

# Supporting Faculty in Educational Reform

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*Abstract* This article will briefly characterize the current general momentum for and historical resistance to change that characterize higher education. Within this context, the significance of investing in the faculty as a critical organizational asset will be discussed. Structural arrangements and process actions important to achieve change and the specific steps taken to support faculty facing change at Portland State University will be described. One aspect of this support includes establishing the Center for Academic Excellence, with its overlapping emphases of community/university partnerships, teaching and learning excellence, and assessment. In addition to describing the Center and its activities, the article will identify the principles that guided PSU's decision around change in order to provide perspective that goes beyond one institution's actions.

The organizational changes currently taking place at Portland State University (PSU) are largely driven by reform of its educational programs. A radical revision of general education, now called University Studies, has served as a vital, distinctive force rippling through existing university structures, confronting students, faculty, and staff alike with its consequences.

At the center of this dynamic environment are the students. They are both participants in and recipients of these changes. But the most formidable affected group is the faculty. Since, as Damrosch has observed, "The most rational modernization may encounter implacable resistance if it runs afoul of a professorial prerogative" (1995:19), it is critical to engage and support the faculty if educational reform is to succeed.

However, there are other reasons why investing in the faculty is critical. Faculty are higher education's major institutional asset. Not only are sustained faculty commitment, satisfaction, and productivity the key ingredients to a thriving institution, but faculty salaries are the biggest percentage of the budget (Layzell et al. 1996). In addition, "Vital faculty are those who are consistently motivated by some sense of purpose to identify and take advantage of opportunities" (Finkelstein 1996:71). Just as work force agility is a requirement for successful business, so is faculty agility essential to enabling institutional responsiveness to a changing student body and the new ways of teaching and learning that technology introduces (Dove & Wills 1996). For example, more students are working and bringing to the classroom an awareness of the importance of computers as a tool for communication and resource for information. Increased use of email and other software by students and faculty offers greater access to informal written interaction related to

the class as well as new opportunities for different forms of classroom presentation. Investing in faculty so that they keep up with their students and know how to use the new technological tools to enhance learning just makes good sense.

Critical to aligning faculty prerogatives with the new institutional directions is placing the change in context. For example, if faculty understand that all of higher education is being challenged by its consumers to examine and strengthen undergraduate education, the response to change may be different than if an emphasis on undergraduate education is seen to be just the whim of a particular leader. How radical are the changes? The more radical a curricular change is, the greater the necessity for considering its consequences for other parts of the curriculum. Have faculty been involved in deciding on the changes? Change will be difficult, and especially difficult unless there is early, serious, and thorough involvement of faculty in designing the change, weighing the implications, staging the implementation and anticipating the consequences.

This article will describe the nature of change at PSU against the backdrop of nationally pervasive forces as well as local influences that are pressing for change in higher education. Accusations that many higher education institutions emphasize research at the cost of teaching are strong and frequent; local employers echo the national debate and in addition, seek institutions responsive to their needs. Portraying the nature of the changes and how they originated sets the stage for understanding the actions PSU has taken to support its faculty. In addition, identifying the principles that guided PSU's decisions is intended to provide perspective useful to others engaged in change.

## EXTERNAL INFLUENCES FOR CHANGE

The forces impinging on higher education nationally have also been driving forces behind change at PSU. These forces include increased demands by industry for graduates with academic exposure to real problems and experience in addressing them. There is a declining resource base for higher education as the needs of other governmental institutions, such as corrections, have increased. Business leaders, many of whom have suffered through their own experiences with downsizing, are expressing increased impatience with the apparent immutability of academe. There is growing criticism throughout society of the poor quality of undergraduate education and its failure to teach, and teach well, what is meaningful and useful. And, the increased presence of technology in higher education driven by technological innovations in the larger society has created the accompanying demand that students and faculty alike know how to use that technology. Representatives of business and industry participating throughout Oregon in focus groups on higher education have echoed many of these national concerns.

The two major groups who populate higher education are also changing. The student body is increasingly comprised of older students who have more work experience, work more while going to school, and come from diverse backgrounds. Incoming faculty are of a new generation, themselves impatient with the canons of scholarship tied to the promotion and tenure process. They view the process as inhibiting the pursuit of much more interesting and potentially important work than now fills academic journals. They jostle the system to accept different forms of scholarship, and to see the value in an applied orientation as a much more immediate way of informing change and the conditions that surround it (Rice 1996).

## LOCAL INFLUENCES FOR CHANGE

Clarity of mission can help to focus the choices of an institution within an expansive vision. Tierney (1989) describes the importance of mission:

Mission statements link up an organization's history with present-day contexts to provide a vision of the future. The mission and ideology of a culture also help provide guide-lines for action within the culture, while at the same time calling into question how specific activities might change in the future (Tierney 1989:149).

Many of the changes at PSU are the result of presidential vision. President Judith Ramaley has urged an expansive, dynamic redefinition of ourselves as an urban institution.

This expansiveness and dynamism are played out in an ever increasing diversity of ways as faculty at PSU investigate ways to blur the boundaries between the city and the university.

Mission also plays an important role in a charged political environment where legislators and other funders seek a rationale for their decisions about where to invest. PSU's mission is to "enhance the intellectual, social, cultural, and economic qualities of urban life" and to conduct "research and community service to support a high quality educational environment and reflect issues important to the metropolitan region" (Portland State University 1992). It serves to distinguish PSU's role from those of other colleges and universities in the city and the state. This distinctiveness is extremely important in the current political environment. Property tax rollbacks have reduced the dollars available for all public services. This has created funding shifts which have dramatically reduced funding for higher education. Predictably and understandably, this has meant sharpened competition among state institutions.

Establishing a mission was also an important symbolic effort at PSU. The effort communicated to faculty, staff, and students--who also participated in shaping the mission and the plan--the new purposeful identity of their institution as an urban university.

An urban university is not just an institution located in a metropolitan area, but one which serves as the nexus of many relationships among the institution, the people and the other institutions of the city. Those relationships, based on connecting the needs and realities associated with urban issues to the learning and research opportunities for both students and faculty, come to characterize the urban university. For example, Portland State has a partnership with the city's Bureau of Environmental Services. The city is seeking to educate citizens about the importance of various forms and kinds of conservation. PSU has organized students into teams working with neighborhood groups focused on peer education and community action.

Thus, the urban mission provided institutional response to the external political and financial environment as well as providing a framework for students, faculty, and administration to work through changes. It brought both a greater coherence to existing activities and a guiding rationale to many new initiatives.

## THE URBAN UNIVERSITY SETTING FOR SCHOLARSHIP

Scholars of academe such as Boyer (1990), Damrosch (1995), and Rice (1995), have called for a "a broader, more open field where these different forms of scholarship can interact, inform and enrich one another, and faculty can fol-

low their interests, build on their strengths, and be rewarded for what they spend most of their scholarly energy doing" (Rice 1995:144). Rice describes four forms of scholarship: *discovery, integration, practice* and *teaching*. Together, these four forms increase the diversity of ways for faculty to express their scholarship. "As faculty feel free to explore the multiple dimensions of scholarship, they allow themselves to balance questions of 'what' faculty do with other issues, such as how scholarship is expressed, how well scholarship is accomplished, and who benefits from the scholarship" (Johnson & Wamser 1996:6).

An increased diversity of forms for scholarly expression lends itself well to the mission of an urban university. The opportunity is great for delivering "high quality contributions on non-traditional, interdisciplinary fronts, particularly community outreach and professional service" (Johnson & Wamser 1996:5). For example, as the community and the institution are mutually infused by the curiosity, opportunity and knowledge that each brings to the social, economic and humanitarian issue of the metropolitan area, there is a particularly great opportunity for the scholarship of application. As Rice observes, "It is this congruence that gives special meaning to academic work, sustains morale, cultivates commitment, and makes possible a more direct relationship between performance, evaluation and reward" (1995:144).

Still, even in light of all these factors--pervasive national and institutional forces for change, positive local conditions for action created by strong leadership and definition of mission, and new and broader definitions of scholarship--deep educational reform is difficult. To get to significant reform, the provost at PSU challenged the faculty to review the purpose and goals for general education, and to investigate what evidence there was that the existing distribution requirements achieved the purpose and met the goals. By creating committees, the provost also provided a structure within which the faculty could effectively explore these challenges.

Damrosch (1995) writes that "'lofty dissertations' about the global redefinition of the goals of education" (Damrosch 1995:25) are likely to go nowhere. The PSU provost brought the rhetoric of vision and mission to action. At the same time, he acted according to Tierney's observation that "a curriculum is a powerful act that structures how organizational participants think about and organize knowledge" (1989:153). He also recognized Damrosch's insight that it is "in the structuring of courses and other forms of academic work, rather than in the specifics of individual offerings or in the generalities of academics' views of life as a whole" (1989:25) where the evidence of what defines the goals of the university may be found. It is here that change must take place.

Thus, at PSU a number of factors combined to set the stage for educational reform:

- determined, dedicated leadership created a grand vision
- external forces--particularly finances and the national debate over undergraduate education--created extreme pressures for radical change
- skilled leadership knew the importance of both a focused mission and structural curricular revision as the avenues for true educational reform
- committed leadership among both administration and faculty insisted on intellectually solid and relevant undergraduate education

## STAGES FOR CHANGE

Rogers (1983) observes two distinct stages in organizational innovation. The first is initiation, during which the organization collects information, analyzes problems, and frames possible solutions. The result of these activities is a decision about whether or not to move forward with innovation. The second stage is implementation, which involves making the necessary changes to initiate and support the innovation. Innovations at PSU followed this profile.

Subsequent to the creation of the university's mission, the provost, by posing key questions and providing the structures to address them, initiated the first stage. Considerable committee work, campus-wide meetings, structured discussions, and many informal conversations followed.

After the new general education curriculum, University Studies, was approved by the University's Faculty Senate, the task of implementation began. All the implications of these changes were not fully understood. For example, it was difficult to adequately calculate or appreciate the amount of time and effort needed for faculty teams to develop interdisciplinary approaches to teaching a common theme, one of the features of the freshman year curriculum. Nor were the details of the implementation process worked out. Scheduling is one illustration of the challenges of implementation. Who would coordinate with individual faculty and departments the array of times required to provide options for the required course sequence for entering students? Who would assemble the information in a timely fashion for the university class schedule?

The changes in the general education curriculum in particular called for faculty who would be capable of teaching as part of an interdisciplinary team, skilled in a writing intensive format, knowledgeable about how to work with students in collaborative learning and groups, capable of using technology to teach as well as working with students to use the technology to learn, and thoughtful about how to use their disciplines in interdisciplinary contexts focused on

broad learning objectives. At the same time general education called for these capacities, there were faculty in every discipline who needed to become technologically competent and who would also benefit from some of the same skills called for by the new curriculum. Also, with the sharpening of the institution's urban university mission, there was opportunity for new forms of exchange with the community through the inclusion of community-based learning in classes, through mutually defined partnerships, and through the senior capstones which are a part of the general education curriculum. Faculty were also called upon to implement assessment.

It was the innovators--those who are the very first to adopt a new idea (Rogers 1983)--who were the early supporters of the implementation. These were the 25 faculty who volunteered to create and teach the freshman year courses. In keeping with Rogers' model it made sense to fully and actively support the early adopters of innovation and over time, focus on involving more and more persons to achieve the broad collaborative effort ultimately required for successful realization of innovation.

In addition to this array of changes in faculty roles, there are also changes in the promotion and tenure guidelines. These changes offered the opportunity to define scholarship in more diverse ways. That alone is an extremely critical component of motivating faculty support for educational reform. It also introduces another dimension of faculty roles: creating meaningful ways to document the value of the more diverse forms of scholarship (Lynton 1996).

## FORMS OF SUPPORT

Educational reform calls for transformational learning by those who are both creators of the reform and subject to it. Cranton (1994), writing about instructional development, couples transformational learning with assumptions about self-directed adult learning. She suggests that in order for transformation of faculty perspectives on teaching to occur, the conditions for faculty to become aware of and critically reflect on their assumptions about teaching must be set. Those conditions should fully support the "learner control dimension of self-directed learning." That is, "personal autonomy (faculty choosing to attend) and self-management (faculty planning their own program based on current offerings) are supported" (Cranton 1984:735). The result is an emphasis on locating control of faculty support with the faculty, beginning where they are in terms of their needs, and establishing conditions where faculty can share their expertise with one another rather than learning from outside experts. As much as possible, support for faculty participation in educational reform at PSU has been directed to creating the conditions for transformational learning. This support

has taken on three distinct forms: 1) discussion of proposed changes; 2) intellectual examination of the culture of higher education; 3) creation of organizational structure, based on faculty recommendations, that fosters learning opportunities for faculty.

### Discussion

In initiating the discussion of this general education reform, repeated invitations were extended to the faculty to participate in discussions about the proposed changes. Approximately ten different times and locations were scheduled for faculty to respond to the proposed changes in the curriculum, and a similar number of sessions was held in considering revisions to the promotion and tenure guidelines. Furthermore, each of these proposals themselves came from faculty committees. More opportunities for faculty discussion occurred when the provost initiated an annual, campus-wide fall symposium. Each year the symposium has featured a topic related to campus issues--general education, undergraduate education, graduate education, faculty time--and combined presentations from invited speakers, PSU faculty, and faculty discussion in small groups. Increasingly, faculty have participated in the design and delivery of these symposia.

Further, faculty from many different arenas of the campus were sponsored to attend meetings of higher education associations where they participated in discussions on the nature of academic change, both curricular and otherwise. Attendance at these meetings provided access to ideas and experiences of others engaged in curricular reform and new forms of scholarship. It also generated the perspective that PSU faculty were not the only ones being challenged to change.

### Intellectual Examination

The PSU administration increasingly has been guided by this principle: "Define any issue that needs to be considered and that requires faculty action as a scholarly issue" (Reardon 1995). This is a challenge to faculty to review the relevant literature and systematically collect data that will bear on the major change they are being asked to undertake. In this context Provost Reardon believed the "overwhelming tendency of faculty...to speak and to act on issues related to their own culture and institutions based upon their experience as faculty" (1995:2). To overcome this, he advocated that they must develop their "knowledge of themselves as faculty" and become "objects of their own study" (1995:2). He fostered the framing of issues and action as scholarly endeavors in three principal ways:

- . He seized every opportunity he could--in introductions, in convocations, in faculty forums--to communicate some historical perspective that reminded faculty of the character and roots of academe

- . He sponsored attendance at national meetings where there were discussions on higher education. These meetings were the first opportunity many faculty had to hear about issues of higher education outside of their discipline-based conferences and they provided the faculty new perspectives on their own institution and faculty roles.
- . The president and the provost committed PSU faculty to participation in a series of national round table discussions on key issues in higher education.

The provost, as one of the network of discussion facilitators for other institutions, could witness and introduce information about discussions taking place at other universities around the country. Further, the foundations sponsoring these conversations provided links among the participating institutions in order for faculty to learn from one another.

From these discussions, faculty shared in planning the most recent fall symposia and devised an action plan for taking elements of the discussion to small groups of faculty throughout the campus. The extensive readings that formed the basis for some of these discussions fostered reflection and an openness to exploring new faculty roles. This opportunity for intellectual examination of faculty roles is a form of support for transformative learning and professional development.

#### Creation of Organizational Structure

The provost appointed three task forces to recommend ways that faculty might best be supported in their changing roles. The three task forces--one on community/university partnerships, one on teaching and learning excellence, and one on assessment--each recommended a separate center that would sponsor and facilitate those activities for faculty. Integrating these three centers in one office promised to be more cost effective. More importantly, integrating the three areas made conceptual sense: including community-based learning as part of the curriculum would require new pedagogy, while assessment of community/university partnerships and assessment of teaching effectiveness were part of building a "culture of evidence". In one coordinated setting these three activities could overlap within the frame of faculty development, and thus The Center for Academic Excellence was created.

All these forms of support--discussing intellectual examination and creation of structure--have been informed by an intention to locate within the faculty the discussion and the activities in support of change, using general education curricular revision as a primary vehicle for changing the structure of faculty work and student learning (Tierney, 1989).

## CENTER FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

As the Center took shape, the vice-provost responsible for establishing it convened a group of faculty who had been visionary and articulate throughout the change process to that point. They came together to consider perspectives on change, outlining a set of tactics for learning continuously from faculty about what they want and need. These early tactics evolved into a set of principles that are characterized by a commitment to "working from the inside out", that is, to use faculty in as many ways as possible to determine what should happen, to draw on them to make it happen, and to continue to draw on those who participate about what to do differently and how to engage others.

A federal "Learn and Serve" grant from the Corporation for National Service enabled the Center's start up and supported a significant portion of its first three years of operation. In order to draw on PSU's best leadership, two of PSU's own faculty were hired as directors for Teaching and Learning Excellence and for Community/University Partnerships. Six faculty comprised the Faculty Assessment Team. The creation of the Center and its ongoing operation are facilitated by a vice provost for academic affairs which establishes the Center's centrality to the academic core of the university.

## THE CENTER'S ROLE IN FOSTERING CHANGE

The Center was established to support faculty in their changing roles. A certain portion of the faculty--Rogers' (1983) early adopters among them--welcome the notion of such a resource. They become part of the faculty who continually assist in defining needs, and even participate as part of the Center in response to those needs--teaching their peers, attending roundtables, participating in consultative discussions on specific topics. But change on any university campus is enormously complex. Even the most systematic approach--a vision, a mission, a strategic plan, faculty committees, approval by the faculty senate, support activities defined by the faculty themselves--does not necessarily equal transformation when the goal is true educational reform. The Center was recommended and staffed by faculty, but established as an administrative entity. Even though its purpose is support of faculty, if it becomes in any way "of the administration," its agenda may be viewed by some with suspicion, and it may be misperceived as a way of driving change toward the desired ends of the administration and away from some of closely held faculty expectations.

In fact, the Center is a vehicle for taking the faculty in certain directions. For example, by choosing to allocate dollars to technology workshops that focus on the integration

of technology and teaching, the administration is making a statement about role and skill sets important for faculty. At the same time, faculty themselves are engaged in setting directions for the Center, and in this way there is an ongoing, somewhat organic evolution of what it is the faculty need and want. For example, an early request from a small group of faculty for support in bringing attention to qualitative research has evolved into an ongoing activity, giving greater visibility for qualitative research to the whole faculty as a result.

One way of addressing the tension between administration and faculty is to focus on departments, seeking ways to get resources to the departmental units where faculty can stylize the support they need to best fit the idiosyncrasies of their discipline. They can also draw from the colleagues they know best for peer consultation. Liaisons from the departments can work together with the Center so that common needs are identified, and common activities sponsored by the Center to address those needs. This is, in fact, one of the models which the Center for Academic Excellence has underway in activities related to technology, community/university partnerships, and assessment.

## OTHER SPECIFIC CENTER ACTIVITIES

The Center's activities include direct support to faculty participating in the new general education curriculum. In addition, through two technology institutes, forty faculty have had the opportunity to learn from one another how to think about and learn to use technology as a teaching and learning tool. Awareness of the Center as a resource for technology has led to an initiative by the School of Business faculty to work with the Center to design and offer a quarter-long workshop on technology and teaching. Other workshops facilitated by the Center feature faculty who demonstrate their integration of technology in their classrooms or instruction on software useful in teaching. To seed the campus with faculty who understand and have experience with community-based learning, funds from the federal grant from the Corporation for National Service were used to provide mini-grants to faculty, and to support their professional development in a variety of ways. Scholarship has been fostered through small-group work among faculty coordinated by the Director of Community/University Partnerships. This work has been focused on devising ways to assess community-based learning, on improving the use of self-examination as a learning tool, and on engaging whole departments in examining the potential for community-based learning throughout their entire curriculum. The federal grant also enabled the creation of a database from which faculty and community-based agencies will be able to draw information about sites available for partnerships and faculty inter-

ested in community connections. For example, if a faculty member is interested in working with a particular agency, he or she can use the data base to determine the focus of the agency, find out whether there is a record of a previous involvement with PSU and the nature of that involvement.

An essential component of the new general education curriculum is the required senior capstone course. Students participate with an interdisciplinary team of their peers on a community-related project. Funds from an anonymous donor have sponsored groups of faculty to develop relationships with community-based agencies, business, and government offices which will become capstone sites. Pilot capstones have provided the opportunity to determine the amount of faculty time required to nurture the relationship with the community partner, jointly define the project with the partner, orient and supervise students, and create opportunities for participants, partners, and faculty to reflect on their learning. In addition, the pilots are revealing the pedagogical challenges of the capstones. Faculty in the Center administer the anonymous donor grant, work closely with faculty to enable their experimentation and to capture their learning for the purposes of establishing the necessary ongoing structure and support for the capstones.

The federal Learn and Serve grant has also supported the development of ways to document and describe the activities of community/university partnerships. These same data will likely be used in the assessment of capstones and other partnerships as well. A small team of the capstone faculty are developing the specifics on how the capstones can be assessed.

Assessment activities have also been a focus of the Center. Activities stimulated by a group of faculty, called the Faculty Assessment Team, include working with departments to assess the learning outcomes associated with their majors, holding informal lunch discussions on assessment, and conducting workshops on classroom assessment techniques. A quarterly newsletter, *The Assessment Almanac*, features various assessment projects underway across campus.

These examples render a picture of what The Center for Academic Excellence, an organizational vehicle for supporting faculty in their changing roles, has stimulated. Not all faculty development activities have come through the Center, however, nor was that the intention. University Studies, the home for the general education curriculum, has sponsored significant opportunities both for general education faculty and others on the campus. Outside presenters, retreats, and informal gatherings to reflect on their collective experience have provided varied opportunities for the University Studies faculty to think and learn together. The Center has assisted in the definition, coordination and delivery of these activities as well.

## SUMMARY

At PSU external forces for change have combined with an internally generated intention to distinguish the institution as an urban university in service to its students and its community. Defining student learning outcomes in ways that are consistent with societal requirements and then linking the community and the university through partnerships are principal strategies for achieving the institutional mission. Much of the educational reform has been focused on both the content and manner of delivering the curriculum. Supporting the faculty in this process has involved a mix of activities centered on three realities.

The first is that the traditional norms of individualism and autonomy of faculty are very strong. The second is that as an essential asset of the institution faculty deserve and require support to remain vital. As a group, faculty are often difficult to engage in change and are highly resistant to change through coercion. Further, the results of change are likely to be more valuable if enriched by the involvement of talented, invested scholars. The third is that change is more likely to occur when there is a vision and consistent leadership, when there is involvement in the design of change by those who will be called upon to implement and sustain the change, and where there is a commitment of resources and a chance for ownership of the change and the structures that support it (Cross 1993). Through an extensive and comprehensive process tied to these realities, faculty have become the key to generating the mission for the urban university, but even more importantly they have become the key for defining through an increasingly diverse expression of scholarship what it means to be an urban institution. In this process they have radically revised the core general education curriculum as an essential avenue to educational reform. Continuing to support them from the inside out--based on their self-identified and emergent needs--will be critical to sustaining reform at PSU.

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## 要約

## 教育改革における教職員のサポート

この論文は、高等教育改革に関する現在の一般的な動勢と、この改革に対する抵抗の歴史を簡潔に述べる。また、教職員に投資することが、組織に必須であり有効に働くことを論じる。改革を成し遂げるために重要な構造的再編と段階を踏んだ実行、ポートランド州立大学において改革に立ち向かっている教職員をサポートするために特別に用意したステップについて述べる。これらは、コミュニティー(地域社会)大学間連携部門、教授と学習エクセレンス部門、および評価部門の互いに重複する研究を重視しつつアカデミック・エクセレンス・センターを確立していくことを含む。さらに、本論文は、センターとその活動について述べるとともに、改革をめぐるポートランド州立大学の意志決定と先導する原理を特定する。

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