Faculty incentives are skewed away from the collegiate ideal, particularly at research universities. Is it inevitable that research-oriented faculty divorce themselves from campus life, or can the incentive system be reshaped to incorporate faculty contributions to campus life?

Faculty Culture and College Life: Reshaping Incentives Toward Student Outcomes

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Traditionally, faculty role and workload are shaped by academic culture, including values and incentives that tend to be in large part discipline related and institutionally driven. Teaching, research, and service are the common tripartite “assignments” for faculty, with weights, distributions, and definitions of terms being more institutionally specific than discretely generalizable (Moore and Amey, 1993). As institutions evolve, so do the expectations held for and by faculty. As new initiatives and directions take hold, it is common to find faculty work following suit, at least as a generality. For example, an academic unit interested in increasing its national standing and prestige is likely to reflect this ambition in increased expectations for faculty-generated external research funding, publications, and national visibility. Faculty also do not maintain the same interests and levels of expertise in all three areas over the life of their career, and often negotiate greater emphasis on one area for a period of time (Baldwin, 1990).

Many come to the professoriate for altruistic reasons, and report strong motivation to remain, based on intrinsic rewards (for example, contact with students, love of teaching, intellectual curiosity [Moore and Amey, 1993]). It is also clearly demonstrated in the literature that faculty will respond in kind to those activities and behaviors for which they are reinforced either in the tenure and promotion processes or in annual evaluation for salary increases. Often, these two sets of rewards are not in concert and can even be cause for significant conflict and frustration for faculty, especially, but not exclusively, those in untenured positions.
In addition to the established norms and evaluation criteria for each discipline and each institution, there have been two competing pressures felt by faculty at research universities over the last decade or so. The first has been a perception by faculty (if not a reality in practice) that post-secondary institutions are moving toward an emphasis on research over teaching. At ratios often higher than two to one, faculty at comprehensive colleges through research universities believe that there has been a shift in focus and evaluation to favor research over teaching (Atkinson and Tuzin, 1992). Numerous studies have been conducted demonstrating both the perception of what Fairweather (1993) calls “academic drift” toward a stronger focus on research even at traditional teaching institutions such as liberal arts colleges, and the reality of the negative relationship of time spent on teaching with reward and promotion. Atkinson and Tuzin claim that the relative focus on research has not only separated faculty and undergraduate students but also estranged them.

The second major press in the last decade has been increasing pressure from legislators and the public at large to improve the quality of undergraduate education specifically, and teaching in general. The expectations are not without foundation, certainly, but they bring to light once again the paradoxical life of many faculty—the conflict between time (and often desire) spent on teaching and students, and reward systems overly oriented toward research productivity. As additional evidence of the seeming contradiction between value on undergraduate education and value of research, remember that often we encourage the buying out of teaching time to conduct research or reduced teaching loads for junior people as an effort to support their success in the academy, thus taking faculty out of contact with undergraduate students. There is also a fairly common practice to shift lower division courses to TAs instead of full-time faculty, again removing full-time faculty from direct involvement in the lives of students (Atkinson and Tuzin, 1992).

The scrutiny of undergraduate education raises a historical concern in the evaluation process—how to evaluate teaching effectively. One perspective is that emphasis on research has been a function of the more “objectified” criteria used to assess it, while teaching remains a very personally and individually constructed mix of pedagogy, philosophy, and content that others are less qualified and appropriate to judge. A similar argument could be made about the difficulty of evaluating other student-related activities such as advising, independent study and thesis work, and time spent in out-of-class student activities, whether they be labeled service learning, service outreach, or student development. Regardless of the rationale, reconciliation is an ongoing tightrope walk for many. Some do not succeed in the system and move to institutions that more closely align with personal value systems; others choose to leave academe altogether; and still others find that fifty-hour weeks hardly suffice for accomplishing the myriad tasks laid before them.
It is into this turbulent faculty climate that we introduce (or more accurately, re-introduce) concern with the collegiate ideal and student development. An immediate reaction for many already struggling to manage the multiple roles is, “Who has the time?” As evidence, in a study of faculty norms related to recommendations for improving undergraduate education, two of the recommendations—faculty–student interaction and learning about students—did not garner strong normative support (Braxton, Eimers, and Bayer, 1996). Encouraging faculty–student interaction may be seen as meaning out-of-class time or time spent on non-academic matters such as affective concerns. Faculty in the Braxton, Eimers, and Bayer study tended to see their role as ensuring cognitive growth and success, and as disciplinary experts, not necessarily as affective nurturers or developmental counselors. Similarly with learning about students, Braxton, Eimers, and Bayer (1996) conclude faculty may believe this is a personal choice or decision and therefore not something needing strong normative support. If faculty do not value certain institutional foci, they will not likely act on them without provocation. In a discussion on student development, faculty will not likely become involved in the lives of students if there is no intrinsic or extrinsic reward associated with doing so. At the same time, an appropriate question seems to be, “If we are not attending to student development, why are we at an educational institution?”

### Alternative Conversations on Campus

Faculty conservatives abound at research universities. These are persons who subscribe to traditional norms and expectations related to research, teaching, and service in this particular institutional environment. The idea of student development per se, in or out of the classroom, may not be held as a high priority. At the same time, a series of alternative conversations has occurred in recent years that is beginning to permeate the ivory towers and to generate enthusiasm, support, and grounded research at both institutional and national levels. These conversations are often spawned by national reports such as “An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education,” led by professional associations such as the American Association of Higher Education with its timely national conference discussions (for example, “Taking Teaching Seriously”). Other conversations are instigated by research of well-known scholars such as Thomas Angelo and Patricia Cross’s work on classroom assessment (1993), George Kuh’s examination of seamless learning (1996), and Robert Menges’s focus on teaching and learning (1990). Of the many alternative conversations taking place today, five are briefly highlighted here as examples of attention to faculty role and responsibility in the lives and development of students, both in and out of the classroom. They focus on learning, learning communities, on-line communities, assessment, and the changing role of faculty.

#### Focus on Learning

At the same time that there has been increased attention given to improving the quality of undergraduate instruction (teaching), there has been a parallel discussion of the need to shift the focus to student achievement
What makes this shift exciting and challenging is the overt acknowledgment, perhaps for the first time in many minds, that teaching and learning are not synonymous concepts. We have long debated the whys and wherefores of measuring effective teaching, how to reward it, and its role in the distribution of faculty time. We have paid far less attention to the same questions related to student learning and learning outcomes, and essentially no attention when the questions relate to activity beyond the classroom walls. Perhaps this is because, as Menges (1990, p. 107) reminds us, “most teaching occurs in the classroom, most learning does not. Learning may occur in any setting where learners encounter the subject matter of study.” As a result, faculty often choose to focus on that area over which they traditionally have jurisdiction—the formal classroom—laboratory and instruction. Student affairs practitioners have long suggested the need to look beyond the formal curriculum to understand the complex learning equation, but their suggestions often fall on deaf ears. Yet Menges (p. 107) insists that “The job of the teacher is to be cognizant of all those settings [where learning takes place], using them to shape an environment conducive to learning. The essence of teaching is the creation of situations in which appropriate learning occurs.” This is a different approach to the instructional role, one that emphasizes learning rather than teaching, and one that accommodates multiple settings for learning.

One of the strongest proponents of the shift from teaching to learning is Terry O’Banion, author of *A Learning College for the Twenty-First Century*. Although his institutional focus is the community college, O’Banion’s message is equally provocative for consideration in the research university. O’Banion (1997) characterizes our post-secondary system as time-bound, place-bound, efficiency-bound, and role-bound. In coming to terms with our academic embeddedness and its impact on achieving real learning, we see clear evidence of O’Banion’s criticism in the following:

- Course scheduling time blocks and academic calendar years are rooted in agrarian economic models and false understandings of how learning occurs [time-bound].
- “School is a place” (O’Banion, p. 12), making it difficult to envision alternate forms of educational delivery and even different locations for traditional delivery [place-bound].
- Reliance upon business principles and values, particularly rules and regulations that routinize learning processes for all learners and policies designed to make efficient what is in effect bad practice, wreak havoc on reform efforts [bureaucracy-bound].
- Teachers are the purveyors of knowledge and students are the recipients, leading logically to a teacher-centered educational experience rather than anything that reflects the needs, interests, and personal knowledge of the learner [role-bound].

O’Banion concludes that, without significant transformation of our academic organizations and a focus on learning, only minor structural changes are
achieved and the status quo of teaching-centered, traditional classroom academic experiences is basically maintained.

**Learning Communities.** Thomas Angelo (1997) operationalizes the learning college of O’Banion and the learning-centered academic institution of the likes of Barr and Tagg (1995) into “learning communities.” The communities are centers of faculty and students (and often, more inclusively, administrators, staff, and the larger community) “working collaboratively toward shared academic goals in environments in which competition is de-emphasized” (p. 3). Teachers and students are all learners and teachers; faculty become designers of learning environments and experiences, rather than transmitters of knowledge in a prescribed manner. Learning communities are not prescriptive in their design, but often have common components such as purposive groupings of students, common scheduling, significant use of collaborative/cooperative learning experiences, and a sense of integration across discipline, course boundaries, and learning environments (p. 3). When taken to a logical extension beyond two or three formal courses, what can result is a collegiate transformation where faculty and students are engaged in learning, where the “community of learners” (O’Banion, 1997) transcends traditional academic boundaries, and where undergraduate education becomes a more truly seamless learning experience. The evidence demonstrating the degree to which learning communities enhance student learning is not yet conclusive, though the results are promising (Angelo, 1997). Less evident is documentation that participation in learning communities enhances faculty learning without interjecting more negative professional consequences. This will need to be addressed in order to implant this strategy into the value system of many research university faculty, especially if they are expected to move beyond the traditional classroom.

**On-Line Communities.** The virtual university and the virtual classroom are in vogue today, although exact definitions seem to vary in practice from setting to setting. From instructional technology in its various configurations to something as transformational as the Western Governors University, the traditional definition of undergraduate education as students coming to campus and sitting in rows with an instructor at the front for 50–90 minutes is in transition. For many, apart from the logistical and technological questions, the burning issue is the impact on student learning and development of what is truly an alternate learning environment. There is not yet sufficient evidence about the degree to which on-line instruction and the virtual classroom increase learning outcomes for students (as opposed, perhaps, to satisfaction) and the degree to which development of such instructional environments may actually penalize faculty. Though conversations abound, recent surveys show that no more than 10 percent of faculty are doing very much with technology in the classroom (Geoghegan, 1994). For many, great concern lies in the impact of technology on the sense of community fostered through the collegiate ideal and the important relationships between faculty and students, and students and their peers in the classroom. Advocates and futurists suggest that community will not be lost but the nature and definition of it will likely change as on-line communities increase.
Critics suggest that caution be used when assessing the value of technology, because increased productivity (measured in FTE, faculty/student ratios, and cost equations) may not be equivalent to increased student learning and development (O’Banion, 1997).

**Assessment.** Corresponding with, and sometimes the antecedent to the discussions of a learning focus, is an increased emphasis on assessment. National accrediting agencies have been diligent in requiring institutions to posit new plans for assessing learning (as opposed to teaching) outcomes, especially over the last five years. Unlike some past efforts at changing institutional cultures, this latest accrediting effort has actively sought follow-through and a clear demonstration that campus plans are being enacted. Cross (1991), Angelo (1993), and others have been writing about classroom assessments for years, but “suddenly” their work is taking on greater importance as faculty struggle to move beyond traditional, standardized, summative assessments of teaching. Purposeful, tailored, authentic assessments took hold in the late 1980s in public schools, but seem to be making sustained appearances at colleges and universities in only the last two to three years. As Cross (1991, p. 20) suggests, “The ultimate criterion of effective teaching is effective learning.” She adds, “Learning probably depends more on the behavior of students than on the performance of the teacher. . . . The purpose is to involve students actively in their own learning and to elicit from them their best learning performance.”

Cross (1991) suggests a very different model of assessment than we relied on in the past for both describing faculty teaching productivity and measuring teaching effectiveness. Angelo and Cross (1993, p. 5) suggest that classroom assessment focus on three questions: What are the essential goals and knowledge that need to be taught? (teaching goals), How do you know if students are learning them? (assessment techniques), and How do you help students learn better? (informed instructional improvement). Keig and Waggoner (1994) suggest that, with a focus on learning, we are likely to have various definitions of effective teaching, definitions that are constructed with different contexts, different goals, and different objectives of desired outcomes of instruction in mind. Therefore, the answers to Angelo and Cross’s questions would need to be addressed for each learning situation, in or out of the formal classroom, not set out as an a prior dictum.

There is much work to be done in changing the nature of assessment in a culture that has been dominantly teacher focused, efficiency driven, and research oriented. Time spent addressing the challenge, finding or creating appropriate learning measures and environments, and educating faculty on their role as learning assessors are work components that heretofore have not been included in typical annual evaluation criteria, yet which likely constitute substantial commitments among faculty and staff. If we are to truly move in this direction, these efforts need to be supported and rewarded appropriately.

**Changing Role of Faculty.** Implicit in the other descriptions of alternative discussions on campus is a changing role for faculty in the twenty-first century. Even if we acknowledge that all faculty do not excel equally in teaching, research,
and service, or that they will not balance their roles equally in a constant fashion over their careers, these alternative suggestions make it clear that faculty lives will not remain static. For example, making the paradigmatic shift from a focus on teaching to one on learning is a radical departure for many. Coming to terms with a “learning facilitator” persona (O’Banion, 1997) when one has spent a career as a knowledge expert is not an easy adjustment. Collaborating with students in the design of in-class and out-of-class experiences and in the definitions of their learning is inconsistent with the way many faculty have thought about instruction and their own role as faculty. Removing place and time restrictions from the way we think about undergraduate education, thus working to reconstruct teaching load equations apart from credit hour equivalencies, in-class time requirements, and a designated number of formal courses per year, requires substantive changes in both faculty and administrative mindsets. Facing their own inhibitions about technology and concerns about its place in the undergraduate experience is only the first step in enacting on-line communities. Faculty must also begin to think very differently about the meaning of community, how it is fostered and maintained, and their role as community members rather than only as instructional activities directors. They also need to embrace the challenge of learning assessments and their role as formative assessors. Rather than seeing themselves primarily as summative evaluators who assign term grades, faculty need to re-orient themselves into a role of learning facilitator, providing regular feedback to students and adapting learning experiences to better support student achievement in and out of the classroom.

For many, these suggested changes in the role of faculty would be welcomed. They stand as overt acknowledgment of efforts already being made by some and of long-standing value systems held by others that have been unsubstantiated in the culture of the research university. For others, these changes cause greater role conflict because they suggest a potential refocusing of effort away from research and toward teaching. In reality, an institution need not prioritize its activities differently in order to achieve greater student learning outcomes. If faculty were not conducting research on classroom assessment, involving colleges, and service learning, for example, there would be no models to draw upon or documented experiences to learn from in these areas. What will be required is a willingness to take learning and development seriously in faculty assessment, and to reward activities (including scholarship on teaching and learning, academic and group advising, and other developmental out-of-class experiences) that increase student outcomes rather than allow the perpetuation of an evaluation system that effectively penalizes and ignores efforts in these areas. In the complex environment of the research university, there should be room for appropriately evaluating and rewarding excellent scholarship, excellent teaching that increases student learning, and excellent campus citizenry as it fosters student development as well as institutional governance.

**Reshaping Evaluation Models and Incentives Toward Student Outcomes.** Research universities are extremely tradition-bound institutions where change is often hard to accomplish. They are also places where innovative
thought and practice abound, even when it is not broadly recognized. Many creative evaluation models and incentive structures already exist within pockets of research universities, or have been posited by faculty within those institutions. A few of these ideas illustrate ways in which evaluation models and incentive structures can be reshaped toward student outcomes.

**Teaching.** Several suggestions have already been made about how the activity of teaching may need to change in order to better support the learning outcomes of students. When we focus on learning, O’Banion advises that success comes “only when improved and expanded learning can be documented” for learners (1997, p. 60). How learning-centered instructional activities are captured in evaluation schemas is the next step in moving toward real change.

Teaching portfolios are one way of accommodating a changing teaching activity and outcome. Brought to the forefront by Seldin (1991) and his colleagues (Seldin, Annis, and Zubizarreta, 1995), teaching portfolios are an attempt to capture more richly the complexities of teaching and the teacher–learner relationship, and to describe more clearly the outcomes of that relationship. They are more elaborate and reflective than the traditional, standardized student evaluations used by most universities, and they provide a mechanism by which faculty members think through and articulate to others the meaning of their teaching. Portfolios contain samples, “not just [of] what teachers say about their practice but artifacts and examples of what they actually do” (Edgerton, Hutchings, and Quinlan, 1991, p. 4). Among these examples could easily be exemplars of student work illustrating the relationship between teaching and learning in and out of the classroom. Exemplary theses, independent student research, or service learning journals could be included, affording recognition of critical and time-consuming faculty activity outside the traditional classroom.

Portfolios also include reflective statements in which faculty describe “personal teaching philosophy, strategies, and objectives” or articulate “teaching goals for the next five years” (Seldin, 1991, p. 10). These personal statements of faculty might be adapted to include an emphasis on learning, as well as teaching, and those strategies, objectives, and future goals a faculty member sees as integral to the achievement of student learning. The reflective statements also provide an opportunity for faculty to articulate their beliefs about advising, out-of-class instructional activities, and their role in student development. Because the teaching portfolio intentionally contextualizes instruction in pedagogical contexts, it potentially captures learning needs and differences, as well as instructional adaptations, strategies, and environments far more effectively than standardized teaching evaluation criteria. All of these activities are already part of the work of faculty truly engaged in developing the whole student, but most of these go unrecorded (and therefore unrewarded) in evaluation schema that focus only on quantitative measures, head counting, and traditional learning settings.

More than 500 institutions (not all of which were research universities) used teaching portfolios in 1995 (Paulsen and Feldman, 1995). Although there
is not significant empirical evidence suggesting that the use of teaching portfolios systematically increases improvement of instruction or learning, it is clear that a carefully constructed portfolio includes those elements of instruction that more clearly reflect institutional values and that allow for more careful assessment by others in a review process. A research university truly interested in reshaping evaluation criteria might be well served to consider the use of teaching portfolios that focus on achievement of student outcomes.

**Research.** The existence of traditionally defined research at research universities does not inherently preclude faculty from becoming more actively engaged in student outcomes. At the same time, if we adhere to Boyer's (1990) re-description of scholarship, many of the scholarly activities required by faculty to improve student outcomes could become accepted parts of the annual evaluation of research rather than becoming a detriment in the zero-sum time equation for faculty.

Boyer (1990) posited four aspects of scholarship: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. The latter is the most obviously applicable to this discussion, but not exclusively so. The scholarship of teaching includes the acquisition of knowledge requisite for effective teaching and an active engagement in the subject matter; it should also include understandings of pedagogies and learning theories, and perhaps even a gamut of student development theories so faculty understand more fully the population with which they work. Scholarship of teaching has traditionally been assumed within the assessment of teaching. Scholarship of integration, and, to some extent, of application, could encompass action research activities used in classroom assessments, in “class as unit of analysis” research, and in other interventions that focus on student development.

Action research is still emerging as an acceptable form of research in many research universities, yet at its heart (when applied to the practice of teaching) is the improvement of instruction leading to increased student outcomes. Those faculty involved in action research have often found their scholarship ignored by the peer review process or considered another aspect of the teaching or service component. Conversely, the systematic collection and analysis of these same classroom data by someone other than the instructor of record is often lauded as high-quality and important research. Faculty cannot easily improve learning outcomes without action research and other forms of classroom inquiry. There needs to be room in the research evaluation scheme to accommodate this activity. Similar arguments might be made for action research looking at student independent research processes, advising, residential living, or student organizations. Should this scholarship be undertaken to improve practice, it is often accepted in “less prestigious” practitioner journals, disseminated as in-house technical reports, or evaluated as service activity. Until the work becomes more accepted, there is a disincentive for faculty to pursue such critical developmental activity.

**Service.** Most faculty operate with the belief that service is something one needs to do to be considered a good citizen, but not something to be rewarded.
Much of the work with students in which faculty engage gets listed under service, and acknowledged with a smile or a check-mark on the evaluation criteria. Because of the amount of time and energy faculty spend in work that has characteristically been called service, recent efforts have been made to provide ways for systematically evaluating and rewarding these activities (Singleton, Burack, and Hirsch, 1997). Sandmann (1996), for example, has proposed a “service portfolio,” similar to the ideas encompassed in the teaching portfolio. The service portfolio provides opportunity for faculty to submit exemplars of their work in this area as well as reflective statements illustrating the ways in which the activities presented support institutional priorities, integrate with faculty interests, research, and instruction, and have a value-added impact on the overall contribution of faculty. Work that supports student development, especially that taking place out of the classroom, could easily become a more effectively documented and assessed part of the service portfolio, thereby being recognized and valued in the evaluation process.

Conclusion

It is not inevitable that research-oriented faculty divorce themselves from students and campus life. In order for them to actively participate, however, changes need to occur in faculty culture, evaluation and reward schemata, and the types of conversations in which faculty engage on campus. The traditional tripartite roles of faculty are already being challenged by the changing collegiate enterprise, and a focus on student development adds an additional perspective to consider. Even with the challenges, change is slow to occur and slower to be embraced within the faculty value system. Fortunately, creative and future-oriented discussions are taking place, and critically important work is being done to reshape faculty priorities and reward structures. In the same way that recent efforts worked to create a supportive teaching culture, current and future efforts need to focus on creating a supportive learning and development culture that encourages faculty participation in what has long been seen as their most critical function: the development of students.

References


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