Fall 1989

The Academic Workplace (Fall 1989): The Roots of Faculty Dissatisfaction

New England Resource Center for Higher Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston

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The Academic Workplace

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Current research projects

The New England Resource Center for Higher Education currently has two research projects underway.

General Education Project: The General Education Project, sponsored by a grant from the Exxon Education Foundation, is tracking the implementation of new general education programs in the 48 comprehensive and doctoral-granting colleges and universities in New England. During the summer, these institutions were surveyed by telephone. Six to eight of the surveyed institutions will be selected for on-site visits that will help Resource Center staff develop case studies of the implementation of new general education requirements. The ultimate purpose of the General Education Project is to develop models of successful implementation of changes in general education. The project is based on the conviction that the most serious challenge to general education lies in implementation. We fear that much time has been wasted in producing elegant curricular designs that will not be implemented as they were intended because of lack of awareness of the "five R's" of implementation: *recruiting* new faculty, *re-training* new and old faculty, *rewarding* faculty, *restructuring* the institution, and *resources*.

Minority Faculty Project: The second research project, undertaken with support from The Education Resources Institute (TERI), is developing a profile of the need, supply, and demand for Black and Hispanic faculty in Massachusetts colleges and universities. This profile will provide a data base useful for monitoring changes in minority faculty recruitment and retention. A telephone survey of all Massachusetts colleges and universities was conducted during the summer.

A Letter from the Director

Dear Colleague,

This is the premiere issue of *The Academic Workplace,* a newsletter published by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education, part of the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

The Resource Center was founded in February 1988 to serve both private and public higher education institutions and related organizations in New England. It is unique in its focus on the quality of academic worklife for faculty and administrators in colleges and universities, a growing concern around the country.

The Resource Center spent its first year establishing collaborative relationships with some of the 264 colleges and universities in New England. Our goal is to provide leadership on professional development and related policy initiatives for higher education in the region. We sponsor programs of research, dissemination, and professional development. This newsletter describes some of our activities.

Particularly noteworthy are the "think tanks" composed of invited higher education administrators from a broad range of institutions in New England. We currently sponsor five different groups: senior student affairs administrators, senior academic affairs administrators, presidents, higher education researchers, and middle academic administrators. The think tanks engage some of the most reflective administrators in the region in a continuing conversation about life in and around higher education.

The feature article of this newsletter, "The Roots of Faculty Dissatisfaction," was prepared as background for our conference on the quality of faculty worklife held in December. The "Practical Programs" section of the newsletter describes new programs or policies aimed at improving the quality of faculty worklife.

We welcome your comments, suggestions, or questions about the New England Resource Center for Higher Education. Do be in touch!

Zelda F. Gamson
Director

The roots of faculty dissatisfaction

This short position paper was written as background to the conference on "Challenges in the Academic Workplace: Improving the Quality of Faculty Worklife" held in December 1988.

Most faculty members have lived through unprecedented changes in the nature of their institutions and in social attitudes toward higher education. Many faculty feel that the rules of the game they entered in the 1950s and 1960s have been rewritten repeatedly, in ways over which they have had no control. They have understandably found life in their institutions unsettling, even occasionally threatening. Three general problems have the greatest impact on faculty dissatisfaction: 1) the gap between student performance and faculty expectations; 2) a feeling of isolation from administrators and other faculty members; and 3) limited opportunities for career advancement.

There are three critical issues: the gap between students and faculty, faculty isolation, and limited career opportunities.

Faculty have been especially unsettled by the people to whom most are deeply dedicated: the students. In the past fifteen years, a noticeable gap has developed between the skills and interests of students attending the majority of colleges and universities and the expectations and experiences of their teachers.

Academic work tends to be individualistic under most circumstances; recent years have turned individualism into isolation. Faculty have reacted strongly against increasing bureaucracy on their campuses and a resulting isolation of the faculty from the administration. Less obvious, but no less disappointing, is the isolation of faculty members from one another.

These disappointments with their students, their institutions, and their colleagues have left many faculty feeling "stuck." Most faculty members live out their careers in the same department. As full professors, they do essentially the same work they did as assistant professors – and they experience few of the satisfactions that come with moving up in an organization.

Let us examine the roots of these three aspects of faculty discontent in the larger forces that have acted upon colleges and universities in the past three decades.

The most obvious force affecting academic worklife has been the sheer growth of higher education in the United States. In 1950, there were 1,859 colleges and universities in this country; in 1982, there were 3,273. In 1950, there were 2 million undergraduates and 240,000 graduate students; in 1980, there were 11 million undergraduates and 1.1 million graduate students. Growth in and of itself has affected the working conditions of the average faculty member. It has tended to introduce additional layers of administration and to create more distance between senior administrators and individual faculty members; it has also tended to narrow the vision of individuals to ever smaller portions of their institutions.

These negative effects of growth matter less when resources are plentiful, as they were in the 1960s. In times of steady state or contraction, they intensify competition and isolation. The result is greater fragmentation within institutions and increased rivalry among departments and individuals. For many faculty, this means intellectual insularity and a feeling of being trapped. This feeling grew especially intense during the 1970s, when support for higher education began to decline. The pressure in the last fifteen years to do more with less has hit the faculty hard. Teaching loads have expanded, as have other duties such as chairing committees and paperwork. Despite the fact that college professors put in more hours than the average worker, their real salaries began to decline in the early 1970s and have not caught up yet.

Three forces have changed higher education: growth, changes among students, and government involvement.

The impact of growth fades in comparison with the effect of changes in the student body. The majority of the faculty now teaching in our colleges and universities entered academia during a period when higher education was undergoing a dramatic transformation – from being places where an elite was prepared to being places open to almost anyone. This egalitarian revolution in higher education came at a time of decline in high school preparation, resulting in what the vast majority of the faculty perceives as students who are woefully unprepared for college work.

In addition, public institutions and departments within many private colleges and universities are typically funded according to the number of students they enroll. The pressure to keep enrollments up is very high. Many faculty members see themselves as victims of this enrollment economy and resent what they see as deterioration of academic standards.

The growth of higher education and the egalitarian revolution have been accompanied by changes in the relationship between the academy and government. Substantial portions of college and university revenue now come from federal, state, and local government. When dollars are scarce, appropriations for higher education suffer along with everything else and policy-makers ask more questions about how public dollars are spent. Growing numbers of governmental regulations add to the pressure. Many professors see these demands as unwarranted intrusions on academic freedom; all face more bureaucracy, more paperwork, and more delays.

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Government involvement in the affairs of the academy is intensified by the growing recognition of the contributions of higher education to the country's economy, through its production of an educated labor force, research, and technology. This perception is double-edged. It has rekindled public appreciation of higher education, which sank to a low point in the 1970s; but it has also intensified scrutiny of higher education's performance. Legislators and government officials want to see evidence of the qualifications of graduates and the usefulness of research.

College and university faculties are "dispirited, fragmented, and devalued."

These three forces — the growth of higher education, changes in the student body, and government involvement in the academy — have made life immensely more difficult for the faculty of the 1980s than it was for the faculty of the 1950s. The decline in the quality of faculty life has left the professoriate, in the words of Howard Bowen and Jack Schuster in *American Professors: A National Resource Imperiled,* "dispirited," "fragmented," and "devalued."

We offer three recommendations for improvement in the quality of faculty worklife: (1) leaders of colleges and universities must pay more attention to articulating their institutions' purposes; (2) task and decision-making structures must become more collaborative; and (3) persuasive programs for career planning and professional development must be instituted.

Colleges and universities have always run on the commitment of the people who work in them — the commitment to do more. Commitment is a precious resource, one that turns out to be a key to the productivity of most organizations. It is based on employees' sense that the institution in which they work is worthy and cares about them. Leaders are crucial in shaping the atmosphere that gives rise to these feelings. Indeed, most effective organizations have leaders who constantly articulate their institutions' beliefs.

Exactly how to articulate purposes in a college or university will depend on the institution's history, student body, and mix of emphasis on research, teaching, and service. Any effort to do so, however, should try to define who the students are or should be, what skills and knowledge they should acquire, and how they will demonstrate what they have learned. Many colleges and universities around the country have found that asking these questions as specifically as possible, and then taking action to deal with the answers, goes a long way toward closing the gap between student interests and faculty expectations.

Collaboration involving faculty participation in decisions that affect them is a complicated but necessary condition for improving their relationship with administrators. Leaders must make hard decisions, but they should do so by involving as many people as possible in developing ideas, writing and discussing position papers, and building support for the best decisions. To work together effectively, faculty members and administrators must learn the skills of collaborative decision-making.

There are many examples of faculty working together within and, more importantly, across disciplines. Creating new curricula, establishing learning communities which group several courses or offer inter-disciplinary studies, and setting up research teams can re-create faculty community. Collaboration among faculty from different institutions — on service and teaching as well as research — is also valuable, and is becoming more common around the country. Projects in public agencies and businesses develop new relationships and enrich teaching. Faculty members find renewed meaning in their careers as they work in networks on improving writing, developing new materials on women and minorities, or teaching their students to think critically and creatively.

Three recommendations for improvement: articulate institutional purposes, foster collaboration, and encourage professional development.

Colleges and universities do a poor job of rewarding faculty for the activities they wish to encourage. Even in teaching-oriented institutions, faculty are often promoted and given raises according to the number of articles and books they publish. While publication brings luster to scholars and their schools, it does not help much in the daily life of institutions. Nor does it necessarily contribute to the improvement of teaching. Therefore, a close analysis of how faculty are rewarded and promoted is the first step toward improving faculty life.

Along with an examination of the reward structure, an all-out effort to expand mobility and choices for faculty is needed. Innovative workload arrangements, rotation into administrative jobs, and internships in government and industry are being tried in institutions around the country. Human resource development, common in business and industry, is just arriving in higher education in the form of faculty career counseling programs, pre-retirement planning, and growth contracts.

Sabbaticals, faculty exchanges, and conferences and workshops on the latest issues in pedagogy and curriculum are also more common today. Specific activities are less important than the organizational climate in which they take place. Leaders must actively encourage faculty to take risks and grow, and must put resources into helping them do so. They will then discover what should be obvious to us all: that the faculty is a renewable resource.

by Zelda F. Gamson,
Sandra E. Elman, and
Ernest A. Lynton

Learning styles and teaching activities

At **Keene State College** (NH), one of the most successful programs that help faculty improve teaching and learning is the Freshmen Year Experience Program, currently in its third year. As part of this program, the Kolb Learning Style Inventory is administered to all entering freshmen. Results are given, along with other traditional assessment information, to faculty who teach regular introductory courses designated for freshmen only.

This year, however, a new twist will be added. Faculty will receive more detailed information, including not only an individual look at each student's learning style, but also an analysis of the learning preferences of the entire class and recommendations for teaching activities that fit the class learning profile and the course syllabus. For example, students who have concrete, active learning styles would benefit from an opportunity to share their experiences or express their opinions as a beginning learning activity. This exercise often provides enough dissonance to make students more receptive to abstract or theoretical information.

Merle Larracey, director of the Instructional Innovation Center, explains, "We expect faculty to do a lot and we often don't give them the tools. If we ask faculty to do more than lecture, we need to support them to try new methods. Faculty often feel very frustrated with students. Generally, they are relieved to have more information about learning styles. We want to help them to feel more successful in the classroom."

Faculty resources network

The University of Hartford (CT) is one of the fifteen member institutions of the "Faculty Resources Network" administered by New York University and funded by the Ford Foundation. The Network gives faculty at small universities and liberal arts colleges access to the resources of a large research university. Network programs attempt to compensate for the limited resources and isolation from discipline and subdiscipline colleagues that inhibit faculty and curricular development in smaller, undergraduate institutions.

University of Hartford faculty members can develop two types of relationships with faculty at NYU. The "scholar-in-residence" spends a full semester at NYU (apartment provided) pursuing research and curriculum planning projects in close association with one or more members of the NYU faculty. Each scholar may use all library resources and participate in classes, interdisciplinary colloquia, and seminars. The scholars are released from obligations in Hartford while at NYU, and then receive a lightened course load and additional resources during the semester following their NYU residency. In the four years of the Network, the University of Hartford has had three scholars-in-residence. "University associates" have less intensive connections with NYU: they make regular visits to use research facilities, participate in faculty colloquia, and attend lectures and special events, while also developing associations with specialists in their disciplines. Associates can be released from part of their course load and receive a travel allowance. Eleven University of Hartford faculty have participated in fifteen associateships.

Michael Mills, assistant vice president for academic administration, observes, "We have found the Network opportunities quite successful in developing faculty members' research skills, invigorating teaching, and contributing to the richness of departmental and general education curricula."

Curriculum innovation

At **Wheaton College** (MA), three new curricular initiatives — integrating scholarship on women, internationalizing the curriculum, and a freshman seminar — have proved a potent force in improving the quality of faculty worklife.

The project on integrating scholarship on women into the liberal arts curriculum brought the attention of the faculty to a new body of literature and research and caused, for many, shifts in academic and research interests. Darlene Boroviak, dean of the faculty and acting provost, comments, "Faculty felt enlivened and invigorated. Our whole professional view of ourselves and of Wheaton as an institution changed. We developed a clear sense of mission and a view of ourselves and our institution as leaders in the academic community."

Recent awareness of a need to internationalize the curriculum led to the establishment of the Faculty Overseas Internship Program. Boroviak explains, "We started by educating the faculty and giving them experience in non-Western societies so they could share those experiences with colleagues and students." Faculty internships are currently available in Korea, Thailand, Kenya, Egypt, and Israel. So far about one-third of the permanent faculty have participated in internships, lasting 5-12 weeks. Results of the program include changes in course content and co-curricular activities and greater awareness of cross-cultural issues throughout the Wheaton community.

The newest initiative, the Freshman Seminar, gave faculty an exciting opportunity to decide on a common theme ("Revolutions") but also to teach from their own perspectives and disciplines. While sections share some common readings and experiences such as films, each section is different. Boroviak observes, "Faculty have had to step outside of their areas of expertise. This has led to a changing perspective of themselves as teachers and as learners. They have had to admit there's a lot they don't know."

Support for scholarly activity

At **Fitchburg State College** (MA), two new programs support scholarly activity: Faculty Research Fellows and Associates, and Summer Research / Creative Teaching Grants. Both are competitive and require applications. Funding for them was carved out of the existing budget.

Each "faculty research fellow" receives a one-fourth course load reduction each semester — that is, six hours per year — as well as a work-study allocation and travel or publication funds; the fellow must submit one paper for presentation or publication, and one grant application. The Faculty Research Associates Program is similar, but with fewer requirements. Each year, two research fellows and two research associates are chosen.

The Summer Research / Creative Teaching Grant Program encourages faculty to undertake new or complete ongoing research and submit the results for presentation or publication. Awards are $1,500 for individual projects and $2,500-3,500 for joint projects. About nine grants totaling $15,000 were made this past summer. For example, two professors — one in education and the other in English — are collaborating on course modules to help teacher candidates learn the use of the computer for process writing across the curriculum. Other faculty research projects are quite varied: a biologist will collect external parasites of rodents, a communications professor will complete a video, and a psychologist will undertake a book on gender issues.

Elaine Gardiner, associate vice president and dean of undergraduate studies, explains, "We knew we needed to do more for faculty development, so the vice president for academic affairs, Oliver Ford, instituted these programs. We've had a lot of applications and the reaction from faculty is very positive."

Conference on faculty worklife

In December 1988, the New England Resource Center for Higher Education sponsored a one-day conference on "Challenges in the Academic Workplace: Improving the Quality of Faculty Life." The conference tackled the issue of widespread dissatisfaction among faculty about their work lives. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, best-selling author and professor at the Harvard Business School, suggested ways to use workplace strategies for productivity at colleges and universities. She said, "People need opportunity for growth, they need the power to take action, particularly on their own ideas, and they need the room, the encouragement to take risks, to innovate."

The speech drew lively reactions, ranging from outright rejection of the profit-making sector as a model for the academy to a request for more ideas from the world of business and industry.

Respondents to Kanter's speech were: Claire Gaudiani, president of Connecticut College; David Harris, assistant professor of management at Rhode Island College; and Robert Woodbury, chancellor of the University of Maine system. Other speakers suggested ways to address faculty dissatisfaction. Kenneth Bruffee, professor of English and director of the Scholar's Program at Brooklyn College, CUNY, advocated collaboration among faculty members; and Sandra Elman, visiting fellow in the New England Resource Center for Higher Education, provided a variety of options for invigorating faculty through applied research and community involvement.

A summary of the conference proceedings will appear in the Summer/Fall issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy,* which is published twice yearly by the McCormack Institute. If you would like to subscribe to the journal, see the reply form elsewhere in this newsletter.

New pathways for work and learning

The New England Resource Center for Higher Education and Bunker Hill Community College co-sponsored a seminar and symposium entitled "New Pathways from School to Work: What Can We Learn from the German Apprentice System?" in April 1989. The conference reviewed the German "dual system," an apprenticeship program which combines work with education to produce highly-skilled labor. The conference speakers and participants included employers, labor representatives, educators, and government officials from the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States.

Ernest Lynton, senior member of the New England Resource Center for Higher Education, was the moving force behind the conference. He explains, "I believe there is a great need to provide a new pathway which closely relates work and learning for individuals who do not enter higher education. The German dual system produces the kind of highly-skilled labor for which there appears to be a growing need and an inadequate supply in this country. We cannot copy the German approach because of different cultural and social circumstances, but we can learn from it."

Lynton and Piedad Robertson, president of Bunker Hill Community College, are co-chairing a planning group of labor leaders, educators, and government officials to work on a pilot project for a similar apprenticeship system in the Boston area.

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UMass/Boston's 25th anniversary

September will mark the beginning of a year-long celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the University of Massachusetts at Boston. A calendar for the year is being developed which will include a variety of academic, cultural and social events. The theme for the anniversary celebration is "A Commonwealth of Learning: A Quarter Century of Urban Education." The kick-off event for the year will be the University Convocation and the Installation of Chancellor Sherry H. Penney, to be held September 13 on the main plaza of the Harbor Campus beginning at 11:30 a.m. The day will also include festivities on the plaza after the ceremony and the Chancellor's Colloquium on "Urban Education/ Urban Schools" in the afternoon. For further information about the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration, contact the committee co-chairs, Elizabeth Mock and Linda Kime, at (617) 929-7500.

Statistics on Higher Education in New England*

Number of colleges and universities

	USA	*CT*	*ME*	*MA*	*NH*	*RI*	*VT*
Public 4-year	573	7	8	14	4	2	4
Public 2-year	960	17	5	17	8	1	2
Private 4-year	1497	21	13	72	12	10	14
Private 2-year	376	4	5	18	4	–	2
Total	*3406*	*49*	*31*	*121*	*28*	*13*	*22*

Total enrollments

	USA	*CT*	*ME*	*MA*	*NH*	*RI*	*VT*
Public 4-year	5.3 million	59,000	29,000	109,000	22,000	22,000	15,000
Public 2-year	4.4 million	40,000	5,000	70,000	7,000	13,000	3,700
Private 4-year	2.5 million	58,000	11,000	221,000	23,000	34,000	12,000
Private 2-year	257,000	1,800	950	18,000	26,000	–	1,800
Total	*12.5 million*	*158,000*	*46,000*	*418,000*	*54,000*	*70,000*	*32,000*

Number of full-time faculty

	USA	*CT*	*ME*	*MA*	*NH*	*RI*	*VT*
Public	288,520	3,039	1,295	5,676	1,123	1,281	742
Private	102,211	2,591	514	9,612	810	1,084	687
Total	*390,731*	*5,630*	*1,809*	*15,288*	*1,933*	*2,365*	*1,429*

*Source: *The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*, September 1, 1988

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