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Innovation, Responsibility, and Culture

By Idahlynn Karre

Organic transformations, social responsibility for towering expectations, turnaround leadership, and generative compassionate communities; these are the lessons from our authors in this issue of Leadership.

Taking us on the journey from “College to University,” Robin Fisher, Provost and Vice-President Academic, Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta tells of a major cultural evolution. Making a significant and successful institutional change requires attention to organic processes within an organization. Innovation must be anchored in core values. Mount Royal transformed from “College to University” by maintaining fundamental core values of abiding commitment to student success, emphasis on high quality undergraduate teaching and learning, and a strong sense of the stewardship of community. Our first article tells the story of Mount Royal University’s transformation.

“The New Social Compact for Community Colleges: And What You Can Do About It,” by Lane Glenn, Vice President of Academic Affairs at Northern Essex Community College, Haverhill, Massachusetts meets us where we live. Public support for higher education is plummeting, while demand for student access is soaring. Open access and appropriate support for all students are the foundation on which many of our post-secondary organizations are built. Our institutional beliefs are anchored in the “social compact” for higher education. What are we to do? Lane presents compelling arguments and responsibilities for a New Social Compact and provides specifics on what we can do to make it happen.

Erika Agin, Presenter at the Academy’s 19th Annual International Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota summarizes the importance of starting organizational innovations with open communication, appreciative inquiry, and transparent leadership. “A welcoming culture is vital to the development of an organization where innovation is fostered each and every day. The actions of leaders set the tone for creativity and reinforce the unifying effects that the organization’s mission and vision statement can have for innovative thinking.” Erika integrates the thinking of Senge, Bennis, and Collins while arguing that “Innovation Starts with Culture.”

The Community College Futures Assembly is an annual gathering of community college leaders in Orlando, Florida. The Futures Assembly serves as a “think tank” and showcase for best practices in community college education. “Change is Good . . . You Go First” is a summary of the 2010 Assembly. Bellwether Awards and “Turnaround Leadership” are at the heart of this article by Matthew Basham and Dale Campbell. Matthew and Dale share “think tank” voting results on Instructional Programs and Services; Planning, Governance, and Finance; and Workforce Development. They also provide excellent details on best practices and Bellwether Award winning programs. The Assembly tackles the tough questions of our daily work, shares innovative practices, and helps us see that “Change is Good.”

Leaders serve and inspire in all corners of our organizations . . . and at all levels. Nicholas Palumbo, Director of the Physical Plant for Suffolk County Community College’s Eastern Campus, Riverhead, New York gets us into the “Dirty Jobs on Campus.” Nick is a storyteller. We hear the voice of his wisdom as we read his narrative. Sharing his thoughts as “A Leader’s Story,” Nick provides insights that serve us all well.

Together our authors confirm that innovation, responsibility, and culture are at the heart of our hopeful enterprise.
College to University

Last fall Mount Royal College in Calgary, Alberta became Mount Royal University. This apparently simple change in name came after an extended process of transition within the institution so that by the time Mount Royal was designated a university, it was a university.

In today’s fast moving world all post-secondary institutions are experiencing change as they strive to keep up with the demands of communities and governments, but Mount Royal’s change was a big one in anyone’s terms. There is a fairly sharp distinction between College and University in the Canadian post-secondary system even though there are now more institutions, like Mount Royal, that bridge that gap. So moving from one “side” to the other is not a small matter. For Mount Royal the transition involved implementing our own baccalaureate degrees, engaging faculty in scholarship, establishing career long evaluation and academic rank, moving the institution to bicameral governance, acquiring the funding to make all this possible and joining the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada which, in Canada, is the measure of being a university by national standards. This apparently short list of changes actually added up to a major cultural evolution within Mount Royal.

It is almost facile to say that change is constant these days and yet, because change remains difficult for many, it is still important to reflect on what makes significant institutional change possible and successful. I am going to suggest those factors that made the transition go relatively smoothly and certainly come to successful conclusion in the Mount Royal case. I will also mention some of the obstacles. I should note at the outset though, particularly for my colleagues, that these are my views and not those of the institution or, necessarily, anyone else in it.
History

Mount Royal University was built on the firm foundation of its past as a College. It became a new university last fall and this fall we celebrate our one hundredth anniversary as an institution. So we call ourselves Canada’s oldest new university. Founded in 1910, Mount Royal is the same vintage as some of the big universities in Western Canada. The University of British Columbia, the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan along with Mount Royal College, were all established in the same decade. With its origins in the Methodist Church, Mount Royal College, like other smaller institutions in western Canada, was established at the beginning of the twentieth century to bring learning and the arts to a frontier society that was growing very fast on the basis of utilitarian values. Our founders believed that rampant individualism and material values needed to be mitigated by a sense of social responsibility and a greater emphasis on cultural life.

Mount Royal College has had university aspirations for a long time. In the 1930s it offered the first university level courses in Calgary and advertised itself as the college with the university atmosphere. Mount Royal remained a private college until 1966 when it became a public institution and it continued to evolve and grow. It moved to a new campus in south west Calgary in 1972 that enabled it to accommodate more students. It led the way in Alberta in establishing applied degrees that involved students in three years of academic courses and one year of related workplace experience. Mount Royal also implemented baccalaureate degrees in partnership with other institutions – Nursing with the University of Calgary and later with Athabasca University, and then Arts degrees in four majors, again with Athabasca University. All of these developments were steps along the path to university status and yet the ultimate goal remained elusive.

That was because nothing ever came easy to Mount Royal. While internally the institution was clear about its desired direction and status, governments, both provincial and municipal, were not always supportive. Some other post-secondary institutions did not share Mount Royal’s vision of its future. Universities did not necessarily want a fifth university in the province and some colleges did not like the idea of Mount Royal separating from the pack. Opposition and setbacks did not, however, weaken institutional resolve and successive presidents and administrations continued to move the institution forward towards the goal.

Core Values

Throughout its one hundred year history Mount Royal has gone through many changes and yet has maintained some fundamental core values. Three of these values in particular have defined the institution. First and foremost is an abiding commitment to student success, second, an emphasis on high quality undergraduate teaching and learning and, third, a strong sense of the stewardship of community.

Students have always come first at Mount Royal College and it was important that this commitment was integral to the transition to Mount Royal University. The two main reasons for wanting to make Mount Royal a University had to do with serving the needs of students by providing access into Mount Royal and pathways after graduation. There was a clear and urgent need in Calgary for more student places in undergraduate degree programs and, with a range of new degrees, Mount Royal could help to meet that demand. We were also adamant that these new degrees be delivered off a legitimate university platform so that our students would have real opportunities to go on to graduate or professional programs after they completed their degrees at Mount Royal. Our students clearly understood that these objectives were in their interest and, through the student organisation, gave them strong support. Representatives of the Students’ Association of Mount Royal College worked enthusiastically on all the internal transitional committees and they also lobbied the provincial and federal governments to support these outcomes for students.

Our abiding commitment to students has been reflected in the fact that teaching and learning has always been job one at Mount Royal. Our current
mission statement proclaims that we are about “creating exceptional learning experiences for a world of possibilities.” Faculty members were, and as a university they still are, hired primarily on the basis of their ability and commitment as teachers. Recognizing that teaching and learning does not happen only in the classroom, Mount Royal has constantly striven to improve learning in the broadest sense for all students. During the final stages of the transition to university we confirmed this core value by establishing the first ever Faculty of Teaching and Learning in Canada. Included in this new Faculty are the Academic Development Center, the Department of General Education, the Department of Education and Schooling and the Institute for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Collectively, these elements in the new Faculty champion the teaching and learning mandate of Mount Royal and the establishment of this Faculty was a clear signal that our commitment to teaching and learning would not merely be maintained, but would be strengthened, through the transition to university status.

True to its community college roots, Mount Royal has also continued to develop close relations with the communities that it serves. One of the most effective vehicles for maintaining connection with community are the business and industry advisory committees that we have for our degrees in all professional programs. The feedback from these committees on the relevance of our curriculum was particularly valuable as we developed and implemented our new baccalaureate degree programs. We conduct regular surveys to gauge how we are perceived as an institution in our community. The findings are evaluated and changes are made to the way we do things. We also hold annual events on campus for our immediate neighbours and our extended families. In these formal, and in many informal, ways we keep in touch with our communities. We knew that we had a high level of support among our stakeholder and communities for the development of baccalaureate degrees and the move to university status. Indeed, towards the end of the transition, but before 3 September 2009 when we were officially named a university, people would look confused and say to us “aren’t you already a university?”

The determination to maintain, and even strengthen, the values of high quality teaching, student success and community connection through the process of major cultural change at Mount Royal actually assisted the transition. Colleagues could be reassured that, while many things changed, the fundamentals that had defined us for many years would not. We would not, that is to say, throw out the baby with the bath water. This commitment meant that Mount Royal would become a university that was different in the Canadian context and that could be difficult to explain externally in a system where there is less diversity among institutions than in the United States. But the fact that we could agree on these core values and agree to maintain them reassured colleagues within Mount Royal and many of our community stakeholders. Thus continuity through change made the change less alarming for many.

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Collegial Culture

In my view, Mount Royal is a remarkable institution because of its collegial community culture. I was struck by this atmosphere at Mount Royal from the first time I visited to be interviewed for the position of Vice President Academic. I had by that time worked in six different universities, though two were for short periods in visiting positions. Mount Royal struck me
transition to university status involved major changes in their working lives. Not only were they asked to put a great deal of time and thought into such things as the transition committees and the development and implementation of many new degrees, but they were also asked, if they wished, to become scholars as well as teachers. The introduction of a new tenure process, academic rank, and the criteria for both, along with a more robust system of career long evaluation, all involved more time and effort and, more importantly, a willingness to engage with a new emphasis on peer review. Collective bargaining was intense and required a prodigious amount of work as well as a commitment between the parties across the table to agree on mutual interests and to the ultimate institutional goal. The most recent version of the Collective Agreement at Mount Royal includes the usual criteria for tenure (teaching, scholarship and service) along with an additional one that requires “evidence that the duties have been carried out in a responsible and professional manner.” That stipulation is but one measure of the interest in maintaining a collegial culture at Mount Royal University.

as different from the start. After a day of interview process I attended the Faculty Association’s end of year barbeque and chatted with a number of people who later became colleagues. One faculty member said to me, “You know Robin, we have our disagreements and debates at Mount Royal, but we all love working here.” I was hooked. I had never heard a remark like that at any other institution. Mount Royal sees itself, and it is, very much a community. This sense is reflected in our “Face to Face” brand and the fact that a higher than usual proportion of our faculty and staff are Mount Royal alumni. And, as a community, there was a high level of support for the effort to become a university.

This sense of community is also part of the reason why debates among faculty, and between faculty and administration can be spirited, but are usually respectful. We are not perfect! There are exceptions and some hot spots around the institution where interpersonal relations need some work. But, by and large, institutional discussions are conducted in a cordial manner. This institutional characteristic was particularly important because, for faculty members, the
In the midst of all this change, particularly in the academic life of Mount Royal, the strong working relationship that, as Vice President Academic, I had with the Mount Royal Faculty Association and particularly with its president, David Hyttenrauch, was a major factor in the successful transition. I have seldom worked with a more principled individual and the fact that he believed in Mount Royal becoming a university was hugely influential. Together, we were successful in greatly reducing the number of faculty grievances by resolving most of them at an early, less formal, stage. Based on this work, we moved on to co-chair a number of task forces where major aspects of the change for faculty were raised and debated and then recommendations made to the academic community. The most significant of these was the Task Force on Faculty Roles and Responsibilities. This group did the initial thinking on faculty work, evaluation and rank. It established guiding principles and then made recommendations on how the changes to faculty roles and responsibilities might look and how they could be achieved. This was a nuanced, diplomatic process to advance the institutional conversation and build consensus without imposing vision. We had to be clear, for example, that the recommendations were advisory, particularly in relation to collective bargaining, but this Task Force certainly raised big questions and generated much discussion. Later David and I chaired a Task Force on Faculty Recruitment and Retention and another on The Role of Part Time Faculty. To work in this way with the President of the Faculty Association was unique in my experience and, I believe, an important factor in the success of the transition.

Leadership

While colleges and universities are collective institutions where students, faculty and staff all contribute to institutional culture and success, we all know that leadership matters. That fact is equally apparent when leadership works as when it does not. At Mount Royal the leadership of President Dave Marshall was a huge factor in the success of the transition. He was appointed President in the fall of 2003 on the assurance that university status for Mount Royal was a done deal. He very soon wished that it were so because, in fact, it took another six years of careful planning and hard work to make it happen in the face of internal, and particularly external, challenges.

Dave Marshall was the perfect fit for Mount Royal at this moment in its history. He had been President at Nipissing University for thirteen years and had transformed that institution from college to university. So he knew where the goal line was, what it looked like and how to get there. He always believed, and reminded colleagues, that the transition at Mount Royal’s was a team effort and yet, in my view, he was the first among equals. He kept his eye unwaveringly on the ultimate goal even when it seemed to be getting more distant. As President he, of course, called the plays, but he was also able to adjust the strategy when the opposition seemed insurmountable or the goal posts seemed to be moving. A large part of the strategy was to make Mount Royal look like a university in as many ways as possible and assume that, in due course, it would be named a university. This strategy was an effective one under the circumstances of great support for the transition to university within the institution in spite of sources of opposition from without. In fact, external opposition likely served as a catalyst for a common sense of purpose and collegial cooperation internally. Towards the end of the process we were visited by an AUCC review team comprised of three university Presidents and they wrote a report on Mount Royal’s eligibility for membership in AUCC and, therefore, for university status. That report reads like a blueprint after the fact for Dave Marshall’s strategy to make us a university. Dave was fond of saying to colleagues through the process that we would become a university because “if we walked like a duck and talked like a duck then, eventually, we would be called a duck.”

The tone and direction of leadership was set by the president, but Mount Royal is blessed with experienced and capable leaders at all levels. The senior executive is an exceptional group of five individuals with very different personalities and different roles to play and yet who have formed a great team that works very effectively together. Deans Council is a larger group of Deans, Associate Deans, and Directors who are all...
highly capable and committed to Mount Royal and the kind of institution that it has chosen to be. This was the group that got the job done at the academic level because there was no problem for which they could not, together, work out a solution. Department Chairs always form the front line of academic leadership and Mount Royal has developed its own professional development program that is designed to move the Chairs from being administrative assistants to academic leaders. So leadership, and the development of leadership, at all levels has been crucial to the transition at Mount Royal.

Planning and Process

We know that process is fundamental to successful change, particularly in post secondary institutions. Indeed, it is often said that a good outcome can be undermined by a bad process. Fortunately, this pitfall was avoided at Mount Royal where the process of transition from College to University was planned, thorough and consultative. That the plans were well conceived owed much to the fact that the President had been through the same process at another institution. Of course the existing College governance bodies, Academic Council and the Board of Governors, were fully engaged in the transition. In addition there were a number of committees with representation from across the institution that looked at the gaps that needed to be bridged if we were to become a university. At one point there were eleven task force groups working on different aspects of the transition: from institutional governance to academic planning to student recruitment and retention. Overarching all of these task forces was a body that began its life as the Transition Steering Committee but later changed its name to the University Implementation Committee. This committee reviewed the work of all the other committees, did the gap analysis and kept its eye on the changing context in which we were working. The President, who chaired the Transition Steering Committee, concluded each meeting by asking the question, “Is there anything that we have missed?”

We worked hard to be transparent within Mount Royal throughout the process. All of these committees consulted frequently with the wider Mount Royal community. We developed a communication plan called “Mount Royal in Motion” so that everyone could understand what was happening and thereby relieve the stress of change. The President held regular town halls for the entire Mount Royal community. Often his presentations would include a power point slide with a check list of major things that we needed to do to become a university with those items that were completed checked off. Everyone had a clear sense of the progress made and the challenges ahead. In the Academic Affairs division we held consultations with all faculty and staff on major planning initiatives such as the academic plan and the work on faculty roles and responsibilities. These consultations were to get discussion and feedback on draft recommendations but they were also the source of unexpected developments. When I first came to Mount Royal I was assured by faculty leaders that we would certainly not be entertaining the idea of moving to academic rank during the transition to university. Then at a community consultation one faculty colleague stood up and spoke forcefully in favour of looking at rank. It became apparent that others agreed. So the Faculty Roles and Responsibilities Task Force worked on a model for rank which was taken back to the community and eventually fed into collective bargaining. The result is that we now have academic rank at Mount Royal. To be effective, consultation must be a two way street.

“If we walked like a duck and talked like a duck then, eventually, we would be called a duck.”
External Factors

No matter how determined we at Mount Royal were to become a university or how logical and compelling our arguments were, there were external forces, over which we had little control, that would have a large bearing on the outcome. Some were positive and others were not, and the latter meant that remaining optimistic was sometimes difficult but always essential.

One of the positive drivers in Mount Royal’s transition, at least in the final analysis, was a growing sense in Canada that there was the need for a revival of undergraduate teaching and learning in the university system. It was not so much a factor early on when Mount Royal’s position on the primacy of teaching and learning for students was swirling around in a back eddy of debate. Later on this view became, if not main stream, at least a strong counter current. For twenty years in Canada a great deal has been said and written, though little done, about the need to revitalize undergraduate education. Levels of student engagement and satisfaction are not strong particularly in the large universities where the emphasis is on graduate education and research. So there has been discussion of the need for a new model of an undergraduate only university. Such an institution would place a greater emphasis on teaching than on scholarship and that would be reflected in the faculty reward structure. It would also feature a strong element of general education and experiential learning, an emphasis on learning outcomes and an investment in the scholarship of teaching and learning. In other words, the model that Mount Royal was advocating. In 2010 a book entitled Academic Transformation on the Ontario university scene advocated a renewal of undergraduate education along the lines that Mount Royal was proposing. As the universities continued to provide evidence of the need for change, for some, though certainly not all, in the post secondary system finding a better way to deliver undergraduate education seemed like an idea whose time had come.

Another reason for making Mount Royal a university was the rapid growth of the city of Calgary. Fueled largely by an oil boom, Calgary grew very fast over the last decade and its population surpassed one million in 2007. It was the only city in Canada with a million people and only one university. There was a clear, if not always clearly perceived, need for more student seats as the Calgary post secondary institutions regularly turned away ten to twelve thousand students every fall. The demand for and shortage of, student seats in Calgary institutions should have been a positive force and, in the end, it was. In the early stages though, it appeared more important, given its power base, for the provincial government to develop excess capacity in rural areas than to meet the demand in Calgary. Nor was the fact that Alberta has the lowest post secondary participation rate in Canada a compelling motivation to create more student places in Calgary. In the final analysis, however, a growing realization of the need for more student access and choice was a factor in our success.

The greatest obstacle that Mount Royal had to overcome was the initial opposition of the Provincial Government and the Ministry of Advanced Education. Seven years ago that opposition seemed adamant and insurmountable. The succession of four different Ministers of Advanced Education in five years made it
difficult to build a relationship with any one of them and the people in the Ministry were either opposed to or cautious about, our aspirations. Nevertheless, the President and our very well connected Vice President University Advancement, Hunter Wight, were persistent and persuasive in keeping the Mount Royal agenda before the Government and the Ministry. So gradually the tide did turn. We were able to introduce some elements of a university starting with the introduction of our own baccalaureate degrees, approved by the Campus Alberta Quality Council and the Minister of Advanced Education. We began with Nursing in 2007 Royal became what it already was – a university. On 3 September 2010 the Premier of Alberta, Ed Stelmach, came to Mount Royal and bestowed upon us the name “University.” The following month Mount Royal became a member of AUCC and thus a university by national standards. We will be a university with a difference. As soon as the Premier made us a university, President Dave Marshall said it clearly by asserting in his speech at the announcement that “Mount Royal will become Canada’s top ranked university when it comes to every measure related to the success and the satisfaction of undergraduate students.” And so the course is set for

and then twenty-two new majors in Arts, Science, Business, Communication Studies and Justice Studies in 2008. It was also very important that these degrees were funded by the government at a level that enabled us to hire new faculty in behind those who were moving portions of their workload to the scholarship stream. The degrees were a huge step forward and could not have been implemented without government support. One significant barrier was the view that, since all post secondary education, including program quality and institutional accreditation, is a provincial matter in Canada, there is no need to met AUCC’s nationally recognized standards if the Campus Alberta Quality Council had already approved our baccalaureate degrees. In the end though, the Minister under whom Mount Royal became a university, Doug Horner, did not oppose, even if he did not wholeheartedly support, our intention to become a member of AUCC. He made it possible, through legislation, for Mount Royal to establish bicameral governance, approved more degrees and provided the needed level of funding. Under his leadership we were able to implement the elements that made us a university.

All of the factors and all of the effort culminated, amidst great excitement, in the fall of 2009 as Mount

We will be a university with a difference.

Robin Fisher has been Provost and Vice-President Academic for the last five years of Mount Royal’s transition from College to University. He is a historian by discipline and was also at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George, I was involved in building a new university from scratch. Transitioning an existing college to a university is a quite different and, in some ways, more challenging exercise. Change still remains constant of course, and how Mount Royal University evolves in the longer term future will be for time, and others, to tell.

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A New Social Compact for Community Colleges

By Lane A. Glenn

“For more than 20 years, the costs of college have risen even more than those of healthcare. This academic year, the average price for public, four-year university tuition and fees is $7,020, up 6.5 percent from last year, according to the College Board in New York.”

- Christian Science Monitor, February 2010

“You can substitute “Milwaukee” for Macomb. Or Cleveland, Chattanooga, Dallas, Scottsdale, Laramie, or Pasadena. Community colleges were founded on the same strong beliefs Obama expressed: open access for everyone, and appropriate support — both academic and financial — for those in need.

These beliefs emerged from an unwritten, but broadly understood, “social compact” for higher education in America that existed for more than a century. This compact was rooted the 1862 Morrill Act that established “land grant” colleges and universities; the “G.I. Bill” of 1944, providing college and vocational training for World War II veterans; to the national community college building boom of the 1960s.

“Now, this is a place where anyone — anyone with a desire to learn and to grow, to take their career to a new level or start a new career altogether — has the opportunity to pursue their dream, right here in Macomb. This is a place where people of all ages and all backgrounds — even in the face of obstacles, even in the face of very difficult personal challenges — can take a chance on a brighter future for themselves and their families.”

- Derek Bok, Former President of Harvard University

President Obama delivered a speech on Macomb Community College’s Warren, Michigan campus, announcing the “American Graduation Initiative.” He said:
These and other public policy decisions in the 19th and 20th centuries led to expectations about higher education, including who could attend (anyone) and who would fund it (primarily the government). The old social compact was based on the following principles:

- Higher education is a good thing for all individuals, and for American society.
- All high school graduates should have access to a broad range of higher education opportunities, including both public and private college choices.
- Public choices should be made as affordable as possible through government support.
- The federal government should subsidize the cost of research, while state governments should be responsible for infrastructure needs.

The old informal agreement withstood the expansion of undergraduate education in America from 232,000 students and 977 colleges and universities in 1900 to more than 13 million students and over 4,000 colleges and universities in 2000. Most recently we have been able to provide access and necessary support to anyone choosing to pursue a post-secondary education.

This “social compact,” and the beliefs on which so many community colleges were founded, are being sorely tested, as public support for higher education plummets, while the demands for student access and support, particularly at community colleges, soar. Individual colleges and even entire state systems are faced with the need to drastically reduce their budgets, cut programs and class offerings, and in many cases limit critical support — sometimes for the students who need it most.

These reductions are largely the result of the worst economy since the Great Depression. Property values have plunged, spending is down, and unemployment is up. The revenue that states receive has fallen; while the pressure to expand spending on social assistance programs, particularly during the downturn, only grows. In this situation, lawmakers often view “cost centers” like higher education and aid to local communities as likely candidates for cutting, since colleges can raise their fees and cities and towns can raise their taxes. The public’s trust in higher education has been eroding, along with its financial support.

The public, and many of our students, view education as a commodity — a product to be bought and often bargained for. In recent years higher education has become a luxury commodity for many, as the cost of a college degree has far outpaced the rising costs of other goods and services. Yet collectively, we are seen as notoriously unable, or even unwilling, to prove our worth, even in the face of harsh criticism about rising student debt, the outlandish cost of textbooks, and low graduation rates.

Apart from a small number of elite, highly selective institutions that recruit the most academically talented and already accomplished students and boast graduation rates of 90% or more, most four-year colleges struggle to graduate half the students who walk through their doors, and community colleges, facing even greater challenges, have graduation rates that on the surface seem even more disappointing. There are many reasons for these low rates of success — including the student’s level of academic preparation after high school, socioeconomic and family status, employment obligations, learning disabilities, and underfunded support systems at public colleges. Still, while the reasons are many and complex, they are often lost on those outside of higher education, including many public officials, who are seeking clear

NEW SOCIAL COMPACT

It is time to create a new “social compact” for higher education.
goals and results, not excuses. We may not like this, but we must learn to respond to it more effectively — and we can.

It is time to create a new “social compact” for higher education, and more specifically for community colleges, that goes something like this:

- Higher education is good for individuals, for public and private businesses and organizations that benefit from an educated citizenry, and for American society.
- All high school graduates should have access to a broad range of higher education opportunities, including both public and private college choices.
- Because higher education is an economic necessity for lifelong employment, states should ensure residents access to and support for at least two years of education or training past high school, leading to a vocational credential, industry certification, or one’s first two years of college.
- This level of support for two years of education or training requires that colleges operate as efficiently as possible, and with minimal constraints on their ability to generate new sources of revenue.
- Higher education faculty and staff are professionals — experts in their fields — and should enjoy the privileges of academic freedom to pursue truth within their disciplines. At the same time, the public has a right to know what colleges and universities are accomplishing with their financial support. A combination of public accountability measures and accurate and informative reporting about student outcomes from colleges should help guide decision-making and the allocation of resources.

If we are to create this new social compact for community colleges, then there are roles to be played by the federal government, by state legislatures, by accrediting agencies, local communities, employers, families, and students themselves. Large philanthropic organizations like the Lumina Foundation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which have each committed tens of millions of dollars toward research and reform in recent years, may also want to join in the effort.

Undoubtedly, public policy think tanks (all along the political spectrum) will weigh in — sometimes forcefully.

We must begin with us, and what we can do. With this in mind, here are five ways that you can help your college make the most of its resources, and create and support a new social compact for community colleges:

1. **Improve Student Success**

   The surest way to gain public support is to prove our value where it matters most: student success. More students making progress through developmental courses and into college level coursework, re-enrolling from semester-to-semester, graduating, transferring, and finding employment in their chosen career fields means more people in our community who understand and appreciate what we do. If along the way they are able to make connections with the college through athletics, student organizations, leadership development, community service, or cooperative education, that’s even better. In the short term, students who are retained through degree completion or transfer also continue to take classes and provide revenue to the college. When they leave, they generally do not. So what can you do?

   - **Share responsibility for student learning.** Yes, students frequently arrive on campus underprepared for college level academic work, and that may be the fault of the student, of families, of K-12 education and a thousand other things. Our role is still to meet them where they are, and help them get ready as quickly and effectively as possible. This doesn't mean “watering down” assignments, ignoring deadlines, and inflating grades. Depending on the needs of a particular student, though, it may mean taking another look at how assignments are communicated; spending extra time at the beginning of the semester describing course expectations or assisting with time management tools; and connecting to campus resources like advising, tutoring, financial aid, the library, and student activities.
• **Be a mentor.** Every significant study on student success, retention, engagement, and college connectedness for the last fifty years emphasizes the importance of frequent contact between students and faculty and staff on the campus. When a student has at least one strong relationship with a favorite professor, an advisor, a librarian, a coach, a financial aid counselor, or anyone else who provides them with ongoing guidance and support, they are much more likely to persist through the challenging times they face.

• **Be flexible.** If you are getting the same results from students on a classroom assignment, in an advising session, at club meetings, in an internship experience, or at the help desk (and if they are not the results you want or expect), what can you do differently? Be willing to experiment and change.

• **Contribute to a student success initiative.** Not ready to launch your own new project? There are probably opportunities across your campus or system to join colleagues working on specific student success initiatives. Find one that fits your interests or needs and get involved!

2. **Embrace “Institutional Effectiveness”**

   Regional accrediting agencies across the country have been developing more rigorous standards for outcomes assessment and the “public disclosure” of important information about colleges for at least the last decade. The 2006 publication of the Spellings Commission report sparked a national discussion about “transparency” at colleges and universities (and raised fears that if we did not do something soon, we would be forced to administer standardized tests and adopt our own version of “No Child Left Behind” for post-secondary students). Still, despite several years of increased attention to the assessment of student learning outcomes and other measures of institutional quality and effectiveness, we manage to share very little with our students and with the public — and what we do share cannot be compared from one college to another.

   “Institutional Effectiveness” means stating what it is you do as a college, and measuring how effective you are at doing it. How can you help your college get even better at Institutional Effectiveness?

• **Know what programs and services are most important for your area, and find ways to measure your success.** We still must have some way of knowing if the most important work we are doing is having the right impact. In the classroom, this often means “classroom assessment techniques” to gauge whether students are learning the material. In other parts of the college it may mean customer satisfaction surveys, audits, or focus groups.

• **Put resources where they are shown to make a difference.** Show me your budget and I’ll show you your priorities. When you get the results back from measuring your piece of “Institutional Effectiveness,” use them to advocate for putting resources where they will matter the most for your area. And…

• **Stop what is not working.** An old adage, often attributed as Native American Dakota wisdom, suggests, “When you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount.” It seems simple and obvious, but as educators we often manage to get a lot of mileage out of flogging dead horses. If something doesn’t work, recognize it and stop it (and try something else).
3. Be an Advocate

Community colleges are enjoying a new era of recognition for the value — and the quality education — we provide. Nearly 50 percent of all undergraduates in the United States are enrolled at community colleges, and as our enrollments have climbed, we have become a regular feature of prominent state and national government planning.

When President Obama delivered his “American Graduation Initiative” speech in Michigan last year, he acknowledged that America is falling behind other countries in educational attainment, and our long-term prosperity depends, at least in part, on the educational level of our young people. The American Association of Community Colleges estimates that an associate degree increases an individual’s average earnings by $7,200 annually, and that state and local governments reap a 16 percent return on every dollar they invest in community colleges, as a result of these increased earnings. There is a community college advantage.

Those of us who work in community colleges recognize that the fate of many of our students is also a social justice issue: Community colleges educate 45 percent of all African American undergraduates and 53 percent of all Hispanic undergraduates. We also educate 42 percent of all first-generation college students. When our resources run low or run out, the most vulnerable members of society — minorities and the economically disadvantaged — are often the first to suffer the consequences.

There are clear benefits to a community college education. This education is the best value in higher education. Our role is to be an effective advocates for what we do.

4. Help Manage Resources

We must manage the resources we do have as effectively and efficiently as possible — and here is how:

- **Inform — and be informed.** The resources we have and use are not somebody else’s resources. They belong to you — as an employee of the college and as a taxpayer. You have a right to know everything about the budget — how much it is, where it comes from, and how it is being spent. Because it is your money, you have an obligation to help spend it carefully. Understand the budget process for your department, your division, and the college. Ask questions.

- **Know what you own — and how to take care of it.** Equipment has maintenance needs and a life cycle. Portable technology needs protection from damage and theft. Software must be periodically updated. Plan to get the best value from your limited resources.

- **Seek ways to reduce costs that work for you, your area, and the college.** There are as many ways to do this ranging from recycling and printing on both sides of paper to offering the right classes at the
right times for your students, to minimize low enrolled courses.

**Plan ahead for success.** Most sources of outside funding are interested in supporting new initiatives — for a limited period of time. If you receive funding for a pilot project, or write a grant to launch a new initiative, how will you sustain it if it works? Can your project generate additional revenue to help pay for itself one day?

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**...we must pay attention to developing new ways to attract the resources we need...**

- **Know when to say “No”**. Some questions to consider when reviewing that tempting “Request for Proposals”:
  - Is the project important to the mission and goals of your area and/or the college?
  - Do you (and those around you) have the time to effectively manage it?

- **Collaborate when possible**. Efforts to conserve resources by collaborating are often met with a protest. But there are some bold and effective new models for collaboration out there but only if we are open to collaborating to reduce these expenses. If the opportunity comes your way, try to contribute to one of these collaborations.

**5. Be an Entrepreneur**

We can improve student success, show the public the important results of student learning, fiercely advocate for our place at the table and our piece of the pie, and manage the resources we have as effectively as possible — and we will still need to do more for ourselves. This new social compact for community colleges seeks public support for two years of education or training past high school — but that is not coming anytime soon. Therefore, it also seeks minimal constraints on colleges’ ability to generate new sources of revenue.

As we become less and less state supported, and more and more state “affiliated,” we must pay attention to developing new ways to attract the resources we need, including public-private partnerships, expanded fundraising and grant writing, and a renewed emphasis on effective, and profitable, forms of contracted training for business and industry.

We also have to be careful that we meet any actual, required compliance standards — whether related to academic programs, financial processes, or managing physical or human resources — without strangling ourselves in our own red tape. Successful entrepreneurship requires some room to run.

Not everyone is a born fundraiser, corporate trainer, or venture capitalist, but you may have other interests or talents to contribute. Being an entrepreneur means being open to risk and to new ways of doing things. It means seeking out new opportunities for programs, products, and services — and turning a need or a want into a new activity, and a new source of revenue, relationships, or capacity for your area and for the college.

You can be entrepreneurial by:

- **Developing new partnerships**. Is there another college, business, governmental agency, or social service organization that can help you do what you do more effectively? Can they bring additional resources into a project or ongoing program, help you attract more students, or join you in writing a grant?

- **Seeking donations of equipment or services for your program/area.** Do you know a writer, performer, business executive, or other professional
who might be willing to be a guest speaker or visiting artist? Do you have advisory board members or other industry contacts who might donate equipment or expertise to your program?

- **Finding ways to expand what you already do (without expanding the cost).** Can you accommodate more students in your class, program, or workshop? Provide services to more staff on campus through the creative use of technology?

- **Creating a new program or service to meet student or community needs.** Should we be expanding an existing program, or creating a new one based on changing demands of transfer colleges or the workforce? Do you know a company with a training need in the area? Do you have a talent or interest you would like to promote?

America’s original social compact for higher education was not crafted in a day. It evolved over decades of changing opinions about what matters most in education; as well as changing responses to the needs of students, employers, and society. If we are to successfully forge a new compact — one that pays particular attention to community colleges — it will take time.

It will also take the combined wills, advocacy, and willingness to change of all 1,173 community colleges in the country; and these institutions will only be successful if individuals like you and me first commit to improving student success, measuring and sharing what we do, pushing for public support, using what we have wisely, and seeking out new resources.

Make no mistake. There is a community college advantage. While there is always room for improvement, we do meet and overcome some of the most difficult challenges in higher education — with fewer resources. And our students and communities deserve greater support that a renewed “social compact” will provide.

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**References**


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In the 1960 movie *Spartacus*, a historical drama starring Kirk Douglas as a trained gladiator turned into a slave by the Roman Empire, there is evidence of the creation of a strong culture developed out of the absence of the basic human right of freedom. Kirk Douglas, playing the role of Spartacus gathered close to 100,000 slaves together and created an army, which he united under the shared vision of freedom. It is debated whether he planned on marching on Rome or if he simply wanted to escape outside of the Empire to be free again with his men. Nevertheless, he successfully created a culture that inspired those involved to achieve something much greater than they could have accomplished on their own.

The story goes that after two major conflicts and thousands of casualties, the army formed under Spartacus found themselves defeated by the General Marcus Crassus, the wealthiest man in the Empire. The now only one

“Whatever we accomplish is due to the combined effort. The organization must be with you or you don’t get it done... In my organization there is respect for every individual, and we all have a keen respect for the public.”

- Walt Disney

**Innovation Starts with Culture**
A thousand-man army was told by Crassus, “You have been slaves. You will be slaves again. But you will be spared your rightful punishment of crucifixion by the mercy of the Roman legions. All you need to do is turn over to me the slave Spartacus, because we do not know him by sight” (Senge, 2006).

What happens next is truly amazing. A soldier stands up and says, “I am Spartacus!” Then, another soldier stands and yells, “No, I am Spartacus!” Again, another soldier exclaims, “I am Spartacus!” This went on until all one thousand of the men were standing claiming to be Spartacus. These men all shared a common purpose that was inspired by the former gladiator Spartacus. They were free men under his leadership and would rather die than deviate from the direction they were headed. No man would give up this shared vision and would choose death over a return to slavery (Senge, 2006).

1. Is your organizational culture inspiring you to do something greater?
2. Do you feel unified with others in your organization towards a common purpose of constant improvement?

### The Importance of an Innovative Culture

Culture is defined as the often hidden sets of norms and expectations that underlie what people expect and see as expected of them when they come to work. It is the set of often unspoken interactions, relationships and expectations that spell out how business is done in an organization (Ohm, 2006). In today’s business world it is vital for organizations to change rapidly to meet market demands and adjust to the volatile global economy. An organization that is capable of prompt responses to change demonstrates a culture of constant improvement and a dedication to creativity. Those within an innovative organization are capable of creating change no matter where they sit in the hierarchy of the organizational structure. Employees are immersed in their work environment and know every detail of the job, which allows them to find ways of becoming more efficient, productive, and cost effective. Innovative cultures tap into that specialized knowledge and allow employees to change their work for the betterment of the organization.

Another important point to note is that employees have a tendency to become motivated when they are able to make changes to the work that affects them. An organizational culture that encourages innovative thinking offers employees job satisfaction because they can do the work the best way they believe it should be done each day. Their ideas become reality and their passions are rewarded. Employees that are a part of a creative organization can perpetuate the organization’s vision by having a say in how things can be improved in their department and even have the ability to point out areas of opportunity in other places of the organization. Synergy reigns in innovative organizations and empowers employees to look for ways to save the organization in money, time, and ineffective processes.

### Recognize Which Leadership Traits Foster Innovation and Forward Thinking

“The only person over whom you have direct control is yourself. The most important assets to develop, preserve, and enhance, therefore, are your own capabilities . . . you must cultivate the habits of leadership effectiveness yourself. . . .”

- Steven Covey

Trust is central for engendering a relationship where ideas are easily exchanged across and throughout all levels of an organization. Warren Bennis (1989) states
that there are four leadership traits that generate and sustain trust:

1. Constancy - Leaders stay the course and do not create surprises for their followers.
2. Congruity - Leaders walk the talk. With true leaders there is no gap between the theories they express and the life they practice.
3. Reliability - Leaders are there when it counts; they are ready to support their coworkers in the moments that matter.
4. Integrity - Leaders honor their commitments and promises.

Ethical leadership is vital to inspiring trust in followers. Bennis (1989) describes the difference between a manager and a leader of sound moral character, “Managers are people who do things right, while leaders are people who do the right thing.” This statement by Bennis reflects a tolerance in innovative ideas and the ongoing creative thinking that results within an organization. Leaders have the power to set a creative example for their followers by customizing work processes or procedures to better suit those affected.

Instead of thinking that a particular task cannot be done because it is against policy, an innovative leader would ask why the policy exists. If the task or procedure relating to the procedures and bureaucratic structures whereas followers do not. It is up to those in positions of power to lead by example and start the innovative thinking that is necessary for the survival of most organizations today.

The importance of an Innovative Mission and Vision Statement

“Our commitment to innovation depends on everyone being comfortable sharing ideas and opinions.”

- Google

A mission statement gives the organization a common focus and can always be referred back to as a source for holding each other accountable. Peter Senge (2006) describes an inspirational organizational vision, “When people truly share a vision they are connected, bound together by a common aspiration.” Companies that are truly innovative are able to distinguish between what can change and what is a part of their core ideology. It is the business practice or strategy that should be flexible enough to change quickly and can be discussed openly in the organization (Collins and Porras, 1996). The shared purpose however, must remain constant unless for some reason that purpose were to become obsolete as in the case of a technological advance or a major shift in market demands.

Missions and visions work best when they appeal to both left and right-brained people. A rational mission statement cannot inspire the creativity nor demonstrates the emotional appeal necessary to unify an organization. Likewise, a mission or vision statement that is too far on the right side may be too touchy feely for those in the organization that are more apt to be logical and matter-of-fact in their thought processes. The best solution for creating an innovative purpose is to develop a mission statement that has enough force to pull the organization together towards a common realistic goal and also has the ability to ignite the spark of creativity in those that share it.

Peter Senge (2006) states that compelling shared visions give people courage to do things they otherwise

“Trust is central where ideas are easily exchanged throughout an organization.”
would not do. Even failed attempts inside of an innovative culture propels the organization forward because failure is not punished, it is used as a vehicle for learning and growing. An organization without an innovative mission cannot expect its workforce to have the audacity to say or do what has never been thought of before.

Open Communication Encourages Innovative Thinking

“We won’t be able to rebuild trust in institutions until leaders learn how to communicate honestly – and create organizations where that’s the norm.”

- James O’Toole and Warren Bennis

The first necessary step in establishing a basis of candor with a workforce is to provide them the same information that senior leadership has access to. This information may come in the form of financial statements, customer complaints and praises, employee suggestions and recognitions, and especially plans for the future and the whys for the necessary changes or courses of action. O’Toole and Bennis (2009) call this a culture of candor and relate being open with one another to developing an innovative culture that has all of the facts necessary to make smart decisions.

After all of the information is available to anyone who needs or wants to see it, then the next step is to ensure that honesty is the only policy. Leadership initiates this spirit of open communication by first being honest with those in the organization. Once a leader gets a reputation for tactfully telling the truth, they open the doors for employees to begin telling them what is on their mind. Communication that goes up the chain of the organization is not an easy feat and therefore must be constantly encouraged from the top of the organization to ensure employees realize that it is safe to give up their opinion.

The organization will foster an environment of open and honest communication by welcoming ideas of those that are skeptical or unsure of a plan. Employees have direct access to information that can provide insight to current or future opportunities that the organization may face, both good and bad. Leadership is at an advantage if they are continuously seeking employee input on the future direction of the organization (O’Toole and Bennis, 2009). The respect shown to employees by keeping communication lines open is imperative to developing an innovative workforce unified by common information and an empowered view of the big picture.

Summary

A welcoming culture is vital to the development of an organization where innovation is fostered each and every day. The actions of leaders set the tone for creativity and reinforce the unifying effects that the organization’s mission and vision statement can have for innovative thinking. A trusting and safe place for employees to experiment is a must for organizations that believe in the empowerment process and the continuous improvement that results from an inspired workforce.

References


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The Community College Futures Assembly has met annually in Orlando, Florida since 1995 to serve as a “think tank” and showcase for best practices in community colleges, to identify critical issues facing them, and to assist the institutions in contributing to their mission of being adaptive and responsive. In this article we will discuss the “think tank” or research from the 2010 session and the best practices and Bellwether winning programs.

RESEARCH
The comments of several keynote speakers would be used to create the research framework for the 2010 Community College Futures Assembly. This year, the comments of Michael Fullan, George Boggs, and Frank Chong would be used to create the research frameworks.

On Saturday, January 23, 2010, Michael Fullan, world-renowned author and scholar in change leadership and Profession Emeritus of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the University of Toronto; provided a keynote speech to serve as the context and backdrop for the research goals of the 2010 Community College Futures Assembly. He discussed how difficult change can be for higher education. To use an analogy he said “elementary school teachers love their students, high school teachers love their subjects, but college teachers love themselves.” As such, it is more difficult to motivate and change higher education faculty and administration. He reminded us of a cartoon of Dilbert which stated “Change is good…you go first.”

George Boggs, President of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), stated the top issues for community colleges over the coming years are the economy, sustainability and green projects, student success (as opposed to access), educational alignment, inclusion, globalization, skills gap/STEM competitiveness, addressing an aging population, the needs of returning veterans, and leadership and
accountability. Together, he urged community college administrators and researchers to find common ground for moving forward.

Finally, Frank Chong, the new Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges in the Office of Vocational and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education, discussed how President Obama has made the erosion of “silos” a top priority. He said for many years many agencies within and between the Department of Labor and Education have operated autonomously. In some instances they have held meetings across the hallway from one another, never stopping to communicate their goals or objectives. Furthermore, he elaborated on the President’s objectives on graduating American’s, replicating best practices and scalability of those programs, accountability, sustainability and green topics, and accountability. He urged researchers and practitioners alike to define “what it means to be pre-college ready” and to communicate those answers to K-12 educators.

With the comments of those three keynote speakers forming the frameworks for the research, 47 board of trustee members, presidents, senior administrators, and faculty members formed three focus groups in Instructional Programming and Services (IPS); Planning, Governance, and Finance (PGF); and Workforce Development (WD). Each group was asked to focus their answers upon their area for these three questions: (1) What is “Turnaround Leadership” for IPS, PGF, and WD? (2) What issues are there for implementing “Turnaround Leadership”? (3) What resources are needed? These first three questions were framed around the community college of today. The questions were then repeated under the framework of the community college of 2015. The groups brain-stormed as many ideas as possible and then came to a consensus on the “top six issues” for each of the three questions of today and the three questions of 2015. During the closing luncheon on Tuesday the conference assembly (n=115) then voted upon the top issues facing community colleges (see Appendix A for final voting in detail). Of course it should be noted here conclusions can be only causal at best.

**Instructional Programs and Services (IPS)**

When defining “turnaround leadership” in IPS the top vote getter for IPS of today overwhelmingly is being flexible in delivery methods of curriculum (39%). When defining “turnaround leadership” for IPS of 2015 is remedial education (18%) or defining “successful completion” differently (18%). Although it should be noted there is no clear-cut winner in the voting results for IPS of 2015 as several categories came close to 18% as well.

The top issue for IPS of today is strategic, innovative thinker (28%), which is not unlike results from past years. However, collaborative leadership (26%), and entrepreneurial mindset (24%) were very close. The top issue for IPS of 2015 is clearly being innovative and collaborative (46%).

The resources needed for IPS of today, as it has been so often in the past was funding (31%). On the other hand, in 2015 the resource most needed will shift to “more cooperation with other community college institutions (n=39%).”

**Planning, Governance, and Finance (PGF)**

When defining “turnaround leadership” in IPS the top vote getter for PGF of today is organizational development (28%), although support from the top down was somewhat close (24%). When defining “turnaround leadership” for PGF of 2015 is clearly trying to get a handle on the funding picture of 2015 in the face of a changing audience for community college students (29%).
The top issue for PGF of today is understanding the customer (20%). However, several other categories were very close and should not be discounted. The top issue for PGF of 2015 also is community engagement (39%).

The resources needed for PGF of today, was community partnerships (32%). On the other hand, in 2015 the resource most needed be partnerships (28%), but will shift to including P-20 entities in collaborations (n=27%) as well.

**Workforce Development (WD)**

When defining “turnaround leadership” in WD the top vote getter for WD of today overwhelmingly was “getting out of your box and into the community” (57%). When defining “turnaround leadership” for WD of 2015 is greater competition for resources (23%) although many other categories came very close and should not be discounted.

The top issue for WD of today is understanding the customer (36%) but relationship building (34%) is not far behind. The top issue for WFD of 2015 is understanding global dynamics (32%) but understanding the generational shift (27%) is also not far behind.

The resources needed for WD of today, as it has been so often in the past was community partnerships (50%). In 2015 the resource most needed will become more global relationships and partnerships (n=48%)."

**BEST PRACTICES**

200 applications were received for the 2010 Community College Futures Assembly. In all, 30 finalists, ten in each category, were selected to present their programs. In this section each of those programs are listed, the winners announced, and a brief abstract of the winning program included.

The Instructional Programming and Services (IPS) category included those programs or activities that have been designed and successfully implemented to foster or support teaching and learning in the community college. Serving as the judges and co-sponsors of this category was the National Council of Instructional Administrators. The 2010 Bellwether Winner was awarded to Jackson State Community College-Jackson, TN, for their SMART Math – Removing Roadblocks to College Success program for successfully implementing a re-designed math program. The SMART program (Survive, Master, Review, Achieve, and Transfer)

"As we have seen over the years, funding is key in community colleges in recession years."
set the standard statewide for energy conservation. To find out how LCC’s journey can be used as a model for other colleges and universities, please visit http://lakelandcc.edu/about/energy.asp

The Workforce Development (WD) category includes all public and/or private strategic alliances and partnerships that promote community and economic development. Serving as the judges and co-sponsors of this category was the National Council of Continuing Education and Training (NCCET). The 2010 Bellwether Winner for PGF was award to Mid-South Community College.-West Memphis, AR. Their The Power of Partnerships = The Power of Success!! program detailed the process by which the Arkansas Delta Training and Education Consortium (ADTEC) trained more than 8,000 new and incumbent manufacturing workers in 3 years, and more than 200 students in the first-semester of enrollment for renewable energy technology. Visit http://www.southernideabank.org/items.php?id=2637 to learn more about this outstanding program.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS/DISCUSSION

These results are not unlike those of past years (see, for example, the articles of the authors in the Community College Journal of Research and Practice Conference Proceedings). Sustainability was the key factor in IPS in the past year. This is not to be confused with green issues, but being able to sustain the growth of curriculum. This year there seems to be a shift towards the addressing the needs of the exploding enrollments at community colleges that were predicted last year, but had not yet arrived at our doors. Discussions in this year’s focus groups also revolved around how can we position ourselves for a changing audience of older students? Those who were retired or about to retire and now need to work or be retrained to work longer, since their retirement funds have evaporated in whole or in part.

As always PGF’s top issue is fundability and sustaining that funding. As we have seen over the years, funding is key in community colleges in recession years. As the economy slows, the enrollments grow. Adding to that is aging facilities and retirements of key administrators.

Workforce Development has always seemed to revolve or evolve around partnerships with the community. It is interesting to note the workforce development side of the community college seems to be mainly non-credit, life-long learning, and continuing education. As such, they tend to have little role in the overall administration of the community college other than being a profit center. Thus, with “community” playing such a large role in the workforce departments, community colleges quickly becoming baccalaureate granting institutions, and therefore dropping “community” from their name, one would be left to wonder about the overall mission left in “community colleges.” George Boggs addressed this very issue in his keynote address at the 2010 Community College Futures Assembly. The data supported this. Perhaps the workforce development centers should be renamed to the “Widget College Community Workforce and Economic Development Center” or some amalgam to retain the “community” name in there somewhere.

CHANGE IS GOOD...

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VOTING RESULTS

What is "Turnaround Leadership" for Instructional Programs and Services (IPS) today?

1. Targeting special populations
2. Communication
3. Be positive
4. Flexible Delivery Methods
5. HS->CC T&A
6. Staying within mission

What is “Turnaround Leadership” for IPS in 2015?

1. Continuous Improvement
2. Assessment and Targeted growth
3. Remedial education
4. Community education of CC’s
5. Expanded opportunities

What are Issues for “Turnaround Leadership” in IPS today?

1. Collaborative leadership
2. Strategic/innovative thinker
3. Respect for culture/history/people of institution
4. Entrepreneurial mindset
5. Good interpersonal skills
6. Visionary

What are Issues for “Turnaround Leadership” in IPS in 2015?

1. Courage
2. Responsiveness
3. Better communication about best practices
4. Global mindset/competition
5. Innovation and collaboration to share scarce resources
6. Resources/infrastructure visionary

What resources are needed for IPS of today?

1. Funding $$$
2. Strong Stakeholders
3. Physical and technology
4. Faculty professional development
5. Effective advocacy
6. K-12 School System

What resources are needed for IPS in 2015?

1. Information/Tangible plan to use what we have
2. Alternative funding
3. Green Technology
4. Identify and overcome limitations (Don’t back off)
5. Make curriculum changes as appropriate
6. More cooperation with other community college institutions
CHANGE IS GOOD...

VOTING RESULTS

What is “Turnaround Leadership” for Planning, Governance, and Finance (PGF) today?

1. Good -> Great
2. Organizational Development
3. Support from the Top Down
4. Mgt from the bottom up
5. Targeting specific grants
6. Redefine “trust” for CC’s

What is “Turnaround Leadership” for PGF in 2015?

1. Sustainability for decreasing enrollments
2. WD Opportunities
3. Global Issues
4. New energy economy
5. What will funding be?
6. Addressing Fed. Initiatives

What are Issues for “Turnaround Leadership” in PGF today?

1. Emotional Intelligence
2. Talent Management
3. Trust & Ethics
4. Change agents
5. Communication
6. Community engagement

What are Issues for “Turnaround Leadership” in PGF in 2015?

1. Emotional Intelligence
2. Talent Management
3. Trust & Ethics
4. Change agents
5. Communication
6. Community engagement

What resources are needed for PGF of today?

1. Budget
2. Human Resources
3. Community Partnerships
4. Resource Development
5. Good Government Relations
6. Effective Boards and Relations With

What resources are needed for PGF in 2015?

1. Financial Resources
2. Innovative Faculty and Staff
3. Increased P-20 collaboration
4. Partnerships
5. Flexibility
6. Technology Upgrades
What is "Turnaround Leadership" for Workforce Development (WD) today?

1. Support from the Top
2. Link with Non-Credit
3. Get out of your box and in the community
4. Communication and Transparency
5. Emerging Trends
6. Change advocates

What is “Turnaround Leadership” for WD in 2015?

1. Global Advance
2. Greater Competition for Resources
3. Capacity Sustainability
4. Faculty Willingness to Change
5. Flexibility
6. Adjusting to Learning Styles

What are Issues for “Turnaround Leadership” in WD today?

1. Risk taking/change agent
2. Integrity
3. Understanding the customer
4. Political savvy
5. Passion
6. Relationship building
7. Leadership development

What are Issues for “Turnaround Leadership” in WD in 2015?

1. Understanding global dynamics
2. Technology savvy
3. Change agent
4. Integrity
5. Understanding generational shift
6. Political savvy

What resources are needed for WD of today?

1. Human Capital (Paid or Volunteer)
2. Community Partnerships
3. Quality Readily Available Information
4. Time
5. Funding
6. Model Program Replicating

What resources are needed for WD in 2015?

1. Entrepreneurial Spirit
2. Global Relationships/Partnerships
3. Advisory Boards/Groups
4. Funding
5. Human Capital
6. Technology
A Leader’s Story:

Dirty Jobs on Campus

By Nicholas Palumbo

In his popular television program *Dirty Jobs* on the Discovery Channel, host Mike Rowe has in the past several years (among other things): scraped seagull poop off ocean buoys, wrangled maggots on a maggot farm, and assisted in the artificial insemination of a turkey. The show’s appeal is no doubt in part a credit to Mr. Rowe’s self-deprecating wit, and his game willingness to personally participate in these onerous tasks.

I suspect, however, that among the sizable audience for this show, there are many who watch for the pure voyeuristic satisfaction that comes from being able to say, “at least I don’t have to do that!” That the host conveys a seemingly genuine respect for the people he interviews each week goes a long way toward minimizing any potential guilt that might come from the knowledge that these folks will continue to perform these distasteful tasks long after we have flipped off the TV for the night, and the *Dirty Jobs* crew has moved on to the next pig farm or diaper cleaning facility.

Although most are not nearly as colorful as those spotlighted weekly on the Discovery Channel, there are plenty of dirty jobs on a college campus. From those that, in fact, might warrant consideration for a special collegiate episode such as cleaning dorm bathrooms on a Monday morning, to more prosaic everyday tasks like sweeping floors and cleaning chalkboards in classrooms, there exists a broad spectrum of work categories which are notable mostly for the fact that they need to be done - by human beings. To the extent that these tasks are even contemplated, it is likely that many of us would feel the same sense of relief at not having to do them that we get watching them on TV.

As a result of the Blue Collar Hero persona he has cultivated, Mike Rowe has gained considerable celebrity, and recently became a spokesperson for the industrial supplies vendor Grainger whose advertising slogan is: “For the Ones Who Get Things Done.” In the preface to the most recently distributed catalog from Grainger, he
describes a speech he delivered to a gathering of 3,500 of their corporate employees:

“It was a simple message, drawn from my experiences hosting Dirty Jobs, and my growing suspicion that our country had waged a cold war on The Puritan Work Ethic. I talked about the many ways I’d seen our society marginalize skilled labor and disparage blue-collar work. I talked about the dangerous consequences of doing this: namely, a steady decline in the trades, and an infrastructure that seems to be falling down around us. And I suggested with considerable passion that skilled labor was in desperate need of a PR Campaign. I probably spoke for a half hour, but my entire message came down to one sentence - “Work is not the Enemy.”

The most enduring lessons that are learned at college often occur outside the classroom. This simple bit of wisdom is a valuable one for those of us who work in Higher Education, and fairly obvious to anyone who has spent any amount of time on a college campus. In my case, this lesson remains as vivid today as the day it occurred, and has had a profound influence on my professional life.

It was the last day before winter break in a grueling week of freshman year final exams, in an overcrowded and typically overheated building. Slightly feverish and very nervously rushing to get to the classroom for the start of a test, I walked straight into a bit of commotion occurring outside the student bathrooms. There, in the midst of the turmoil of similarly preoccupied first year engineering students, stood a single middle-aged man ranting rather loudly and obviously agitated. From the uniform he was wearing and the mop bucket in front of him, it was clear this was the custodian for that building or floor, but I remember being struck by the notion that I had never noticed either him, nor anyone else in that role during the entire semester. The direction of his anger was somewhat vague, and seemingly not of any real significance. What was apparent was that this person was frustrated and upset to the point of lashing out at those responsible for creating the mess that he had been challenged to contain. Beyond the surprising fact of his anonymity, however, what I recall most from this encounter was that his worn expression conveyed more than simple frustration, but instead a sense that he was embarrassed at having to perform a chore which either we students might, or he himself did view as demeaning and/or without value.

Following graduation and a not entirely planned, but thoroughly rewarding 15 year career in Higher Education Facilities Management, I am now probably approaching that man’s age at the time, and my job involves in part supervising a team of individuals doing similar types of work. The experience that I have acquired over that time has, I feel, given me particular insight into what I imagine that gentleman in the corridor was feeling back on that gray December day. For one thing, occasionally having had to address situations where these jobs did not get done has taught me how truly vital they are. Gaining a better understanding of the institutional costs of maintaining these services has also taught me how valuable the people behind them are – or should be.

In many ways, however, I have come to believe that his sense of futility was not entirely unjustified. As a culture, Americans seem to have come to the conclusion that manual labor is no longer necessary, and we have consequently devalued those who perform it. In a recent article for the New York Times entitled “The Case for

**Americans seem to have come to the conclusion that manual labor is no longer necessary.**
Working with Your Hands”, Matthew B. Crawford talks about the way many have come to view manual labor: “When we praise people who do work that is straightforwardly useful, the praise often betrays an assumption that they had no other options. We idealize them as the salt of the earth and emphasize the sacrifice for others their work may entail.” Even in regard to highly skilled labor and artistry, we seem to have evolved toward celebrating the wealth and fame that may (but does not always) result from these disciplines, as opposed to a genuine appreciation in the mastery of a craft.

By examining our feelings towards “dirty” jobs, and in turn our perception of the men and women whose responsibility is, in fact to complete them, it is possible to gain a better understanding of how our society as a whole has evolved over the past several decades. It was not all that long ago that the daily routines of average Americans at all levels of society involved some amount of manual labor. Thanks to wondrous advances in technology, an improved standard of living, and a fundamental shift in our economic system from agricultural through post-industrial, many of us may for better or worse now go weeks without really having to get our hands dirty.

As part of the Chair Academy Leadership program that I recently completed with my colleagues at Suffolk County Community College, we spent a good amount of time one morning talking and thinking about the idea of diversity, and the various forms it can take. Most of us took justifiable pride in working in an environment in which prejudice on the basis of racial ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc., was not tolerated. What of the more subtle forms of bias related to such factors as formal educational attainment, job description and title, however? Even in the egalitarian environment of academia (perhaps even more so), these criteria still do tend to inform our perception of people’s value to the institution. This is a challenge for the enlightened workplace: How do we celebrate academic achievement, and honor the pursuit of educational advancement without marginalizing those career paths for which these credentials are not normally required?

In pondering this question, I came up with a few simple ideas. Although they are essentially common sense applications of the basic human courtesies most of us already bring to the workplace, it may be helpful to review them in this context. Several are especially relevant in light of the fundamental realignment currently impacting all sectors of the global economy.

- Remember, there are no small jobs - Changes in the global economy are driving a redeployment of the workforce. A renewed focus on infrastructure, and the growing recognition that there are many jobs that cannot be outsourced is increasing the demand (and pay) of labor-intensive fields.

- Take advantage of Team Building opportunities - Learn what your colleagues do and how they do it, and be willing to jump in to help. This has the obvious added benefit of making you more valuable to your institution.

- Refrain from judging others’ performance - The shockwaves that continue to ripple through all sectors of our economy has resulted in cutbacks in all areas. Often, the departments hardest hit in the quest for efficiency gains are the backstage functions and support services furthest removed from the bottom line. As a result, those left behind are often challenged with increased workloads, variable assignments, and an ever-looming mandate to do more with less. Because output in these areas is
also often the most readily observable, the temptation is to blame a perceived decline in performance on the front line workers, without a comprehensive understanding of the situational factors which may create occasional lapses.

• Attempt to minimize your Campus Environmental Footprint.

• Don't be afraid to get your hands dirty - In his powerful descriptions of Level 5 Leaders, Jim Collins points to humility and selflessness (in addition to driving ambition) as critical traits of the most effective leaders. Similarly, Robert Greenleaf writes of the Servant Leader as one who seeks first to serve. In my estimation, both of these paths toward leadership excellence have as a prerequisite, at least a willingness to engage challenges directly (hands on!), rather than to delegate those that are unpleasant or less glamorous.

• Look for leaders in all corners of the organization - Throughout history, special recognition is reserved for those leaders who have risen from humble beginnings and achieved great prominence, perhaps by overcoming tremendous obstacles or personal challenges. Consider support staff for leadership training program opportunities such as the Chair Academy.

• Support Vocational Education as a legitimate academic pursuit, and encourage lifelong learning as a worthy undertaking for all career paths.

By keeping these ideas in mind, perhaps we can all help to make the necessary tasks involved in running a college campus seem less like Dirty Jobs.

If you have a good picture or story about a dirty job on your campus, please send it to me at: palumbn@sunysuffolk.edu.

References

Nicholas Palumbo, MS, C.E.M, is the Director of Physical Plant for Suffolk County Community College’s Eastern Campus. He recently received designation as a LEED Green Associate, and strives to manage the operations of the campus in a manner that exceeds the needs of the institution, while always being mindful of the environmental impacts and demands on staff that those needs create.

He can be reached at: palumbn@sunysuffolk.edu
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