

# Faculty Resource Pool: Mark of An Innovative Institution\*

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The first printed report to the Board of Regents of Florida about the plans for the University of West Florida presented a conceptual frame of reference which specified certain features for an academic program: individualized instruction fostering flexibility and incorporating student programs in independent study, close attention to student counseling, experiential learning associated with vocational or professional pursuits, a liberal learning focus with an emphasis on teaching, and strong preparation in a major field of study. Furthermore, the fact that the students enrolled would be older and more mature added a dimension of assurance to the venture, decreasing any likelihood of its being caught up in frivolous or rah-rah

episodes which tend to detract from the dignity and thrust of the academic enterprise.

Because the objectives cited above are not easily realized in a large monolithic structure, it was decided that a collegium-like structure embracing smallness would be introduced to guarantee attainment of these objectives, to insure a sense of "identification," and to avoid feelings of "alienation." The model selected was the cluster college model. Other means were suggested as ways of reinforcing this model: differentiation in buildings (separate buildings for each college); program distinctiveness (being set apart to some degree by what goes on in each college); student/student, student/faculty, and faculty/faculty interactions peculiar to the inherent program uniqueness of each college. What

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was sought was not only a *personalized* approach described as "they know me and I know them," but also an *institutional identification* expressed as "what happens in your college may be similar, but it's not the same as what happens in our college." In brief, the cluster structure provided for distinctiveness in each college within the University and called for the development and reinforcement of programs or program emphases that were unique to each college. Thus, in the smallness of a college housed among other colleges on a large campus, students and faculty members know and are known by each other and by each colleague within the structure of a total university complex, i.e., they are known because they can maintain themselves as persons in a relatively small group identifiable by college name and program.

The uniqueness to Alpha, Gamma, and Omega Colleges was provided through the arrangement of disciplines within the colleges. Each college had a different set of *academic disciplines*. In the assignment of disciplines to the respective colleges, two practical and determinate factors were introduced: 1) numbers of students (FTE's) a discipline might attract; 2) the necessity of dividing up the areas of Business and Education, thereby controlling the amount of political influence each might exert within any unit of the University. The traditional division format (the Humanities, the Physical and Biological Sciences, the Social Sciences, and the Arts) was avoided. Instead, disciplines from each of these traditional divisions were placed in one or the other college and with minimum duplication from college to college.

By setting up its collegium format in this way, the University of West Florida became unique to higher education in the United States. What was done through this arrangement demonstrated rather conclusively that it isn't any particular array of offerings or groupings of disciplines

which defines liberal learning as much as it is a grouping of faculty members competent and secure in their own fields, faculty members willing to converse and plan with like-minded colleagues from other fields. It constitutes evidence in support of the supposition that what develops from the interaction among intelligent and competent men, regardless of the separateness imposed by disciplines, is what gives uniqueness to the program of any particular college. However, as programs took shape and faculty were employed at the University, one matter became perfectly clear; namely, if a faculty member does not see the uniqueness of his or her college in terms of the interaction between the disciplines within that college, then in all probability he is less likely to participate fully in the academic aspects of the undergirding concept. Such a person may as well be a member of a large department, in a large university, where he teaches his particular subject matter and recognizes relationships only within the framework of specialty courses. Furthermore, he is not likely to be supportive of a "collegium" concept or structure. I hasten to add that such a person would not be hampered necessarily in his "personal" counseling of students. But colleges of the type established at the University of West Florida must stress not only "personal contact" in the development of both students and faculty, but also distinctive identifiable program components. Uniqueness of each college is not left to the definition provided by the assignment of certain disciplines to any given college, but to the nature of the *interaction* between the persons of differing disciplines within that college. The very validity of the collegium concept academically is based on what can and does happen between academicians when placed in any setting, recognizing that what does happen is attributable to the expressed expertise of

those in a given field and not in spite of their expertise. In such an arrangement there develops interdisciplinary projects, interdisciplinary seminars, and programs which spell distinctiveness for each college. The same seminar with the same title will undoubtedly be different when offered in different colleges by men from different disciplines; i.e., the nature and import of one set of disciplines focusing on the same topic or problem.

Over the past several years I have been in touch with one of my former colleagues in an attempt to define the peculiar characteristics of "collegium." Using the approach of systems analysis, it has become very clear to us that in the typical liberal learning setting, the disciplinary boundaries have provided a conventional structure for program building in which academic disciplines mature and become more complex, reproducing by fission. Thus, in an expanding university climate this process produces a profusion of courses and departments based on the separate disciplines. The same process replicates itself time and again, also in the small college, though the small college has a lot less of everything it takes to be a university. Ultimately it becomes almost impossible for the college to hold an original or novel posture and to reject the typical university model. Even new seats of liberal learning quickly freeze into the static university form when this happens, losing whatever evolutionary viability might have been fostered initially, becoming the victims of an early arthritic process, spawned by a tenured high ranked oligarchy representing all the academic vested interests. Such a situation takes the edge off the thrust of generative people and the order of the day commands new ideas to be resisted, creative projects to be underfunded, and political harassment to be released in the guise of academic respectability and quality control. Soon a

college's resources become committed to program maintenance and there is little energy left for new experimentation and adaptation, because people expend most of their energies in committees searching out one process or another as original aspirations for vibrant programs grow dim and distant. In such a situation the only change that can occur is random change provoked by desperation, or process change for the sake of exercising stagnant process.

As I analyze what happens in the newer and more innovative institutions, the dominant unique feature appears to be a "faculty resource pool system" composed of people and ideas interwoven into the structure and operation of the college. Too, I'm never sure that what I observe isn't an *attitude* more than it is an element of structure. Persons within these structures consider themselves as resource persons (source persons) with extensions to every level and every dimension of the institution. Consequently, in such an arrangement there are as many limitless numbers of programs as there are human beings. The only limit to the number of possible arrangements is the levels of competence and energy of the persons interacting. Thus this pool of human resource provides an almost limitless number of programming options within a limited human scale dimension. This same "resource pool" tends to be open and able to draw upon other energy resource systems such as career service internships, adjunct faculty, community talent and expertise, visiting scholars and visiting artists. Translated within a field theory context, the resource pool is always changing with the addition of programs or persons. The interactions that ensue insure diversity and uniqueness within diversity, i.e., the people are unique and the programs they develop bear close resemblances to those interacting in them.

In handling the disciplines of Business and Education as they did, the planners of the University of West Florida recognized that in a "discipline programmed system" the sophisticated development of any part comes at a cost to the development of the whole. This happens because program development proceeds pyramidally. Basic instruction is provided first with specialists pouring over at the apex, supported by the assumption that only students (majors) who have gone far enough up the incline can profit from work with the specialists. In contrast, the "resource pool system" fosters and thrives on diversity. It does not ignore the contribution of any specialist, but each specialist's contribution is made within the context of the whole. This being the case, the system is enriched and expanded as competent faculty and competent students are added; too, a faculty member never "fills" a slot, but represents a source responding to other sources.

The basic issue is not the choice between a generalist and a specialist, but between conflicting models of human development. In the resource pool concept, the assumptions are that the geneticist grows out of the biologist, who grows out of the scientist, who grows out of the total human being. And when employing faculty, the question is not only what he or she brings in terms of professional and specialty resources, but how this person might enrich and expand the pool of faculty resources in order to exploit and stretch the program and persons within the program—those who make up the collegium. It is a dynamic system wherein the whole is much more than the sum total of the parts, and where acting, interacting and reacting are the fundamental processes.

Incidentally, the argument on "quality" is frequently employed by overly developed specialists as a political weapon to guard their own vested interests and privi-

leged positions. No one is against quality, nor persons teaching or doing research in their areas of competence. However, there are times when I conclude that the over exercised specialist might be the least able person to set standards in a collegium. His criteria may be intrinsically very narrow and his filtering system so refined as to exclude most of what is important in undergraduate education.

It must be remembered that the liberal learning situation attempts to make the student more aware of what it means to be a scientist-artist-scholar human being. It provides rich and diverse opportunities for the learning of specialized knowledge and skills, but not at the expense of learning the skills of being a human being, i.e., the process of humanizing humans. Interestingly enough, the general change agent for this situation is a specialist, but a specialist who can see ways of relating his knowledge, skills, and experience as a whole human being to the skills, knowledge and experience of other human beings from different disciplines. Out of a resource pool of such specialists come new formulations and a continuous redefining of old ones, resulting in the propagation of ferment and growth. Of course, if the specialists gathered are insufficiently grounded in this kind of enterprise, then they are only capable of operating within fixed disciplinary boundaries from which there emerges a tight-knit discipline system that gradually erodes the system as a whole, producing inevitably several satellite groups of "have-nots." The outgrowth of these sub-cultures is hostility and paranoia, because a tightly-knit discipline system operates to the advantage of some disciplines (departments) and to the demise of others.

With its arrangement of disciplines along the lines of practical definition and functional expectation, the University of West Florida can best be described as a

"resource pool system," much different than the traditional university model of departments *qua* disciplines. Its "faculty resource pool" provides it with distinctive markings and sets it apart as an innovative institution.

Another similar, but different model, was developed at Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington. Its format is peculiarly problem oriented and industrial. Faculty members are identified by discipline, but not as members of a department. They are resource persons contracted into and out of specific problems on which students and faculty members are working together. As in industry, a specialist is assigned to a problem along with a number of other specialists of differing disciplines. So, too, at Evergreen State the important thing is what the different specialists can contribute to the solution of the problem on which they focus their expertise.

The founding philosophical rhetoric of Evergreen State posits a unity of life: "The whole is a whole; each individual's life is a whole, this is the nature of nature, this is the nature of the student, this must also be the nature of the curriculum. It, too must be a whole. Thus it is that this holistic conception is implemented in the form of a broadly conceived problem or theme oriented interdisciplinary studies program in which the student and faculty are immersed 100%. Neither the faculty nor students are fractioned by several concurrent and often conflicting courses. In these coordinated studies the Sciences, the Social Sciences, the Humanities, and the Fine Arts interact, interdigitate, interweave in a fashion similar to their interacting and interweaving in the real world. This represents men's minds working in concert, sometimes symphonically, sometimes cacophonously, always authentically." Some 60% of the students and faculty are engaged in some twenty different coordinated

studies at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels of work. The program does not ignore the necessity of acquiring specialty skills; however, it offers an opportunity for specialization without compromise of individuality; a small group may concentrate on a particular problem with a clearly articulated and limited set of objectives, procedures, and evaluation methods spelled out.

Evergreen takes pride in a curriculum that "remains viable," sensitive to the world outside, and responsive to change by having the inherent capacity for modifiability. (It is assumed that people are growing continuously through interaction and, as a result, programming is continuously changing.) It even institutes a self destruct system, i.e., programs are designed and offered for a given year and there are no guarantees of any offering being repeated.

It should be noted that a team of faculty and students can work concertedly and uninterruptedly since all programs are of the full-immersion variety. There are no class bells to break up a seminar discussion, no conflicting class obligations to preclude extended field trips, no deterrents to devoting oneself full time with full effort and concentration. The absence of departments and divisions means that interdisciplinary studies can operate without the problem of dues-paying or other allegiances to the department's source of bread and butter, e.g., promotion in rank or election to tenure, merit salary adjustments. There are no promotions in rank because there are no ranks. Every faculty member bears the non-hierarchical title, "member of the faculty." There is no tenure, but rather three-year renewable appointments; there is no merit salary, only a salary schedule along which one moves based on years of experience. The kinds of forces that are so often divisive and petty are removed; the faculty can work



truly as members of teams, learning both substance and pedagogy from one another. Faculty are assigned to programs according to competencies, institutional needs, personal interests and overall curricular development. The curriculum emerges out of a "resource pool" of faculty and students.

Needless to say, the academic community of Evergreen State is different from the community of the University of West Florida, each having its own and uniquely different "faculty resource pool" format.

Another institution equally exciting is Empire State College, New York State's answer to England's Open University. In this particular setting, a single faculty member acts as a consultant to twenty-seven to thirty students in arranging for expertise support from other professionals in the surrounding community. Each student has his own program designed according to his/her personal goals. Students and mentors work in a one to one relationship and the mentors work with each other looking to each other and anticipating help from each other. This is done in the interest of each student. In this situation a mentor can say truly, "These are my students," but in saying this, he accepts the responsibility of arranging his student's entire program. Out of necessity, the mentor must be interdisciplinary in outlook, holistic in theoretical orientation, critical in evaluation, and willing to extend himself/herself in every possible way for his/her students.

Twenty to twenty-five mentors (professors) are located at each of the several centers scattered throughout New York State. As we indicated, these men and women are responsible for consulting with each student and giving the necessary direct guidance to see each student through a degree granting program. As was stated, they must have an interdisciplinary orien-

tation, be committed to independent study, recognize that work experience can be translated into academic credit, and have a devotion to teaching with full realization that their own kicks in discovering knowledge may have to come through the research and exploration of their students. In these professors are found the sense of challenge, the fusion of the worlds of college and career, the abilities to apply intellectual skills on a broad scale, the representation of many disciplines and the channel for coordinating each student's support staff. They are the sources of information, sources in referral, implementers, coordinators, evaluators, cataloguers of talents and skills found in the surrounding community. They are stripped of departmental apparel, such as the classroom, the blackboard, the podium and the laboratory, even the regular contact with colleagues of the same discipline. They are there with the student and whatever adjunct persons who want to help them help the student. They are the caretakers of the student's portfolio: contracts, bibliographies, experience, comments, and evaluations of field advisers and tutors. And remember, most of these mentors are Ph.D. specialists. Incidentally, they're also backed up by a "think-tank" operation, located in Saratoga Springs, where study modules are created. Study modules cover the widest range of topics and are ready made for distribution. Interestingly enough, they are not widely used by the mentors in the individual centers.

In every sense, Empire State is a "resource pool system"; it may represent the purest of its kind. Though another equally promising design is the competency based model of Alverno College which strives vigorously to involve "both a synthesis of educational goals and a more complete definition of the performance specifications linking educational strategies to the particular goals." Graduation requirements

are defined in terms of eight competencies with six levels of accomplishment in each of the eight competencies. These competencies are:

1. to develop effective communications skills
2. to sharpen analytical capabilities
3. to develop workable problem-solving skills
4. to develop a facility for making value judgments and independent decisions
5. to develop facility for social interaction
6. to achieve understanding of the relationship of the individual and the environment
7. to develop awareness and understanding of the world in which the individual lives
8. to develop knowledge, understanding, and responsiveness to the arts and knowledge and understanding of the humanities.

Each professor, regardless of discipline, serves on evaluation panels for each competency and each level within the developmental process; each professor is a specialist and generalist by definition of function and responsibility; each professor is a resource person for student and colleague; each professor is trained to become exemplary of the characteristics the program espouses for its students.

There are other models: Raymond College and Callison College of the University of the Pacific, Eckerd College, The University Without Walls, Austin College, Ottawa University, New College of the University of Alabama, Mars Hill College, New College in Florida, The Honors Center of Davidson College, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, and several others. Each is undergirded by a "faculty resource pool system." Of course, this is not to conclude

that such a characteristic is the only unique one found in these institutions. There are other features present to some degree in most of them: abandonment of the tradition of a sharply circumscribed campus, abandonment of the tradition of a fixed age group, abandonment of the traditional classroom as the principal focus for instruction, abandonment of a heavily prescribed curriculum and credit points, abandonment of spoon feeding in favor of emphasizing self direction in learning, abandonment of catalogue control programs in favor of individual contract and self designed programs, abandonment of paradigms which have the instructor and student staring at each other from opposite ends of the log, abandonment of conventional certifying of faculty members according to degrees prescribed and ceremoniously protected, abandonment of the concept of the graduate as a finished product rather than a student who continues the "struggle of being and becoming."

In considering "resource pool systems" we have looked briefly at comprehensive programs. It might profit us to look at such a system within a structure which adheres to a departmental format. I refer to Davidson College's professor emeriti and library resource program for Extended Studies.

By implementing and developing extended studies programs in 1971-72, the Library at Davidson College became more an integral part of the teaching function and less a depository or book dispensary. Extended Studies is a year-long program involving every student and almost every faculty member in broadening experiences, e.g., a student designed project, a faculty research project, a seminar suggested by students or their mentors, mutually agreed upon group projects which take students to other areas of information on or off the campus. Every student is expected to complete one such project each year.

During the freshman and sophomore years the program may be in any field; during the junior and senior years the projects are in the student's major area of study. In this program the areas of an approach to investigation and inquiry are almost unlimited. The only stipulation states that whatever is undertaken must incorporate the same academic objectives as other regular academic pursuits.

Extended Studies offered the Library an unprecedented opportunity to become fundamentally a stronger teaching facility. In its initial year the program played a major part in the 25% increase in circulation. Since that time circulation has more than doubled, producing a work load beyond the capabilities of the Library Staff. To meet the demand, a search for a Coordinator of Library Resources for Extended Studies was initiated. Qualifications for this position were defined as follows:

This should be an individual trained in reference work and familiar not only with book resources, but also with micromaterials, cassettes and electronic developments feasible for undergraduate library use. He or she should be responsible for making special arrangements with neighboring institutions for use by Davidson students; should be responsible for inter-library loans and be provided with the means necessary to expedite the process; should apprise faculty members of needs in their fields and students on the availability of materials at Davidson; would be responsible for a substantial travel fund to be used by students, faculty, and library personnel, when the project involved necessitates travel; should also advise against particular projects whose expense in travel or other areas is out of proportion to the resources of the college; would not be responsible in those areas of Extended Studies which do not involve library resources; would supervise the work of three to five emeriti professors and emeritus librarians of the college. The emeriti would be given office space in the library and would work in close conjunction with the Coordinator of Library Resources for Extended Studies.

The program utilizes the talents and experience of professors emeriti who become members of the reference staff of the library, available to students for coun-

sel and assistance in Extended Studies and independent study. They provide support also to the regular faculty and are expected to be familiar with the resources of Davidson College and with those of universities in the region. They advise students concerning opportunities available, both in respect to library resources and the special skills or interests present in the college personnel. They are responsible for the direction of as many individual extended studies students as their abilities and activities warrant. This involves the usual advice, guidance, encouragement and evaluation. When feasible and under agreements made with the Coordinator, the emeriti are available to accompany students to neighboring institutions.

This arrangement broadens the intellectual offerings of the library by identifying learned and experienced men as consultants and by offering the students close contact with individuals and with library resources to which they might not otherwise have access. The "Professor in the Library" can open many doors which the "Professor in the Classroom" can only refer to by way of recommendation. (In some specialized projects travel to neighboring research centers may be essential. In such cases, funds are made available to the Coordinator and Professor or Librarian Emeritus for expenses incurred.)

In many ways this program is an expression of a "faculty resource pool system." It is not fully implemented at this time, but it has been initiated. I've used this illustration merely to show that a "resource pool system" may be introduced into a setting without the necessity of changing or embracing the entire structure in accommodating to it.

In closing, let me make a few observations. Something conceptually and structurally new is occurring in society today and no philosopher or soothsayer has



interpreted adequately the signs appearing on the horizon. Recently and agonizingly, society emerged from the agrarian age to be pummelled headlong into our industrial era. Now it's being propelled into a technotronic phase before those in it have adjusted fully to the industrial impact or discarded the value apparel of their agrarian forebears. Its members work feverishly to develop devices and systems to relieve themselves of work, but without decreasing working time. Citizens' values become clouded, vanish and are retrieved, a little worse for wear.

All in all, one thing becomes clear: a new set of literacies is essential to a modernized world. To date we have rested our case on verbal, mathematical and scientific literacies. Maybe it's time we recognize that imperative to the fast-encroaching upheavals of the next decades are what might be called "organizational" and "conceptual" literacies. John Gardner, former President of Common Cause, points out that we are victims of arthritic institutions and we'll hobble along until we build *self-renewing structures*. Is it not amazing that the most highly organized societies today (the United States, Japan, West Germany, Russia) do not know how to organize themselves vis-a-vis new aspirations and conditions, let alone organize among themselves? Yet certain "organizational" and "conceptual" literacies set the boundaries and provide the style for action and interaction within and between nations and their institutions.

No one will deny the need for new structures in meeting the eroding forces which confront academe. It may very well be that one of the best models for preparing persons within the academic community is one which embraces a resource pool concept and its appropriate structure. Maybe out of this kind of structure is born a greater concern for community and concern for individuality. Maybe in this

structure there is much conceptually new to be unearthed; maybe in this structure we can better answer the question "Organized for what?" than we can in a system which divides and splinters us.

It's time we realized that too often the price of narrow learning is broad ignorance and the consequence of ignorance through knowledge is just as fatal as the consequence of ignorance through magic. It's time we ventured the risks in exploring new systems in the hope of finding better solutions and of producing persons whose wisdom enables us better to cope in the process of humanizing humans.



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