

# TEACHING & LEARNING

## A Mandate for the Nineties

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*(Editor's Note: The following article is adapted from Teaching and Learning in the Community College by Terry O'Banion and Associates, coming this spring from the Community College Press. The book will be featured at the AACC Annual Convention April 6-9 in Washington, D.C., or may be ordered for \$27.50 [\$23 for AACC members] from AACC Publications at 410/546-0391.)*

**T**he past three decades were remarkably busy for community colleges as they tackled the mammoth job of refurbishing the colleges so hastily organized and built during the 1960s. Responding to the increasing demand for access, leaders in the '60s and '70s were primarily interested in structure—the structure of buildings, the structure of organizations, the structure of curricula and programs, and the structure of political alliances. Leaders did not set a high priority on the teaching and learning process that must undergird all other structures if student success is to be the ultimate achievement of community colleges.

In these early days of the modern community college, "to care about students" was the only evidence required to prove that the teaching and learning process was in capable hands. It made little difference to the leaders occupied with developing and maintaining structure that most of the faculty members came from secondary schools with little understanding of the mission and philosophy of the community college; that most of these faculty members had not been schooled in adult development theory or basic theories of learning; that most of these faculty members had little or no experience in working with the diversity of students flocking to these new opportunities for higher education; that these faculty members carried heavy teaching loads while also serving as academic advisers, participating on numerous committees, and sponsoring various student organizations; that, indeed, these faculty members



took pride in not conducting or publishing research. In the leaders' view, teaching and learning were natural processes adequately tended by an underprepared and overworked faculty.

In retrospect, it is a remarkable feat of courage and commitment on the part of faculties that community colleges have done as well as they have in fostering student success. While the record on helping underprepared students succeed is not so sterling, community colleges have been highly successful in preparing students for employment in vocational and technical fields and equally successful in preparing a small number of students, except for minorities, for transfer. While this success is important, the outcomes might have bordered on the extraordinary had community college leaders and their faculties paid more attention in earlier years to teaching and learning as the heart of the community college educational enterprise. In fairness to the leaders and faculty members of the past three decades, the success stories would have been different if we had known then what we know now about instructional strategies and the measurement of outcomes.

Leaders now have a clear mandate to place teaching and learning at the top of the educational agenda in order to repair the neglect of the past and prepare for a new future beginning in the year 2000. The past five years have witnessed an increasing emphasis on teaching and learning in conferences, articles, books, research reports, and, most importantly, educational practice. Numerous developments and forces in the late 1980s and early 1990s have contributed to this new emphasis on teaching and learning. Many of these forces have been external to the educational community, but a great deal of ferment within education has also given rise to creative innovations from practitioners and substantive policies and standards from professional leaders.

## REFORM MOVEMENT FORCES

The activities of the quality reformation that have been driving the educational agenda for almost a decade have helped usher in the more recent emphasis on teaching and learning. Most of the early reports of the reform movement did not emphasize teaching and learning, but the reports and the responses to the reports made education a highly visible national concern and helped prepare the groundwork for an emphasis on teaching and learning.

The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* launched the reform movement in education in this country and has since triggered more than 30 national reports and more than 150 state task reports. In 1988 the AACC Commission on the Future of Community Colleges issued the landmark report *Building Communities: A Vision for A New Century*. With statements such as, "The community college should be the nation's premier teaching institution. Quality instruction should be the hallmark of the movement" (p. 25), the *Building Communities* report helped

usher in, more than any other document in recent community college literature, the emphasis on teaching and learning.

More recently the Office of the President of the United States has helped create an environment focusing on education as a national priority. The Bush administration issued *America 2000: An Education Strategy*, a document suggesting that it is time to quit issuing reports and instead initiate a revolution to

develop new schools for a new world. While many educators have reacted with cynicism to the report as well as to former President Bush's claim to be the education president, at least there is some concern about education from the White House. This concern, and the continuing attention given to education under President Clinton, who played a key role in issuing the *America 2000* report, supports the contention that teaching and learning will be key themes for the rest of this decade.

## POLITICAL FORCES

In addition to the direct involvement of the White House in educational strategy, other political forces are moving education to the forefront of the nation's agenda. The accountability movement, for example, initiated in states such as Florida, Texas, and New Jersey by direct acts of their legislatures, has mandated increasing interest in teaching and learning. Outcomes assessment, designed to measure what students have actually learned in classes, programs, and colleges, has become the primary focus of the assessment movement. As outcomes assessment becomes more sophisticated, researchers will begin to link learning outcomes to patterns and processes of teaching.

Accreditation is a self-enforced political force in education that has the power to bring about enormous change. In the last decade, the regional accrediting associations have become much more assertive in establishing more relevant standards, and they now require institutions to include outcomes assessment as a key part of their programs. Several of the regional accrediting associations emphasize the institution's responsibility for ensuring that diversity among the teaching faculty reflects student diversity.

The unionization of community college faculty has also been a force in bringing teaching and learning to the forefront of the educational agenda. While union programs do not usually emphasize processes of teaching and learning, they certainly emphasize the conditions in which teachers teach and, therefore, serve as an important force in underscoring the key role of teaching and learning in the institution. Indirectly, the union movement has contributed to teaching and learning by separating some of the most difficult faculty issues such as salary, benefits, and working conditions from discussions regarding curriculum development and review, teaching processes, and student evaluation. Faculty senates and councils, unencumbered by these more personal issues addressed by unions, can work in concert with institutional administrators to improve teaching and learning.

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## INNOVATIVE FORCES

**T**he mid-'80s saw a renaissance of innovation throughout the community college, perhaps related to the quality reformation. At the vanguard of this most recent renaissance were innovations related to institutional systems that support student success. Capitalizing on the availability of information technology, community colleges designed student information systems to assist in assessing, advising, registering, and monitoring the progress of students. Information technology made it possible for community colleges to track their students and to intervene with prescriptive programs to ensure retention and achievement. These were innovations that supported teaching and learning, and soon faculty members began to experiment with instructional innovations that would complement the success of the student information systems.

Foremost among these innovations was classroom research, a concept first suggested by K. Patricia Cross, as an approach designed to move the quality reformation from institutional structures and programs monitored by committees and administrators directly into the classroom to be implemented and monitored by individual faculty members. Classroom research became classroom assessment, the purpose of which is to provide faculty members with techniques to examine the effectiveness of their teaching while that teaching is taking place.

In the late '80s, the state of Washington initiated an effort, based at Evergreen State College in cooperation with Washington community colleges, to restructure the curriculum and revitalize teaching through learning communities. Although they take many different forms, learning communities characteristically involve from 25 to 100

students working with three or four faculty members. Built around common themes, they provide participants with an integrated learning experience in a community environment. Today, every community college in Washington has a number of learning communities that have proven highly effective in retaining students and improving their achievement, especially in composition courses. In addition to serving students well, learning communities have proved to be highly stimulating opportunities for faculty renewal.

The Distinguished Research Chair has long been an accepted concept in universities, bringing distinction to the leading research universities that can afford such chairs. The first Distinguished Teaching Chair at a community college was a chair of nursing supported by local hospitals, established in 1973 at Edison Community College, Florida. Several other community colleges have also established individual teaching chairs, usually in nursing or other vocational/technical fields. In June 1989 Miami-Dade Community College, Florida, initiated a faculty endowed chair program with a goal of establishing 100 endowed chairs. The Faculty Endowed Chair at Miami-Dade is designed to serve as the capstone of a comprehensive teaching and learning project—the best example in the community college today of how an institution can muster its resources to revitalize and reform teaching and learning. Beginning with a statement on teaching and learning values in 1987, Miami-Dade faculty have now developed a statement of faculty excellence, used to select and orient new faculty, evaluate and promote faculty, and encourage and provide student feedback on teaching. Professional staff development programs support faculty in developing and maintaining excellence in the teaching and learning process. On June 10, 1992, Miami-Dade awarded 25 faculty members Faculty Endowed Chairs, the first large-scale implementation of this concept in the nation.



In the last 10 years American business has been applying the concepts of Total Quality Management (TQM) to improve services and products in order to compete. Recently, American educators began exploring TQM concepts for their applicability in managing American colleges. Initial applications have focused on structures and systems such as registration, payroll, physical plant, and mail distribution.

Writing in the *AAHE Bulletin*, Ted Marchese suggests that the goal of TQM in education is to develop an institutional culture that is "quality-driven, customer-oriented, marked by teamwork, and avid about improvement" (1991, p. 4). Fully implemented in an educational institution, TQM promises nothing less than a total restructuring of the institutional culture, the management systems, and the processes for creating change, including the improvement of teaching and learning.

## SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC FORCES

**M**any social and demographic forces impact the community college, but three in particular—changing faculty, changing students, and expanding mission—have significant implications for teaching and learning.

A great number of community college faculty members are retiring, and many will continue to retire throughout the '90s. The replacement of these faculty members provides college leaders with an opportunity to influence the future of the community college for decades to come. Community colleges must give high priority to identifying and selecting new teachers and organizing staff development programs to serve their needs.

Although few graduate programs are designed specifically for the preparation of community college instructors, a great deal of reform effort directed at the preparation of public school teachers might influence community college instruction. The Holmes Group is a national organization of deans of colleges of education committed to reforming the way teachers are prepared. The Carnegie Corporation for the Advancement of Teaching is supporting the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which hopes to develop national teaching standards to credential outstanding teachers in the United States. If these reform initiatives are successful, teachers who are influenced by them could gravitate to the community college with new skills better prepared to address the special challenges of teaching there.

Whereas students in four-year colleges and universities tend to be homogeneous along a number of dimensions, such as full-time, young, residential, and prepared for college, community college students are as diverse as American society in general and share special characteristics related to the special nature of community colleges. The majority of community college students attend part-time, hold jobs, are older than their university counterparts, are first-generation college attendees, and are often underprepared for college-level courses. A great many community college students are unsure about their educational goals and sign up for community college courses because they have nothing better to do.

As the nation continues to become more diverse and even learns to celebrate diversity, community colleges will become the primary institutions of higher education that reflect this diversity. In so doing, teaching and learning will become even more visible and more significant as instructors respond to the overwhelming challenge of providing successful educational opportunities for the most diverse group of college students in the history of the world.

While community colleges respond to a changing faculty and an increasing diversity of students, they are also responding to social forces that cause them to expand and realign their mission. Ideally, community colleges are designed for and committed to responding to the special needs of their communities. In recent years, community colleges have been broadening their definition of community in serving business and industry and deepening their definition of community by addressing more difficult social problems.

As community colleges begin to explore new alliances with business and industry, they will be required to examine new approaches to teaching and learning for the special clients they serve. For the millions they will earn in contracts with business and industry, community colleges will learn new

ways of assessing client needs, new ways of delivering instruction, and new ways of evaluating success, their own success as instructors and the success of their clients. These experiences may influence more traditional college programs. Business and industry institutes and programs have the potential of becoming in-house experimental laboratories in teaching and learning for the rest of the college.

Recently, a number of community colleges have extended their commitment to their communities by tackling difficult social issues. When Iowa farmers began to lose their farms because of the economic conditions of recent years, Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids responded by organizing family counseling programs, career counseling, and worker retraining programs. When environmental groups in the timber industry clashed over the spotted owl in Oregon, Lane Community College in Eugene hosted several community forums to bring representatives of the two groups and many other agencies together to work on solutions. Lane faculty helped create a national clearinghouse related to conflicts between environmental groups and industries and organized special retraining programs for laid-off timber workers. At Miami-Dade Community College, the Medical Center Campus has created the Overtown Neighborhood Project and has adopted a neighborhood next to the college in which 50 percent of the residents earn incomes below the poverty level. The college has initiated a number of projects to deal with teenage pregnancy, homelessness, housing, drugs, crime, and education. One major effort is designed to provide child care and residential living for welfare mothers as they attend classes.

These imaginative programs in community development require faculty members to "get out on the street" as they learn new ways of serving their communities. These new challenges in new settings with new kinds of students will require faculty members to experiment with teaching and learning in new and different ways.

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## TECHNOLOGICAL FORCES

**A**mong higher education institutions, community colleges have been avid users of information technology. They have been leaders in applying technology to student information systems, to institutional management systems, and to the instructional process. Unfortunately, these applications have been used, for the most part, only to speed up the old ways of doing business. The community college of today looks very much like the community college of 1963, except that information technology helps faculty and administrators do their work faster and, in some cases, more efficiently. The revolution that was to come in education with the widespread use of information technology is still anticipated.

If the teaching and learning process is to be re-engineered through information technology, there must be breakthrough applications in at least three areas related to increasing productivity (more students learning more without increased numbers of faculty). First, information technology must be used to increase the number of students an individual faculty member can teach. Second, colleges must provide sophisticated, organized learning experiences driven by information technology for large numbers of students that are monitored or supported by a teacher or teacher's aide. Third, colleges must design and provide large-scale, sophisticated, organized learning experiences driven by information technology that stand alone without any assistance from teachers or teacher's aides. When colleges are able to negotiate these changes with faculty unions and other groups within the institution, teaching and learning can be truly re-engineered.

The groundwork is currently being prepared for the development and successful implementation of these changes. Through its eight-year project, "The Community College and the Computer," the League for Innovation in the Community College has made a major contribution to preparing community colleges for dramatic changes in their use of information technology. Working with 20 major computer corporations, the League, through its member colleges, has developed and field-tested over 25 specific applications of information technology with support of more than \$30 million. Six monographs developed by leading community college experts and computer corporation consultants on key topics of information technology have been distributed free to every community college in the United States and Canada. Some of the monographs have been adopted by several states as official guidelines.

At Kirkwood Community College, Iowa, a handful of faculty members teach hundreds of students across seven counties through one of the nation's most sophisticated telecommunications networks. Functionally illiterate citizens by the thousands flock to special computer centers staffed by volunteers located throughout Charlotte, North Carolina, to raise their reading and math levels. This Adult Basic Literacy Education program, developed and coordinated by Central Piedmont Community College, has been cited as one of the most effective in the nation. Karen Schwalm at Glendale Community College in Phoenix, Arizona, has been able to reach the "unvoiced or marginalized" community college student in her composition courses through her Electronic Journal. Using pen names to ensure anonymity, the students communicate with each other via computers in ways they never would in regular classes. Using information technology, Glendale Community College has figured out a way to build a sense of community in a class and even throughout the college in an Electronic Forum in which students and faculty link up to share ideas on a variety of planned and unplanned topics.

These applications of information technology, and hundreds like

them taking place in community colleges everywhere, are the precursors for even more advanced use of information technology for re-engineering the teaching/learning process. The rate of change will be even more rapid in the next 10 years than in the past 10 because of this basic foundation and because students attending the community college are increasingly technologically literate. The Nintendo Generation will require colleges and faculties to respond to their needs. As important, the infrastructures are already in place through telephones, televisions, and satellites to make information technology immediately available to every faculty member and student in the country. Community colleges have been leaders in experimenting with these networks, from the national Community College Satellite Network of AACC to the Cuyahoga Community College State Network in Ohio.

There is growing evidence of the pervasiveness of information technology in education and in community colleges. In 1970 the education industry spent \$2 billion on computers; in 1990 that figure rose to \$8 billion. In 1970 only 1 percent of that amount was spent on instruction, but in 1990, 50 percent of that amount was spent on instruction. Campus purchases of computers in community colleges increased 50 percent from the 1988-89 to 1989-90 academic years. Today, 16 percent of community college students own computers, and 37.5 percent of community college faculty own computers (DeLoughry, 1992, p. A17). Even in difficult financial times, community colleges continue to purchase computers for instructional purposes as a reflection of the emphasis on teaching and learning.

## THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR CHANGE

**T**he forces briefly noted here—reform movement forces, political forces, innovative forces, social and demographic forces, and technological forces—support the mandate that community college leaders will have to transform teaching and learning in this decade. The quality reformation has called for nothing less than the complete overhaul of education. State legislators are mandating specific changes in that overhaul. The changing nature of the community college faculty in terms of kind and number offers a window of opportunity for change. As creative community colleges realign their missions, creative community college faculties are experimenting with new forms of teaching and learning as never before. Information technology promises new breakthroughs.

There has never been a more propitious moment for the community college to leap forward in its continuing commitment to quality education. The signs are right for a major breakthrough that will place teaching and learning at the heart of the community college enterprise.

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