

34. Back to School: An Exercise in Cooperation

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"The high schools in this country are always at the mercy of the colleges," according to A. Bartlett Giamatti, the president of Yale University. "The colleges change their requirements and their admissions criteria, and the high schools are constantly trying to catch up with what the colleges are thinking. When the colleges don't seem to know what they think over a period of time, it's no wonder that this oscillation takes place all the way through 'the system.'"

In the past, college presidents and deans have rarely talked to principals and district superintendents. Only infrequently have college faculty met with their counterparts in public education. The college curriculum, as President Giamatti observes, has been planned in isolation and high schools have been left with no clear sense of what higher education expects their graduates to know. After living for years in two separate worlds, American educators in schools and colleges are beginning to take notice of each other.

The roots of cooperation stretch to the early 19th century, when teacher-training institutions organized their own lower schools so prospective teachers would have a place to practice what they were learning. Those institutions felt a vested interest in early education that few colleges or universities today recognize.

In 1900, The College Entrance Examination Board, a voluntary association of school and college officials, was organized to standardize the academic requirements for college, propose subject area tests in English, mathematics, and history, and make more orderly the transition to post-secondary education.

In the 1950s, after the Soviets launched Sputnik, collaboration flourished once again, as new curricula in biology, physics, English, and mathematics were prepared. Schools and colleges, together, pushed for excellence in education.

During the 1960s, cooperation came to a screeching halt. Colleges and universities were caught up in the free speech movement, and in marches, sit-ins, teach-ins, and other protests over the invasion of Cambodia and the shootings at Kent State.

The civil rights movement pushed colleges to expand educational opportunities for members of minority groups and women, and school districts in America were preoccupied with compensatory education and the challenge of desegregation. Concerns about academic excellence, curriculum continuity, and school-college collaboration were neglected.

Today there are signs of reconciliation and renewal. Perhaps it took the shock treatment of having students come to college unprepared in the basic skills. Perhaps it was the loss of public confidence in education at all levels. Or the downturn in enrollments may have forced higher education to recognize the schools. In any event, college and school educators are beginning to talk to one another. Collaborative programs are cropping up from coast to coast.

One particularly intriguing project is known as "Academic Alliances." This is a national effort to establish conversations among faculty in the same disciplines, regardless of their teaching levels. A pilot program of 73 collaborative projects across the country includes more than 2500 faculty from 120 colleges and universities, and from 300 schools.

Modeled after the county medical societies and bar associations in this country, these partnerships bring school teachers and college professors together to keep each other up-to-date on recent professional

developments and discuss ideas of central importance to their discipline. Thus far, colleagues have come together in the fields of foreign languages, history, English, physics, and chemistry.

These locally-based communities of scholars accomplish their ends without large doses of time, money, or bureaucracy. Such authentic, grass-roots movements, by their nature, have great opportunities not only to endure, but to flourish.

University of Pennsylvania Professor Claire Gaudiani, who is Project Director for Academic Alliances, says this collaborative movement flows "from the same idealism that motivates people to enter the teaching profession. Reaching out to each other, is a natural and intelligent part of being a good teacher. The extent to which we can nurture the sustained intellectual commitments in all sectors," Dr. Gaudiani maintains, "is the extent to which the whole system will gain."

Yale University and the New Haven, Connecticut Public School system established a Teachers' Institute to improve teaching in local schools and produce high quality curriculum materials. Each year, about 80 teachers attend seminars on the Yale campus and prepare curriculum units for their students in close consultation with senior professors.

Topics are chosen by the teachers based on new curriculum ideas and changing trends in their disciplines. Participating teachers are given the title of "Fellow" by the university and have library privileges and access to campus facilities.

To date, almost half of the eligible New Haven teachers have attended the Institute for at least one year. Of special interest is the fact that in a poll of Institute Fellows, nearly half indicated that the opportunity to participate in the program has influenced them to remain in the New Haven Public School system.

The Bay Area Writing Project, which began modestly at the University of California at Berkeley, has burgeoned into the National Writing Project, operating in 44 states. Some 3,500 teachers participate in the project's summer institute, designed to help teachers improve their teaching of writing. The teacher-consultants then return to teach colleagues in their home schools.

The National Writing Project is a true partnership. It attempts to improve the teaching of writing through a combination of university-based research and school-based practical experience. And it involves teachers from all levels.

Project Advance, based at Syracuse University in New York, allows secondary school students in four states to earn college credits without leaving their high school classrooms. About 4,000 students per year, in about 80 high schools, take transferable college credit courses in biology, calculus, chemistry, English, psychology, religion, and sociology.

These courses are taught by high school teachers trained by Syracuse faculty. Teachers get "adjunct instructor" titles from the university, participate in intensive summer seminars, and get stipends for the summer sessions. Ninety-eight percent of students participating in Project Advance go on to college.

Around the United States those activities and others like them are helping to make education's "seamless web" more of a reality. Ties to tradition are not easily severed and not every cooperative venture is destined for success. But to those who make the effort and occasionally succeed, the rewards are high and students are well served. There can be no better reason for working together.

31. To Teach or To Research - The Divided Loyalty

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The academic culture in America has been profoundly shaped by the conviction that research, not teaching, is the cornerstone of the profession. This is one of the conclusions reached at the Carnegie Foundation after conducting a national survey and talking with college faculty on campuses from coast to coast.

Most faculty, we discovered, believe they will be judged primarily by their scholarly reputations. One teacher put the issue squarely: "Faculty members feel pulled in two directions. Teaching is important, they are told, and yet faculty know that research matters most."

Even small colleges live in the shadows of the modern university. A faculty member at a well respected liberal arts institution put it this way: "Every college professor under age 60 has felt the sting of contempt or condescension expressed in direct or indirect ways by the research faculties for the vocation of undergraduate teaching."

On most campuses, papers read before colleagues at conventions will get more praise than lectures presented to students right at home; but neither will mean as much as a paper published in a prestigious journal. While faculty enjoy contact with students, and while two-thirds say their interests lie more in teaching than research, they realize time spent in teaching and student consultation may not count much at tenure and promotion time.

Predictably, major research universities tilt more heavily toward research and publications as a basis for tenure and promotion. Faculty at these institutions publish more and are more likely to be currently engaged in scholarly research that will lead to publication. What we call doctorate institutions - offering advanced degrees with little or no research - are somewhat in the middle, while the smaller institutions weigh in strongly on the side of teaching.

Younger faculty at the larger "campuses on the make," as one president put it, appear to be especially vulnerable today. "The junior faculty are under enormous pressure," one untenured teacher told us. "In some ways, it's harder to work at a place that's up and coming. They're trying to build a reputation on the backs of the exploited junior faculty. The people who are setting these standards could never even meet them themselves."

One senior faculty member acknowledged the problem: "The (tenure) system is working well, but I think some of the junior faculty really worry about doing enough research." The chairman of the history department at the same institution worries that several of his brightest young faculty members, who are talented teachers and excellent researchers, will be denied tenure because they have not yet published their dissertations in book form. "They won't have that book in their hands when they walk in to that tenure committee." He says, "I'm worried about what will happen."

In math and some fields of science, many young faculty may initially have turned down more lucrative and stable jobs in industry to come to the university. Some now hint that they may change their minds. "I could have gone to industry," one biologist told us. "The pay is incomparably better. I still may." Whether the move is to another university or to industry, this science instructor does not envision a long stay at his current post. A sociologist with fewer prospects for mobility will stay if she is tenured, she told us, because the job market outside is so bad.

The push to publish often can have a chilling effect on the commitment to teaching, even for those faculty who already hold tenured positions. Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, authors of *The Academic Revolution*, starkly describe the dilemma: "No doubt most professors prefer it when their courses are popular, their lectures applauded, and their former students appreciative. But since such successes are of no help in getting a salary increase, moving to a more prestigious campus, or winning their colleagues' admiration, many potentially competent teachers do a conspicuously bad job in the classroom because they know that bad teaching is not penalized in any formal way."

The irony is that research pressures notwithstanding, faculty like to be with students and they are inclined to give top priority to teaching. As to productivity, over fifty percent of the faculty surveyed by the Carnegie Foundation have never published a book and almost thirty percent are not currently engaged in scholarly research that will, they believe, lead to publication.

If the American college is to flourish, there is a growing conviction that there must be room for both outstanding researchers and outstanding teachers - and, of course, for those valuable people who are both. The chairperson of a department caught up in a tenure struggle summed up this sentiment very well when he said: "This department should be strong enough to spot a great teacher and say, 'we want you to stay because you're enormously valuable as a teacher,' and also say to a top researcher who may do poorly in the classroom, 'you can't teach worth a damn, students don't like you - but you're a great, great scholar, your name is magic, and we think you are very valuable to us,' then give them both raises and promotion to full professor honoring each for his or her special type of excellence. But the problem is, we give the great researcher everything and the great teacher nothing."

What is needed in American higher education, and perhaps world wide, is greater recognition of the teacher-scholar. The system of rewards and sanctions should establish a better balance between teaching and research. Top quality teaching should be recognized for tenure and promotion along with top quality research.

Here an important distinction should be drawn. While not all faculty will be first-rate researchers, all must be first-rate scholars. A professor may not be on the cutting edge of the discovery of new knowledge. Still, he or she is obliged to stay abreast of new developments in the field, understand their implications, and be able to present these developments to students in an intelligent and stimulating fashion.

Today nearly all colleges pay lip service to that trinity of virtues, "Teaching," "Scholarship," and "Service" in deciding questions of tenure, promotion, and raises. What is needed is the transforming of this often empty rhetoric into operational policy. America's college teachers, and their students, deserve no less.