurtenances of a major profitmaking corporation” (Giamatti 1996, 41).

To be sure, this shift in the educational landscape did not take place overnight. To the contrary, the corporate model of higher education leadership has been developing for quite some time. Arthur Twining Hadley, Yale president from 1899 to 1921, observed that when he visited Noah Porter, Yale president from 1881 to 1886, he would find Porter reading Immanuel Kant. However, when Hadley dropped by to see his successor, Timothy Dwight, Yale president from 1886 to 1899, Hadley found Dwight examining institutional balance sheets (Anderson and Myerson 1992, 2). Furthermore, in 1913, Reed College’s founding president, William Trufant Foster, could have justified this shift when he observed the increasing complexity of college affairs; the larger and more elaborate budgets; the develop of new departments; the promotion of profitable relations with other institutions; the growth of the material equipment—buildings, laboratories, gardens, farms, museums, hospitals, dormitories, dining halls, experiment stations, libraries, playgrounds; all thrust upon the college executive obligations similar to those that exact the entire time and strength of the head of a commercial enterprise. (Foster 1913, 655)

These realities have several pragmatic consequences the faculty dare not ignore. The most notable, and perhaps to teachers the most offensive,
is the tendency of many in the profession to substitute the term *customer* for that of *student*, thus creating a potential employer and employee versus a student-teacher relationship. While probably not intentional, this word change signifies a major shift in the role of the teaching and learning environment by signifying that the student is a coequal or maybe the senior partner in the learning process. Are faculty members employees of the student or do they remain scholarship experts? Do students determine course content and grading scales or does the faculty continue to set the standards for academic success? Is the customer always right? Language and specific word choice are important, and careful thought should be given to using certain business-focused concepts in the higher educational environment.

In the academy of today, the faculty frequently is called on to appropriate management skills in dealing with accreditation organizations, legislative bodies, governing boards, parents, students, faculty committees, the media, and the general public. These groups frequently have demanded quantifiable data for measuring institutional success. However, measuring such quality is tricky. Budgeting, funding, and employment decisions are now far more data driven. Specific delineators that are appropriate to a specific collegiate environment may not be an acceptable measurement in others. Educational leaders have not developed a set of standards that apply to all institutions of higher education nor are they likely to do so. Yet faculty must become engaged with administrators in the process of measuring the quality of their programs and disseminating this information to the various constituencies of the institution.

Appropriate funding has become more of a challenge in both the public and private sectors of higher education. In recent years, students have been expected to pay an ever-increasing percentage of their educational costs. The potential for significant reductions in federal and state financial aid appears to be on the horizon. Publicly supported colleges and universities are increasingly competing for philanthropic dollars. In the private sector, determining tuition rates as to generate sufficient revenue without pricing higher education beyond the public’s ability to pay is always a critical decision. External fund-raising activities have become more difficult in the current economic slowdown. Institutional costs for utilities, technology, maintenance, and faculty and staff salaries continue to rise. “Belt-tightening” measures and cost cutting have become a part of the reality in higher education, forcing institutions to work harder to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. No matter the management or financial challenges or institution type, faculty development impacts not only teaching and learning but institutional success.

**Conclusion**

The focus in this introduction has been to describe selected movements within higher education that communicate one essential point: Faculty
must be prepared to lead their institutions through veritable seismic shifts of the very ground on which their institutions are built. To meet these academic and administrative challenges will require the faculty to engage in ongoing professional development. Further, this introduction is intended to aid the reader in defining faculty development as an intentional set of educational activities designed to equip faculty to grow in their professionalism with the result of being partners in advancing all segments of the institution. When properly designed and implemented, faculty development is a process that will move higher education from where it is to where it is capable of being.

In order to begin any journey, a traveler needs a starting point. It is hoped the contents of this edition of the *New Directions in Teaching and Learning* will enable the reader to begin the trip of knowing, understanding, and using faculty development as an educational enhancement tool.

References


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What makes higher education institutions different from other socioeconomic institutions is their status, as established by the academic community, having with a collegial character and upholding academic values in order to improve the education of the nation's youth. The key to changing an education institution lies in implementing fundamental changes in order to produce academic, economic and social values. Bentley and Kyvic examined how lecturers use their time for teaching, research and service assignments. According to their research, lecturers spent 40 percent of their time teaching, 32 percent researching, 14 percent on administration, 7 percent on service provision and 6 percent on other activities [11].