

Faculty Engagement to Enhance Student Attainment

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Introduction: Premises

The National Commission on Higher Education Attainment believes leadership from colleges and universities is essential for the U.S. to regain international preeminence in college attainment by 2020. Its work is grounded in five premises: No one size fits all; Quality is essential; Faculty are central to quality and completion; Attainment equals but is more than completion; & Strategic public investment is required.

No one size fits all. Part of the strength of U.S. higher education is its tremendous diversity of institutional sectors and of institutions within those sectors. That contributes to the system's flexibility, facilitating varied local initiatives and innovations. As American Council on Education President, Molly Corbett Broad stated in the ACE press release about the National Commission, "Such an effort must recognize the wide range of institutions that make up American higher education—there are not likely to be single solutions that will work equally well for all types of schools." It is important to develop, explore, and adapt solutions that are sector and institution specific.

Quality is essential. The pursuit of greater student attainment must not sacrifice quality. The push for more graduates can lead to paths that reduce the standards of the education being completed. As Association of Public and Land Grant Universities President Peter McPherson said in the A*P*L*U press release, "At our national meetings and in other sessions, A *P *L *U has discussed the need to greatly increase attainment while maintaining quality." A corollary challenge to enhancing completion is to ensure and enhance the quality of the education completed.

Faculty are central to quality and completion. Much of the focus on enhancing student attainment has shifted the focus from faculty, promoting student and learning-centered strategies. Much of the innovation aimed at increasing student engagement and attainment is embedded in new technologies for learning and for instructional delivery. Yet just as realizing increases in student attainment requires leadership by colleges and universities, so it requires leadership and engagement by professors, individually and in groups. Faculty are central to enhancing quality and student attainment.

Attainment equals but is more than completion. President Obama's goal of increasing attainment includes certificates and degrees. As American Association of Community Colleges CEO and President Walter G. Bumphus indicated in the AACC press release, "Being part of this groundbreaking commission further underscores the commitment community colleges are making to meeting President Obama's challenge..." Given the extent of student transfer among colleges, attainment should be defined as graduation, but also as progress and proportional contribution to college degrees.

Strategic public investment is required. The President's goal is ambitious. Its achievement will require significant initiatives and changes in colleges and universities. One topic the commission is addressing is "The current capacity of higher education to accommodate the large number of students who will need to enroll if we are to increase the number of graduates." The members of the commission understand that there are resource constraints. But current capacity is insufficient to even meet current demand with quality higher education. To expand student attainment and ensure quality, strategic public investment in institutions' human and physical capacity is required.

The working paper, “Faculty Engagement to Enhance Student Attainment” has been commissioned to address the key role of faculty in realizing the national goal of increased college completion. The paper opens by setting the stage, identifying changes and challenges in higher education that impact broader faculty engagement, one of which is the relative absence of a faculty voice in policy discourse, deliberation, and formation. Then, prevailing approaches in colleges and universities for promoting fuller faculty engagement in student attainment are reviewed. Finally, new strategies are identified for achieving broader faculty engagement in enhancing student attainment.

Setting the stage: Changes and challenges impacting faculty engagement

Developing successful strategies for enhancing student attainment through faculty engagement involves understanding the current context. Over the last forty years there have been substantial changes in the structure of professional employment in higher education, with implications for fostering faculty engagement on a broad scale. So, too, substantial changes in student demographics, patterns of attendance, and modes of delivering instruction also have implications for engagement and attainment. Moreover, current policy pressures, and the institutional practices they incentivize create a challenge for colleges and universities to increase attainment and quality. Finally, the current policy context, in which faculty are absent, ignored, or identified as the problem, creates an additional challenge in supporting faculty engagement to enhance student attainment.

Changes in professional employment in higher education. The professional workforce in El.S. higher education has been transformed. The full-time, tenure-track professoriate, is of a graying, boomer- generation faculty approaching retirement. Over

two-thirds of faculty are contingent, off the tenure track, in a reversal from forty years ago. The growth area of professional employment in higher education is neither faculty nor senior administrators, but is support professionals, a significant proportion of whom work with students. Each trend has implications for the continuity, community, and coordination that are so integral to faculty engagement to enhance student attainment.

The professoriate is not in good shape, a condition that has been decades of neglect in the making. From 1975-1984 the percentage of professors 34 or younger dropped by 50%: De Francesco and Rhoades (1987) warned of the eventual graying of the faculty, which by the mid 1980s had already developed a middle range bulge in its profile. Noting that policymakers in the U.S. tend to see organizations and students, and to ignore faculty, they called for policies to ensure a healthy demographic profile for the professoriate. No such systemic policies have been forthcoming. Two decades later, an ACE report, "Too many rungs on the tenure ladder," spoke to the limited numbers of tenure-track faculty under 44 (King, 2008): Only 15% of tenure stream faculty in four-year colleges and universities, and only 11% in community colleges are 44 or younger. The median faculty member nationally is in their mid-fifties, within about 10 years of retirement. Given the differential types and levels of involvement with students that professors have at different stages of their professional lives, the current demographic profile of faculty may not bode well for enhancing student attainment,

The name of a relatively new advocacy organization for contingent faculty, the "New Faculty Majority," says it all. The vast majority of the instructional workforce is off the tenure track. Nationally, over two-thirds of faculty members are working in contingent positions. Most scholarly attention has been focused on faculty in part-time

positions, whose numbers have grown as a proportion of the faculty, from 22% in the early 1970s to roughly 45% by the end of the 1990s (Schuster and Finkelstein, 2006). Not including faculty in medical schools, the number of part-time instructional faculty now exceeds those who are full-time (Schuster, 2011). Another roughly 20% of faculty are full-time, “teaching without [chance of] tenure” off the tenure track (Baldwin and Chronister, 2001). So two-thirds of the faculty workforce is working in contingent positions. And that does not include graduate teaching assistants (or postdocs).

Such structural changes compromise faculty engagement in student attainment. The Winter 2011 issue of *Liberal Education*, the Association of American Colleges & Universities’ journal, AAC&U, focused on the potentially adverse impact of faculty contingency on these instructors’ opportunity to engage in highly effective, high impact instructional practices. The evidence is clear that the percentage of contingent faculty is inversely related to various student outcomes including graduation (Ehrenberg and Zhang, 2004; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger and Eagan, 2009, 2010; Umbach, 2007). That is particularly true for part-time faculty who, by virtue of their working conditions have less opportunity, for instance, to interact with students outside of class, individually or in “learning communities” (Wathington, 2012). Conceiving of and employing such faculty as “just in time,” essentially “just in the classroom” employees fails to integrate these faculty around enhancing quality and student attainment through involvement in curricular development, and engagement with students.

To understand the changing structure of professional employment in colleges and universities it is necessary to look beyond the professoriate. The structure of professional employment in colleges and universities has been changing significantly over the past

four decades. Whereas in the 1970s faculty accounted for roughly two-thirds of all professional employees on college and university campuses, by the end of the 1990s, faculty accounted for slightly more than half of all professional employees, and nearly half of them were in part-time positions. The share of managers/executive employees increased only very slightly during this time, accounting for less than 13% of professional employees in higher education. The growth sector of employment has been in support professionals (a significant number of whom are in student affairs and academic affairs). These managerial professionals (Rhoades, 1998a) fall into three categories, which have grown during a period of “academic capitalism” (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004): entrepreneurial professionals (e.g., in fund raising, technology transfer); quality assurance professionals (e.g., in assessment); and student services professionals. Combined, these professionals now represent over a third of professional employees. And their numbers continue to grow through the 2000s. Given this transformation, one challenge is how to facilitate greater integration between their work and that of professors.

Each of the above changes in the structure of professional employment changes the extent to which there is an opportunity for students to experience continuity and community in their relationships with faculty and professionals. It also affects the extent to which students experience an environment in which the work of these professionals is coordinated and intersects in ways that serves educational quality and student attainment.

Changing patterns of students, attendance, and instruction. The demographics of students, the ways they are attending college, and the ways in which classes are being delivered have changed from the time when many current policymakers went to college. The traditional college student is no longer the norm. A little over one-third of first year

college undergraduates enrolled for credit are from underrepresented minorities. Over one-third (38%) are age 24 or older. Almost one-half (47%) are financially independent (Deil-Amen, 2011).

Neither is the traditional pattern of how students go to college any longer traditional. Over half (53%) of first year college undergraduates enrolled for credit are attending part-time or part-year. College is one of many responsibilities for them. The vast majority (87%) are living with their parents or off campus. And roughly one-third of students who graduate transfer before graduation, many of them from four to year institutions rather than vice versa (see National Student Clearinghouse).

Moreover, far more are taking classes on line, sometimes from more than one institution at a time. In 2011, nearly one-third of all students in higher education (31%) took at least one class on line (Babson Survey Research Group, 2011). Enrollments in on-line classes increased 10%.

Each of these developments has implications for developing the relations and engagement with faculty and professionals that are so integral to enhancing quality and attainment. Students are working more while they attend higher education, and they are more likely than ever to move among higher education institutions. Both patterns present a challenge to increasing attainment with student populations that spend less time on a particular campus. Moreover, the growth demographics of traditional age students (lower income, first generation, students of color, and immigrants) are precisely those populations that have not been served and have not achieved as well as they might have. Just over one-third (34%) of first year college students are in remedial classes; in some sectors the number is double that.

The challenges of current policy pressures. The heightened pressure to increase productivity with reduced resources creates all sorts of challenges for higher education institutions. It creates particular challenges with regard to faculty engagement and student attainment. By definition, at least as it is currently being narrowly defined, increased productivity means more volume of output per faculty member (or per institution), whether that output is measured in terms of student credit hour production, majors, graduates, or grant productivity. The policy push is for immediate action, which can have the effect of triggering responses that reduce the faculty engagement central to enhancing student learning and attainment. Whether it is through larger class sizes, more classes, or the reduced numbers of full-time faculty and of advisors, the path to greater productivity can actually be counterproductive in terms of faculty/student contact outside of classes (a key factor in various positive student outcomes), learning, and completion. The Winter 2012 issue of *Liberal Education* explores the embedded dangers of the completion agenda, ranging from reducing quality to undermining the development of the very qualities that employers, graduate/professional schools are looking for.

A recent, emerging ironic twist of the completion agenda is that in the name of student success systems and institutions are reducing access. Two recent reports in California on community colleges have promoted a more focused, student success centered agenda for the colleges (Rhoades, 2012). As community colleges find themselves with insufficient human capacity to meet continued growth in student demand, they end up rationing access. One strategy is to concentrate their efforts and resources on those students most likely to succeed, taking them away from the growth demographic of traditional age students. Thus, rather than working to change

institutional practices to better serve the growing majority of first generation, lower income, returning, and students of color, colleges choose instead to simply focus on those students who will succeed without the institutions adapting more effective practices of faculty and student engagement.

The challenge of policy framing faculty as the enemy. One of the biggest challenges to faculty engagement is the negative framing of faculty in public policy, if professors are considered at all. Despite all that we know about the significance of student contact with faculty in fostering positive student outcomes, current policy proposals evidence remarkably little acknowledgement of or focus on the positive role of professors. Interestingly, that can be true of reports offering quite different assessments of the challenges before higher education. Thus, the Little Hoover Commission report (2012) on California community colleges calls for an updating of these institutions. Despite acknowledging the lack of institutional capacity to accommodate student demand (over 140,000 students were denied access), the report criticizes the colleges for spending too much on instruction due to a state law requiring 51% of expenditures to be on instruction. A recent report of the UCLA Civil Rights Project (CRP, 2012) criticizes the racial stratification of community colleges and transfer patterns. Faculty are barely mentioned in the report. They are not seen as part of the solution to enhancing the success of students of color, despite evidence of their significance in student attainment.

So, too, for national policymakers, professors are largely ignored. One might think, for example, that an administration that set a goal of a 50% increase in college educated adults, and that is promoting a knowledge economy might view professors as significant players in the nation achieving the attainment goal, or at least as central

players in the knowledge economy. Not so. In its public policy deliberations, on increasing attainment, reducing cost, and transforming community colleges, faculty members are remarkably absent from the groups called together by the Department of Education and the White House. Relatedly, for all its emphasis on learning, the cover of its 2011 publication *Focus* is telling. The heading reads: “Flexing the faculty.” The text beneath reads: “When these few educate 50,000, productivity rules.”

The agenda nationally is about increased productivity, about doing more with no more. In that framework, professors are seen at best as a cost and at worst as an resistant obstacle to increased productivity, particularly in their tenured/protected status. Such a framing tends to lead faculty groups to adopt defensive postures at best. The principal frame for much collective faculty response to prevailing proposals is to just say no. That is hardly a winning strategy for engaging the national discourse. The challenge, then, is to create space for finding, fostering, and featuring faculty engagement in efforts that can enhance student attainment and college completion.

Prevailing approaches to faculty engagement to enhance attainment

The prevailing approaches to engaging faculty in order to enhance student attainment focus on them as individual professionals. The models treat professors as if they do their jobs in isolation from one another. And the overriding emphasis is on classroom instruction, as if that is the sole place in which faculty influence student attainment. Each of these three premises underlie the four basic mechanisms by which organizations seek to improve faculty engagement with students: professional preparation

and socialization of graduate students; recruitment of new faculty; professional development; and professional evaluation/reward systems for individual faculty.

Much good work is being done in each of the four professional realms identified above. In the last two decades, more attention has been devoted to improving and emphasizing faculty's instructional work, including the use of new technologies. Yet there is much room for improvement in each of the realms of professional intervention.

Preparing future faculty. Most future tenure track faculty members begin as graduate students in research universities, most of which are not known for emphasizing teaching. The last two decades, however, have brought more attention to enhancing future faculty members' instructional effectiveness. Such attention has been evident in universities' academic departments, and their corresponding disciplines, as well as in universities' teaching centers aimed at orienting, preparing, and servicing graduate teaching assistants in the institution as a whole.

Several disciplinary associations have developed special interest groups and journals on teaching within the discipline. Journals such as *Teaching Sociology*, the *Journal of Chemical Education*, and the *Journal of College Science Teaching* are but a few examples of how fields are devoting scholarly attention to undergraduate instruction. Such a disciplinary focus has translated into doctoral courses for future faculty in university departments, focused on teaching the particular field.

Moreover, most research universities now also have some sort of teaching center, though the names vary widely by campus and over time. Established as early as the 1970s and 1980s, in response to public critiques of teaching in large, public research universities, most such centers focus on graduate teaching assistants. Typically, there are

required orientations for new graduate assistants. Some centers have a fairly well developed set of activities concentrated on instruction. Further, some provide teaching certificates for graduate students, with a series of courses aimed at preparing future professors who will be effective instructors, versed in the use of the latest instructional technologies (Rhoades, 2011). Partly as a result of such teaching centers, most graduate students now receive at least some basic training for teaching (Brint, 2011).

Yet there is much room for expanding on the above efforts. In a 2001 survey of research universities, and one-third of responding institutions did not require orientations for graduate teaching assistants (Brint, 2011). In that same year, a national survey of doctoral students revealed that over 60% of respondents believed there was inadequate supervision of teaching assistants in their programs (Golde and Dore, 2001).

Further, there is far too little preparation and encouragement for graduate students to consider working as faculty outside research universities. Research on graduate students reveals considerable concern about the relative lack of guidance in graduate programs about a range of career matters (Austin, 2011). That includes too little consideration of the contexts in which they might work, such as community colleges. Preparing graduate students to teach is often done in isolation from considering the types of students and working conditions found in different types of colleges and universities.

Finally, little attention has been devoted to the preparation of members of the instructional workforce who are either postdocs or contingent faculty, without advanced degrees. Although postdocs have become a widespread intermediate step on the ladder to a hoped for faculty position, there is little provision in them for mentoring and guidance in regard to faculty members' instructional role. And particularly for part-time faculty,

many of whom have masters degrees, there is no mechanism for preparing them to teach. That is a special challenge for community colleges, which nationally have roughly three quarters of their faculty (by headcount) who are part-time.

Recruiting new faculty. Another increasingly common approach to emphasizing faculty engagement with students is in the recruitment process. One way to communicate a commitment to educating students is to emphasize instructional and advising skills and experience in job announcements, and to ask for evidence from candidates accordingly (e.g., teaching evaluations). Another way is to include an instructional component in job interviews—for instance, having candidates teach a class.

There is some evidence that institutions are requiring more evidence about teaching quality than was previously required. An analysis of Chronicle of Higher Education job ads, for instance, found that in most cases evidence of “teaching excellence” was required (Meizlish and Kaplan, 2008). That pattern was found in each institutional sector. In community colleges, it is also apparent that facility with on-line education and instructional technologies is increasingly a prerequisite for being hired.

Again, however, for the majority of faculty, who are contingent, there has been little to no improvement along these lines. In most institutions, the hiring process is not shaped by peer involvement. Moreover, there is little to no evidence of any systematic evaluation of contingent faculty’s teaching abilities playing a substantial role in hiring.

Professional development for current faculty. As noted earlier, it is fairly standard now for colleges and universities to have centers devoted to teaching, instructional innovation and design, and/or to new instructional technology. The mission of such centers is to provide professional development opportunities for professors to

enhance their instructional effectiveness, most often by encouraging their use of instructional technologies. For technology has come to be inflated with instructional innovation and engagement.

So, too, it is fairly standard for many colleges, particularly community colleges, to provide tuition remission and other mechanisms to support faculty members pursuing professional development through additional formal education and/or training. Along similar lines, most colleges and universities provide for faculty having regular sabbaticals. In the teaching oriented institutions of U.S. higher education (the vast majority of institutions), these sabbaticals can be focused on instructional enhancement.

Yet, overwhelmingly, faculty do NOT seek help from teaching centers, for a variety of reasons. That is part of why these centers feature other work and clients (Rhoades, 2011). The centers have become professionalized, often with staff who have little or no experience as tenure stream faculty. In some sense, the professionalization of this field has contributed to their insufficient integration with academic units and with individual faculty. Moreover, there are limited incentives, and some disincentives for faculty to search out the services of teaching centers, in faculty reward structures.

Professional development for faculty, as it is provided by teaching centers, is concentrated on instruction generally and classroom teaching in particular. The target populations for these centers does not include the large numbers of contingent faculty. There are some settings (often ones in which the faculty are unionized) in which contingent faculty have access to various professional development opportunities (Rhoades, 1998b). But this represents the vast minority of colleges and universities.

Professional evaluation and reward systems for faculty. The principal mechanism of evaluating professors' teaching is student evaluations. This standard tool of professional evaluation had by the 1980s been widely adopted in higher education. In the 1970s, less than a third of colleges and universities utilized student evaluations; by 1993 the figure was 86% (Seldin, 1998). Indeed, by this time usage had spawned a well developed field of research on college teaching and student evaluations that by the 1990s had already matured (Centra, 1993). And by the late 1990s, student evaluations were essentially a universal practice in colleges and universities (Simpson and Siguaw, 2000).

Recent decades have also seen the emergence of national movements to enhance and emphasize undergraduate instruction (Brint, 2011). From initiatives and projects of national entities such as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), to the widespread use of instruments such as the National Survey of Student Engagement, there has been an increased emphasis on student and learning centered, high impact practices, which have in turn translated into increased emphasis on promoting good teaching. Many colleges and universities have introduced teaching awards. Moreover, most research universities have worked to increase the significance of instructional performance in the evaluation and promotion of faculty. And developments in regional and professional accreditation (in the latter case, especially in engineering) have emphasized learning outcomes: That has translated into greater emphasis on instructional innovation and student engagement.

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain. For example, there is some evidence that student evaluations are widely used in the case of adjunct faculty (Langen, 2011). Yet the important question from the standpoint of student is how these evaluations are

used. Thus, there is very little peer involvement in reviewing contingent faculty members' instruction. Moreover, the fact that these faculty members' continued employment is contingent on good evaluations has problematic implications for the incentives provided by these evaluations, in terms of not being too demanding. Indeed, Arum and Roksa (2011) have raised such issues in their broad indictment of the limited learning taking place in college, partly due to limited demands placed on students.

In short, there may be a cost to the emphasis on student evaluations, pedagogical innovation, and new forms of learning. Brint (2011) calls for a renewed emphasis on faculty members' scholarly achievement and focus on being authorities in their field of work, which has declined in recent decades. That rebalancing may be particularly important in the context of community colleges and access universities, where heightened teaching loads, class size, and the changing needs of students have largely forced out time that faculty can devote to the scholarly fields in which they work.

Part of the cost of an increased focus on instruction and classrooms is that it draws attention away from other forms of interaction between faculty and students that are critical to student success. Engagement outside the classroom is fundamentally connected to student attainment. Recognition of that connection has led to much external support for involving undergraduates in the research activities of faculty. It has also led to a new emphasis on service learning, which involves faculty working with students in creative, engaging ways not only outside the classroom but off campus.

Summary. In each of the preceding the focus has been on individuals, in isolation from other professionals and contexts. And the focus has overwhelmingly been on

classroom instruction. Much then, has been done with regard to instructional ability of academics. That is the principal mechanism for leveraging enhanced student attainment.

Yet there are significant limitations to such an approach, as noted above. As Brint (2011) suggests, there is a danger in losing sight of subject content, high expectations, and quality standards amidst the focus on teaching commitment, identity, and ability. Moreover, educational quality and student attainment derive not only from good instruction but also from various forms of engagement with and mentoring by faculty outside the classroom, in labs, in service learning, in informal exchanges, and in structured co-curricular settings such as learning communities. To overlook those is to overlook key mechanisms for leveraging increased student attainment. In addition, it is increasingly evident that enhancing learning that cuts across and extends beyond departments entails engaging groups of faculty to develop educational experiences, curricula, and assessments. Approaches that concentrate on individuals are not enough. Finally, successful strategies for broader faculty engagement must address the changes and challenges that make such engagement difficult.

Strategies for broader faculty engagement... to enhance attainment

The prevailing approaches to faculty engagement are necessary but not sufficient to substantially enhancing student attainment. They focus on individual professors. Yet initiatives to increase student attainment must generally be collective and organizational, involving academic leadership by presidents, provosts, and deans, as well as leadership by groups of professors and professionals. Moreover, each of the prevailing approaches seeks to improve the pedagogy. Yet the challenge is not simply to have better teaching

and learning, but to significantly enhance student attainment of degrees, which involves more successfully organizing and coordinating curriculum, instruction, and support for underserved populations, which are the growth population of traditional age students. In this section new strategies for broader faculty engagement in this work are discussed.

Faculty are the linchpins to student success. They are at the center of student success not just as individual pieceworkers in increasingly large classrooms, but as a collective, engaged in various departmental and organizational initiatives to enhance student achievement. Along with academic administration, faculty must take the lead if substantial changes in the way colleges and universities do their work are to be put into practice and institutionalized over a period of time and on a significant scale.

Broader faculty engagement is required to realize higher levels of educational quality, student attainment, and college completion. The path to that broader engagement lies partly in addressing the changes and challenges that represent key aspects of the current context in U.S. higher education. The organization of this section, then, maps onto the opening section of the report, which set the stage in terms of what we now confront as the basic structures of the U.S. higher education system. For each of the strategies presented there are multiple possibilities of the sorts of projects/proposals that could be pursued in different sectors and institutions.

Strategic approach to the aging academic workforce. An aging full-time faculty presents both challenges and opportunities. Among the challenges is to rebalance the professoriate's demographic profile, and to strategically plan for that rebalancing over a period of years, for the current configuration is due in part to a lack of policy focus at any level. Among the opportunities is the chance to develop a faculty profile with a more

balanced and diverse mix of professors more appropriate to the changing student body. Even now, there is a substantial disjuncture between the demographics of the students and those of the faculty, with adverse implications for the growth segments of students who have historically been underserved.

In the meantime, there is also an opportunity to work through the demographic transition by tapping into potential changes in faculty members' interests over the span of their careers. For instance, most faculty fellows programs, which involve faculty members committing to more extensive and intensive interactions with students in residence hall and other settings, rely largely on faculty within 10 years of retirement. There is an opportunity to construct and reward the faculty role for senior faculty in ways that connect them more to academic and educational initiatives designed to increase student attainment; it is often faculty in these later stages of their career who are freer to explore and get involved in such issues.

Many institutions have devoted considerable time and resources to early retirement plans that as often as not have unintended consequences (e.g., in terms of who retires and who stays). Few devote attention to career transitions before retirement, and to recalibrating evaluation and reward systems, as well as other incentive structures, to focus more senior professors on engaging students more fully and enhancing their learning and completion. Campus presidents and provosts, in conjunction with faculty leaders in shared governance should be developing strategic plans focused on their academic workforce, planning for the next generation of faculty, a more balanced demographic profile, and for more fully engaging senior faculty in student attainment.

At a state and national level, in order to foster the sort of widespread deliberations and informed policy making in this area, it would be useful to have accurate data about faculty, including in relation to engaging students and enhancing student attainment. The National Center for Education Statistics stopped doing surveys of faculty in 2003. That hamstrings the ability of policymakers to see and to address the demographic structure of the professoriate, as well as its employment structure (e.g., tenure track/non tenure track, full/part-time). The National Commission could play an important role in foregrounding the significance of gathering systematic data on faculty as a workforce. It could also focus attention on several key issues regarding that workforce.

More than the descriptive data on the faculty's age profile, we need a fuller understanding of their professional life cycles, which have (in)direct implications for enhancing student attainment. At present, we have far too little knowledge regarding professors' decisions about whether to retire, and when. We know little if anything about their proclivities and choices at different stages of their career cycle about whether and when to become involved in various high profile, sometimes high impact practices that serve student learning and success well. Given the tremendous variety of circumstances among and within institutional sectors (and by other dimensions of context), it would make little sense to pursue a best practices approach. However, the six presidential associations of the National Commission could stimulate a national policy discussion of these issues and promote a circulation of ideas about strategies for addressing the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities of the faculty's aging profile.

Taking such initiative would be an important strategic service for the country, and also for campuses and systems nationwide that face the pressing challenge of impending

retirements in the faculty. It would help concentrate attention on faculty as a workforce that needs to be replenished, rather than the current framing of faculty largely in terms of being individual employees whose productivity needs to be parsed and increased.

Broader engagement of contingent faculty and re-integrating the faculty role.

Another key strategic dimension of academe as a workforce is the structure of faculty employment and of the faculty role. The vast majority of faculty are contingent, and nearly half are part-time. More than that, the current working conditions of faculty in contingent positions compromise student attainment. That is particularly true of part-time faculty, who are often “just in time” hires, and “just in the classroom” instructors.

At the heart of the problem is the narrow nature of these faculty members’ remunerated role, which reflects a widespread narrowing and dis-integrating of the faculty role in the academic workforce. That decoupling involves teaching becomes separated from research (Brint, 2011), and various aspects of teaching (from curriculum development to teaching the class to advising to grading) getting parsed out among increasing numbers of non-faculty professionals in what can become a virtual assembly line for producing instruction (Rhoades, 2007; Smith and Rhoades, 2006).

Faculty matter in facilitating student engagement and success (Umbach and Wawrzynsky, 2005). Their working conditions and practices translate into the learning conditions of students. That connection is particularly problematic in the case of part-time faculty, in that these faculty are far less likely to spend time advising students (40% spend no time doing so), to meet with students outside of class (47% spend no time on this), or to be provided with information about student engagement (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009). Moreover, connecting with faculty is

particularly important for part-time students, who are far less likely to be engaged on campus, which adversely affects their chances of completion.

The National Commission could play an important role in foregrounding the importance of relations with faculty, and this structure of employment challenge to the college completion agenda. “Closing the connection gap” or students, then, which is so essential for enhancing student success, must involve broadening connections with contingent faculty. If institutions are to more fully engage students, they need to more fully engage faculty. In the words of the CCCSE (2009), “To close the connection gap, colleges will need to grapple with ways to offer part-time faculty the same kinds of instructional support and development opportunities that are available to their full-time colleagues.” (p.20) As the study also emphasizes, expecting part-time faculty to be more involved in advising and in conversations about improving student success means restructuring their workloads, as well as compensating them for such valuable work.

Various low cost and no cost strategies for addressing the challenge may be more or less available to different institutions in different contexts. Colleges might, for example, explore the ways in which technology and virtual environments can enhance institutional connections not only with students (there are many examples of such efforts), but also with faculty. Imagine creating a virtual space and place for contingent faculty to intersect with colleagues and institutions about various educational matters surrounding teaching and learning. Even easier to imagine is groups of colleges and universities creating office spaces for contingent faculty who teach in multiple institutions in a metropolitan area or system to meet with students who are themselves circulating around multiple urban spaces. Of course, there are also many straightforward,

revenue neutral ways to broaden the presence and engagement of contingent faculty in fostering student attainment, though few institutions have implemented many of these (Baldwin and Chronister, 2001).

Part of restructuring faculty work to re-integrate a range of instructional activities can also mean rebalancing the faculty role in ways that give fuller meaning to Boyer's (1990) broader and more integrative conception of four types of scholarship. At the core of Boyer and the Carnegie Foundation's initiative in regard to faculty and scholarship was to emphasize the various ways in which all faculty can be engaged in scholarly pursuits. At the same time, their aim was to integrally connect those pursuits to enhancing teaching and learning (which was one of the four scholarships).

Re-balancing the faculty role has different meanings in different institutional contexts. For decades, the national policy discourse has largely been captured by a focus on research universities and a concern that research was forcing out any concern for teaching, let alone for learning. What has been absent in the policy discourse is any consideration of the need to rebalance faculty roles in open access colleges and universities, in ways that encourage and support faculty involvement in scholarship, with an eye to enriching quality education and student completion. Here again, the National Commission has a potential role to play in stimulating this national dialogue. It is particularly important, that any such policy push be connected less to the pursuit of organizational prestige and revenue (e.g., from grants), which can often happen at the institutional level, and more to the enhancement of student success. Again, the National Commission could play an important role in setting the terms of this discussion and push.

By way of thinking about professional rebalancing and integration, it is important to consider that faculty members are not the only professionals on or off campus.

Strategic collaboration between faculty and support professionals. The growth segment of professional employment in higher education is support professionals. That is a decades long pattern, which is part of why instructional expenditures have declined for more than a decade as a share of institutional expenditures in every sector of American higher education (see the Delta Cost Project). A substantial share of these professionals work in student affairs. Recent research suggests that student affairs professionals play a significant role in enhancing student attainment. Increased expenditures on them is positively related to first year persistence and to graduation rates (Webber and Ehrenberg, 2009). The effect is particularly significant in institutions with lower entrance test scores and higher levels of Pell Grant recipients.

At present, there is relatively limited interaction between professors and student affairs professionals who are involved in facilitating student success. There are important exceptions to this pattern, for instance in the case of informal networks of outreach professionals and faculty in outreach programs focusing on enhancing the success of first generation Latino students (Kiyama, Lee, and Rhoades, 2012). But these exceptions prove the rule in terms of interactions between the academic and support side of the house. Moreover, the exceptions themselves experience sustainability challenges. On the one hand, they point to the value of mi-level managerial professional initiative in establishing creative and successful programs. On the other hand, because they operate purely on the good will of professionals going above and beyond and outside the normal structures of resource allocation as well as of individual and organizational reward

systems, the programs are hard to sustain, let alone scale up. What is needed is central leaders to champion and invest hard monies in the efforts that have been established.

It would make sense to develop and expand programs to engage faculty and academic units in targeted initiatives with student affairs professionals and units to enhance student attainment. The nature of those initiatives could take various forms depending on the institution, educational challenges, and student populations in question. They could focus on outreach and college readiness, on transition into college for students with remedial challenges, on making progress in college not only in persisting year to year, but also in making progress toward graduation and in expanding the social networks that are so crucial for transitioning effectively into graduate school and/or work. They can draw on different segments of academic and student affairs units.

Such initiatives need not involve major investments of institutional resources, and indeed they can sometimes lead to leveraging some external grant resources. But there needs to be public and material commitment by institutional and academic leadership to the importance of this joint work. Both faculty and student affairs professionals can play important roles in enhancing student attainment. Broader engagement of these professionals in joint efforts can serve to augment their respective impact.

What such initiatives do require, however, is leadership. For decades there has been much policy discourse about promoting interdisciplinary work, focused on problems in the real world more than on those embedded in academic disciplines. There is an opportunity for the National Commission to raise the important issue of inter-professional cooperation aimed at promoting higher levels of achievement and college completion.

Joint faculty/management organizational initiatives. Another form of much needed cooperation on the major educational challenges surrounding quality education and student completion is that between faculty and management. What is fairly standard in most colleges and universities are units and programs devoted to engaging individual faculty to improve their educational effectiveness. These units tend to be rather disconnected from central academic and educational planning and decision-making, as well as from the most vexing challenges to increasing college completion—remediation, articulation (from two to four year institutions), and tracking progress to completion. What are less common on college and university campuses and in systems, are joint initiatives between management and faculty focused on organizational efforts targeting major educational blockage/failure points for students.

In the face of big problems, the National Commission has the opportunity to provide leadership with a system perspective that is sensitive to campus based differences and that bring together key representatives of the faculty and administration. Nationally, much of the lead in the speaking to major educational issues has been taken by leading foundations that do not have the same understanding of on-the-ground realities that can be found in the institutions, among faculty, professionals, and academic administrators. All the more reason for the National Commission to seize the opportunity to shape the search for feasible, sustainable solutions to the key educational challenges confronting higher education in the realm of quality and college completion. All the more reason as well for that search to be jointly undertaken with collective representatives of faculty. If proposed solutions are to take hold at the campus level, if they are to be institutionalized, then the faculty must carry them forward. And if solutions are going to productively

address, be sensitive and appropriately adapted to the educational realities of campuses, then the perspective and expertise, the inevitable uncomfortable questions and ideas of the faculty will be invaluable.

In promoting organizational initiatives focused on the biggest educational challenges of the day, the National Commission would make a huge contribution if it were to foster the development of grant funded projects (by foundations and other sources) that were jointly crafted, secured, and implemented by joint faculty/management teams. In various states and systems there are certainly large projects that include selected faculty in them, including a number funded by the Lumina Foundation. But there is a truncated dimension to the bottom up aspects of these projects, whether that lies in the way individual faculty are chosen, or in the origins and funding of the project (which tends to go through states, systems, and institutions).

Prioritizing education, quality, and completion in resource allocation and evaluation. The late 20th century was recruitment and enrollment focused, with patterns of activity and resource allocation that channeled resources and attention more to attracting students than to educating and completing them. The so-called arms race to attract students resulted in campuses with extensive and attractive leisure and non-educational facilities. At the same time, the pattern led to a relative level of disinvestment in educational personnel and activities that have left the professoriate and educational condition of the academy in relatively poor shape.

Now, in the early 21st century colleges and universities are being urged to focus more on student learning and success. That should play out in the story told by college and university budgets, in terms of what types of personnel, programs, and facilities are

prioritized. Indeed, that is part of the story coming out of the Delta Cost Project. It is also part of a larger policy discourse about reducing non-essential expenditures and concentrating on academic achievement. In this context, engaging faculty to enhance student attainment must in part mean colleges and universities focusing their current resources more on academic mission and educational activities. Some campus and system heads have explicitly identified targets in such shifts in shares of expenditures.

Amidst much discussion of college costs, cost containment, and college quality, it would be a major contribution for the National Commission to help shape and sharpen this conversation, in conjunction with faculty groups. One way to accomplish this would be to encourage disaggregated analysis within the respective sectors represented on the commission, of higher education's cost structures, and of the relationship between those and quality as well as progress to college completion. That would involve disaggregating the broadly inclusive categories in institutional and national data of "instructional expenditures," "student services," "institutional support," and more. It would also represent a strategic step in connecting specific aspects of cost structures and containment to student attainment, determining the extent to which different policy patterns are positively or inversely correlated to increasing learning, progress, and/or completion. For all the value of the Delta Cost Project, there are real limits to the guidance it can provide. The aim is to more closely connect internal resource allocation, of resources that clearly are insufficient to the task of educating another 50% of the population, to quality and student attainment.

A related aspect of tightening that connection has to do with allocating resources among academic and non-academic units, and evaluating the heads of those units in ways

that reward and promote quality and student completion. Here institutions face another major challenge—the tension nationally, and from one state to the next, between the productivity/completion agenda and the quality/learning agenda. Much of the focus on enhancing the productivity of higher education institutions is on productivity of individual professors and of academic units by simple volume of output (number of credit hours taught, number of graduates), without regard for quality or learning. That is a particular challenge in institutions that have adopted incentive based budgeting or responsibility center management. There is little evidence nationally that institutions are adjusting the algorithms of such internal resource allocation models to include or more heavily weight indicators of quality, student progress and attainment, particularly for certain sub-populations of students. Equally lacking is any evidence that mid-level academic administrators, whether department heads or deans are increasingly being evaluated by improvement in student attainment.

In short, the National Commission has an opportunity to weigh in on priorities that should be shaping resource allocation at various levels. Prioritizing education, quality, and attainment are critical dimensions of a completion agenda that too often lost in an austerity agenda that seeks more volume of output for less investment in input. In representing colleges and universities in various sectors of American higher education, it would be fitting for the National Commission to foreground the dual goals of maintaining quality while enhancing student attainment. Moreover, as the Department of Education is now planning to include part-time and transfer students in its graduation data, though it is unclear how it will calculate graduation rates for them, there is an opportunity for the National Commission to play a leadership role in this process.

Leadership in calling on not just calling out the faculty. Just as the sustainable enhancement of student attainment depends on leadership from colleges and universities, so that leadership in defining successful strategies depends on broader faculty engagement than has thus far been achieved. The National Commission has an opportunity to contribute to that broadened faculty engagement by changing the conversation about college completion. Accomplishing such a change in the conversation, nationally as well as in states and systems, will require leadership, by the associations that are members of the commission, as well as by faculty leaders and groups in the sectors represented on the commission.

Part of the leadership that the commission can exercise is to call *on* faculty for assistance, changing the current conversation which too often consists of calling *out* faculty for being resistant to change, for not working hard enough, for not teaching effectively enough, and more. Part of the leadership can consist of reframing the conversation in terms of the strategies that institutions, systems, states, and the country should be addressing in order to foster broader faculty engagement to enhance student attainment. Part of that reframing is strategies that involve treating faculty as a valuable workforce in the academy and in the country, as part of the solution and as at the center of a knowledge-based society. That means engaging faculty as collectives, in various forms and configurations. Yet if the strategies are to be successful, faculty, too must exercise leadership in changing their own conversation. As collectives, in associations, senates, and unions, faculty have a positive contribution to make in developing proposals for enhancing student attainment. Part of the purpose of this paper is to offer ideas about projects and initiatives that can be the focal point of just this sort of work.

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