Fall 1991

The Academic Workplace (Fall/Winter 1991): Windmills & General Education Reform

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

Zelda F. Gamson
University of Massachusetts Boston

Sandra Kanter
University of Massachusetts Boston

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Letter from the Director

The news from New England is now news in the country at large: there just aren't enough resources around to do everything we wish to do—or even were able to do yesterday. We may decry this news. We may realize that it has more to do with national tax policies and business investment decisions than with anything we are doing. But whatever the reasons, with less money coming from the states and from tuitions, many colleges and universities are unable to continue doing everything they are doing, let alone grow.

New Englanders know this and are struggling to respond to it sensibly. Even institutions that are not facing shortfalls are operating as if they were in a scarcity economy. At the moment, the most common response is a speed-up, from the president on down. Presidential staffs are being cut, and those who remain are asked to pick up the jobs of those who have departed. Provosts and deans are adding more programs from other realms of the institution to their portfolios. Department chairs are doing more paperwork and faculty are teaching larger classes and advising more students. Meetings, it seems, are increasing exponentially, and every spare moment is being filled. People are having breakfast meetings, luncheon meetings, dinner meetings, even weekend meetings.

In this respect, higher education is in tune with the rest of America, where the average number of hours worked has increased and leisure time has decreased in the last fifteen or so years. The result has been a certain raggedness in human relations and a lot of individual wear and tear.

Something’s got to give. In my observation, most people in higher education work hard. It will not be possible to stretch the human resources—ourselves, our colleagues, and our staffs—beyond a certain point without serious consequences, not only for them and us but for our institutions. Colleges and universities especially rely on the good thinking of the people who work in them, and good thinking does not come from exhausted people. As a friend of mine at a leading research university recently said, “I’m so busy I don’t have time to think. If I want to think, I have to leave the university.”

How do we deal with the situation? We must recognize that we cannot do as much as we used to. We must tell ourselves and others that we cannot do a good job at everything without enough resources. If we do not have enough resources to do what we are doing now, we must redefine what we do, restructure the way we do it, and JUST DO LESS. In the short term, we will all try the speed-up approach; in the long term...

This lesson is no better learned than when colleges and universities try to change their general education curricula. As Sandra Kanter argues in the feature article in this issue of The Academic Workplace, faculty members and administrators are keen about reforming general education, but they do it on the cheap. They often come up with extraordinarily ambitious curriculum designs that are meant to solve many problems—from enrollment declines to overdrafts of departments—but give little thought to how they will implement them. At implementation time, underfunded directors or committees are expected to scrounge for resources to carry out the new general education requirements. We know how to improve general education, but implementation requires a tough-minded and sophisticated approach.

The Resource Center continues to struggle with these questions in its own academic workplace. We have leveraged its activities for multiple uses, found a few more resources here and there, simplified its operations, and shared some of its responsibilities with others. Our various think tanks continue to meet; our research is proceeding; and our workshop program is under way. We are glad to be in touch with many of you this fall.

Zelda F. Gamson
Current Research Projects

Faculty Labor Market Project
The Resource Center has just completed the data collection phase of its study to ascertain how colleges and universities recruit, promote, and retain faculty. Funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, a team of researchers has been conducting fieldwork at three universities and one college in New England. The researchers concentrated on two arts and sciences fields (English and mathematics), two professional fields (education and business), and a fifth department that varied across the four institutions. More than one hundred sixty interviews have been completed with senior administrators, chairs of search and promotion and tenure committees, and a range of tenured, untenured, nontenure-track, and part-time faculty.

Zelda Gamson and Ted I. K. Youn of the College of Education at Boston College, who codirect the project, have been working with team members Dorothy E. Finnegan of Oklahoma State University and Robert Ross, Research Associate, New England Resource Center for Higher Education. They have almost completed coding their interviews for systematic analysis. Members of the team have already written several working papers, available from the Resource Center: Working Papers #2, #3, #6, and #10, listed on page 11. Excerpts from Working Paper #2 were published in the Spring 1991 issue of Metropolitan Universities. Reports on the project have been presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association and the Association for the Study of Higher Education. They have almost completed coding their interviews for systematic analysis. Members of the team have already written several working papers, available from the Resource Center: Working Papers #2, #3, #6, and #10, listed on page 11. Excerpts from Working Paper #2 were published in the Spring 1991 issue of Metropolitan Universities. Reports on the project have been presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association and the Association for the Study of Higher Education.

The General Education Project
This is the third year of the Implementation of General Education project, funded by the Exxon Education Foundation. The research team traveled to four New England colleges last year to explore the process of curriculum change. They completed telephone surveys of liberal arts colleges, and analysis of data from those surveys is currently under way. This year's busy schedule includes four more New England site visits in the fall, travel to several exemplary institutions in other parts of the country this spring, and presentations at a number of conferences.

Team members have presented their preliminary findings at several conferences, including the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences, the Association of American Colleges, the Association for General and Liberal Studies, and the Institute on General Education at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. Members of the team have also written working papers, available from the Resource Center (Working Papers #5 and #9). Sandra Kanter, project director, and Howard London, project member, will lead a one-day workshop on implementing general education curricula at the University of Massachusetts at Boston in May. Those interested should contact the Division of Continuing Education, University of Massachusetts at Boston, at (617) 287-7900.

News from the Think Tanks

Academic Affairs Round Table
The Academic Affairs Round Table, whose members include chief academic officers of colleges and universities throughout New England, are meeting for the third year. Current members include: Ray Allen, Vice President, Portland School of Art; Michael Baer, Provost, Northeastern University; John Bardo, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bridgewater State College; Karen Beyard, Provost, Central Connecticut State University; Joanne Creighton, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Wesleyan University; John Deegan Jr., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Southern Maine; Walter Eggers, Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of New Hampshire;
The Round Table, at its first meeting on September 27th, engaged in a spirited discussion of the role of the chief academic officer. They discussed how much provosts, deans, and academic vice presidents should influence faculty hiring and promotion and how they should exert their influence, especially in making contested allocative decisions in hard financial times.

New England Student Affairs Think Tank
The New England Student Affairs Think Tank has begun its fourth year. Members for 1991-1992 include: Doris Arrington, Dean of Students, Greater Hartford Community College; Larry Benedict, Vice President for Student Affairs, University of Southern Maine; Robert Bongiovanni, Dean of Student Affairs, Thomas College; Manuel Carreiro, Dean of Student Affairs, Quinnipiac College; Cynthia Forrest, Dean of Students, Framingham State College; Zelda Gamson, Director, New England Resource Center for Higher Education, University of Massachusetts at Boston; Ann Craig Hanson, Dean of Students, Middlebury College; Judith Sanford Harris, Dean of Students, Bunker Hill Community College; Karen Haskell, Dean of Students, Roger Williams College; Delina Hickey, Vice President for Student Affairs, Keene State College; M. Ben Hogan, Dean of Student Affairs, Dean Junior College; Hollie Ingraham, Director of Student Life, University of Maine at Farmington; Wendell Norman Johnson, Dean of Students, Boston University; Bobbie Knable, Dean of Students, Tufts University; Joan Apple Lemoine, Dean of Student Affairs, Western Connecticut State University; Ernest Lynton, Senior Associate, New England Resource Center for Higher Education, University of Massachusetts at Boston; John McCray, Vice President for Student Development, University of Rhode Island; Charlotte Morocco, Dean of the College, Simmons College; Sheila Murphy, Dean of Students, Mount Holyoke College; Nancy Stoll, Dean of Students, Suffolk University; Jack Warner, Dean of Student Services, Bristol Community College; Trey Williams, Dean of Students, Hampshire College.

The Think Tank, which held its first meeting on October 18, will have additional meetings during the year. An article in the September/October 1991 issue of Change on the theme "Diversity: The Quest for Community" features the Think Tank. In the article entitled "Five
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Takes on 'PC,' Diversity, and Community: The View from Student Affairs," Zelda Gamson presents an edited transcript of a discussion with Manuel Carreiro, Sheila Murphy, Larry Benedict, and Trey Williams.

Associate Deans Group
The Associate Deans Group began its second year on September 25. Members, convened by Associate Dean Milton Kornfield of Brandeis University, are: Dorothea Alexander, Assistant Dean, North Shore Community College; Thomas Brooks, Dean of Academic Advising, Wheaton College; Jeanne Dillon, Associate Dean, Tufts University; Zelda Gamson, Director, New England Resource Center for Higher Education, University of Massachusetts at Boston; Carol Hurd Green, Associate Dean, Boston College; Greg Hall, Assistant Dean, Bentley College; James Kee, Associate Dean, College of the Holy Cross; Lanny Kutakoff, Dean of Freshmen, Pine Manor College; Ernest Lynton, Senior Associate, New England Resource Center for Higher Education, University of Massachusetts at Boston; Victoria McGillin, Dean, Wheaton College; Lois Nunez, Associate Dean, Boston University; Sr. Mary Daniel O'Keffe, Associate Dean, Boston College; Gwendolyn Rosemond, Associate Dean, Salem State College; Voncile White, Dean of First-Year Students, Wellesley College; Jean Woodbury, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Framingham State College.

The group discussed a variety of beginning-of-term topics, such as new student orientation, freshmen seminars, enrollments, and advising. Plans have been made for meetings throughout the year.

Education Research Seminar
The Education Research Seminar enters its third year with a broader focus on education at all levels with a core group of faculty and administrators from the University of Massachusetts at Boston and a select group of researchers and policymakers from other institutions in the region. Its first session, held on October 2, featured an intense discussion led by Howard London, Professor of Sociology at Bridgewater State College, on first-generation college students.

Women Presidents Group
A small group of women presidents of colleges and universities in Massachusetts has held three meetings under the auspices of Sherry Penney, Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts at Boston, and Zelda Gamson, Director of the Resource Center. The group has focused on public policy issues that concern all of them and will undertake joint projects in the next year.
Windmills & General Education Reform

Sandra Kanter

With the financial assistance of the Exxon Education Foundation, a team of researchers from the New England Resource Center for Higher Education, Graduate College of Education at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, has spent the last two years examining the process of general education curricular change, paying particular attention to strategies that foster successful implementation. The focus of the research is on comprehensive and less selective liberal arts institutions in the six New England states. These institutions deserve particular attention because they enroll the majority of students in higher education today. They also face multiple demands on a limited, sometimes declining financial base.

Telephone interviews with academic officers from a large sample of these institutions provided a database documenting changes in general education. From these, we selected eight colleges and universities that had been unusually ambitious in their goals for changing general education. Team members spent two days on the campus of each institution, discussing with faculty members, administrators, and staff how they went about changing their curriculum. These site visits form the basis of case studies for our current publications and presentations.

The expression "tilting at windmills" seems to be particularly relevant to describing the process of general education curriculum change.

Successful general education curriculum reform is difficult to achieve and sustain. While we have discovered a few institutions with model programs, the results for most institutions are quite mixed. The changes usually improve on past practice, but they often fall short of the original goals of the undertaking. In addition, no matter how successful a change process appears to be, some faculty and administrators are often disillusioned by the experience.

What accounts for these outcomes? Institutions of higher education are reluctant innovators, so it should not be surprising that campuses have difficulty changing general education. But general education also has several features that make adjustment even more difficult.

The difficulty begins during the process of curriculum design. There is no field or discipline called liberal arts or general education, and almost everyone has an opinion about what courses should be required in general education. In addition, since students are required to take a substantial number of general education courses, changes in requirements can have a great impact on the operations of an institution.

Proponents of change believe that general education presents a rare opportunity to reform undergraduate education in their institutions.

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General education often becomes what social scientists call an organizational "garbage can": a change in requirements is expected to solve a myriad of student, fiscal, educational, and staffing problems.

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Administrators see the process of modifying general education as an occasion to accomplish important institutional objectives. For example, many presidents feel that a new general education program could put their campuses on the national map. Some
admissions officers view general education as a recruiting tool. Budget officers think that the right changes in general education could produce substantial cost savings.

When considering revisions to the general education curriculum, the faculty debate the effects of the changes on students' education. A simultaneous, less public discussion—considered by smaller groups—considers the effects of changes on the well-being of individuals or departments. None of these viewpoints are, by themselves, wrong. But taken together, they cause campuses to lose sight of the primary educational goals of general education. The result can be compared to a flower garden that has been overfertilized—too much enrichment from too many sources can destroy the very plants one is trying to grow.

Implementing general education is also difficult. Time and time again, we have seen schools put enormous energy into conceptualizing changes in their general education programs only to ignore those elements which are necessary to their implementation.

Unlike that of departments with clear responsibilities and authority, the organizational structure of general education often lacks clarity. On most campuses, general education programs are loosely affiliated with the offices of provosts or deans. In some cases, no single person directs the program. In others, the director of a program has the responsibility for running it, but little power. He or she is either a middle-level administrator in the academic affairs office or a regular faculty member who has received a course release or nominal compensation for his or her efforts.

General education programs rarely have their own budgets. At allocation time, no powerful authorities argue on behalf of these programs, which are usually last in line to receive resources. As a result, funds to run programs are often woefully inadequate.

Finally, few general education programs have permanently assigned faculty. Securing instructors to teach general education courses requires a twofold effort: persuading individual faculty to teach nonmajor courses and convincing departments to release faculty. In the current climate of lean budgets, overcrowded classes, and tight tenure standards, general education administrators must struggle each semester to find enough faculty—who must be good teachers—to cover the needed courses and sections.

While designing and implementing effective general education programs will always be difficult, institutions can take a number of steps to increase their chances of success.

At a later date, we will describe in more detail the elements of an effective change process. Right now, we would like to leave you with just three recommendations, each of which is essential to a successful outcome.

Institutions should think long and hard before embarking on major general education reform.

Major general education reform can be accomplished. As we have seen in our site visits, the results of such a successful change process can be exhilarating. Before attempting this journey, however, campus advocates need to be aware of the psychological and financial costs such an effort entails. Will the results be worth it? Are institutions willing and able to invest significant amounts of their time and money to make the change successful?
When designing changes, planners should be realistic about their expectations.

General education cannot and should not be expected to solve all the problems of an institution. Good campus leadership must work to keep the goals of reform realistic. In so doing, institutional representatives should never lose sight of their most important goal: the general education of the student body.

Politically adept, well-respected people should be appointed to lead general education programs, then be given the resources and power to do their jobs.

In reforming their general education curricula, most institutions will not create separate departments of general education with their own faculty. Since general education programs are likely to remain orphans, it is important that they be run by faculty or administrators who have sharply honed political skills and standing in the community to be academic leaders.

Their talent and the respect they receive will enable directors of general education to function effectively in an academic environment. But to do their jobs well, the heads of these programs must also have adequate resources and the power to implement their programs properly.

Sandra Kanter, an economist and planner, is a professor in the College of Public and Community Service at the University of Massachusetts at Boston and director of the Implementation of General Education project. Members of the project from 1989-1991 are: Gordon Arnold, doctoral student, School of Education, Boston College; Jan Civian, Research Associate, New England Resource Center for Higher Education; Zelda Gamson, Director, New England Resource Center for Higher Education, University of Massachusetts at Boston; Linda Eisenmann, Associate Director, Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College; Daphne Layton, doctoral candidate, Harvard Graduate School of Education; Howard London, Research Associate and Professor of Sociology, Bridgewater State College; Jana Nidiffer, doctoral candidate, Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Robert Ross, Research Associate, New England Resource Center for Higher Education.
Conferences and Workshops
For the second year, the Resource Center will provide one-day regional workshops for small groups of educators. This year's subject is "Improving Undergraduate Education," with three workshops to be held during the year. On November 1, 1991, Ernest Lynton, Senior Associate at the Resource Center, and Betty Diener, Professor of Marketing in the College of Management of the University of Massachusetts at Boston, led a workshop titled "The Liberal Arts and Professional Education," which examined approaches to achieving a professional as well as liberal education.

On January 31, 1992, Karen Romer, Associate Dean at Brown University, William Whipple, Associate Dean at Albright College, and Zelda Gamson will conduct a workshop titled "Collaboration in Undergraduate Education." This workshop will introduce participants to different forms of collaboration, from learning groups within the classroom to collaborative curriculum design. Participants will then apply some of the different forms of collaboration to their own institutions.

The third workshop in the 1991-1992 series, "Implementing General Education," will be held on May 1, 1992. Sandra Kanter, professor in the College of Public and Community Service at the University of Massachusetts at Boston and director of the Center's project, Implementation of General Education, and Howard London, Professor of Sociology at Bridgewater State College and Research Associate on the project, will lead this workshop. They will report on the strategies that have led to successful implementation of changes in general education. Case studies prepared for the project will be used, and participants will be invited to share their own experiences in adopting and implementing new general education programs.

These workshops, arranged by the Division of Continuing Education at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, are moderated by Ernest Lynton. Each session is held from 9:30 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. at the Downtown Campus of the University of Massachusetts at Boston. Space is limited, so call Continuing Education at (617) 287-7900 to register or receive more information.

On November 22-23, 1991, the Resource Center will cosponsor with the Goethe Institute of Boston a bi-national seminar, "Professional Education: Changing Structure and Content." German and American experts from higher education, government, and industry will compare current and prospective trends in initial and continuing education of practicing professionals in technical and scientific fields. Similar questions are being raised in Germany and the United States about the length and timing of professional development, as well as the proper balance between breadth and depth.

This meeting, the third such bi-national event arranged by Ernest Lynton and sponsored by these two organizations, all center on the relationship between education and the needs of the workplace. The second meeting, in April 1989, devoted to a discussion of the German dual system of apprenticeship, was largely responsible for the development of a pilot program in Boston funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Interstate Interchange
Massasoit Community College will host college presidents and government officials from Beijing, Peoples' Republic of China, who will learn about the practices of American colleges and universities. Massasoit faculty and administrators plan to build upon this experience by visiting Beijing institutions in 1992.
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Mount Ida College's Naples Institute 1991-1992 Conference on Leadership in American Education will be held January 20-22, 1992, at the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Resort, Naples, Florida. Mount Ida created the Naples Institute in 1989 to draw together leaders from government, corporate, and educational sectors to develop creative solutions to current public policy concerns. George Keller will address the topic "Academic Leadership in an Era of Financial Restrictions." Other speakers include Jerold Footlik, former education editor of Newsweek, on the changing public image of American higher education; Robert Shogun, author of The Riddle of Power, on leadership and the presidency; and Joseph Flynn, director of the National Network of Faculty Senates, on leadership in academic governance systems. For further information contact Helen Grimaldi at (617) 969-7000, ext. 326.

Suffolk University hosted the 26th Annual Regional Meeting of the National Association of Academic Affairs Administrators from November 6-8 at Boston's Omni Parker House. This year's topic, "Remaking the Academy: Creating a New Environment for Leadership and Learning," was highlighted by the keynote address of Richard J. Light, Professor of Education at Harvard's Graduate School of Education on "New Perspectives on Teaching and Learning: Findings from the Harvard Assessment Seminars."

The 1992 Regional Meeting will be held in November in Baltimore. For further information on either of these two meetings, please call President Myra Lerman, Director of Undergraduate Affairs, School of Management, Suffolk University, Boston, Massachusetts 02108, (617) 573-8309.

The National Association of College and University Business Officers will be holding a two-day seminar on "Budgeting for Academic and Student Services," on February 20-21, 1992 at the Royal Sonesta in Boston. The objective of this new seminar is to clarify the budgeting process in public and private colleges and universities. Sessions include budgeting techniques, strategic planning, budgeting case studies, guidelines for proceeding through downsizing. The program is designed primarily for academic officers with budgeting responsibilities, academic and administrative dean and student services staff with the same responsibilities who would benefit from a better understanding of the strategies. For further information contact Patricia Morgan, Program Manager, NACUBO Development Department at (202) 861-2520.

The University of Hartford is one of the principal sponsors of the upcoming "HELP WANTED: Education Required" citizen education campaign. It is jointly sponsored by the Hartford Courant, WFSB, CBEC (Connecticut Business for Education Coalition), the Stamford Advocate, and the Greenwich Times. The Hartford/Connecticut campaign is one of six developed nationally by the Business-Higher Education Forum, the Business Roundtable, and the Public Agenda Foundation.

One component of the program is the involvement of large numbers of citizens in discussions of the issues, to be held all over the region and state. Campaign personnel will train facilitators to conduct the discussions with the aid of a ten-minute introductory video and supplemental materials. Education experts are also being sought to give presentations on educational issues to civic, community, church, corporate, and school groups.
The University of Hartford has initiated another program to improve education in its city. Educational Main Street (EMS) connects four educational institutions into an educational park. It takes advantage of the university's proximity to three city of Hartford schools, two of which are within sight of the campus. EMS links Annie Fisher Elementary School, Fox Middle School, Weaver High School, and the University of Hartford in an array of activities and programs.

The University of Massachusetts at Boston will begin the implementation of a university-wide requirement in diversity for graduation beginning in September 1992. A Ford Foundation grant will help support some activities. The Diversity Working Group, a body of faculty, staff, and students, culminated their three-year effort in May 1991. The faculty-based Center for the Improvement of Teaching coordinated activities. The requirement defines diversity in terms of race, gender, social class, culture, age, disability and sexual orientation. For more information, contact Esther Kingston-Mann, Center for the Improvement of Teaching, University of Massachusetts at Boston, (617) 287-6767.

Staff Notes
Zelda Gamson's work with Arthur Chickering, "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education," culminated in Issue #47 of the Jossey-Bass series New Directions in Teaching and Learning, which appeared this fall. The "Seven Principles" identify the teaching practices that have proven most effective in undergraduate education. Two self-assessment inventories, a Faculty Inventory and an Institutional Inventory, are available at no cost. The New Directions volume consists of chapters by various authors on the creation and spread of the principles and the inventories, the research evidence that underlies the principles, a survey of institutions that requested them, examples of how they have been used, and additional resources. For further information about the principles and inventories, contact the Johnson Foundation, Inc., Processing Center, P.O. Box 17305, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53217. For the New Directions volume, contact Jossey-Bass, Inc., 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, California 94104-1310.

Under Ernest Lynton's leadership, the third in a series of joint meetings of representatives from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the German state of Baden-Wuerttemberg took place in Germany in late September. Dr. Lynton is continuing work with the O. E. C. D. in Paris on a multi-national project on the role of the humanities and social sciences in the relationship of higher education and employment.

Ernest Lynton has begun work with the American Association for Higher Education on a program to give a national boost to "new scholarship" efforts to rebalance the priority given to teaching, research, and professional service. As this program takes shape, a number of regional activities may be undertaken by the Resource Center. In the meantime, Dr. Lynton would welcome information about colleges and universities that are making special efforts to come to grips with the new scholarship.
Working Paper #1:  
Sandra E. Elman  
*The Academic Workplace: Perception versus Reality*  
Fall 1989

Working Paper #2:  
Zelda F. Gamson, Dorothy E. Finnegan, and Ted I. K. Youn  
*Assessing Faculty Shortages in Comprehensive Colleges and Universities*  
Fall 1990

Working Paper #3:  
Ted I. K. Youn  
*The Sociology of Academic Careers and Academic Labor Markets*  
Fall 1990

Working Paper #4:  
Ernest A. Lynton  
*New Concepts of Professional Expertise: Liberal Learning as Part of Career-Oriented Education.*  
Fall 1990

Working Paper #5:  
Sandra Kanter, Howard London, and Zelda F. Gamson  
*Implementing General Education: Initial Findings*  
Fall 1990

Working Paper #6:  
Dorothy E. Finnegan  
*Opportunity Knocked: The Origins of Comprehensive Colleges and Universities.*  
Winter 1990

Working Paper #7:  
Sandra E. Elman  
*The Status of Black and Hispanic Faculty in Massachusetts Colleges and Universities*  
Spring 1991

Working Paper #8:  
Ernest A. Lynton  
*The Mission of Metropolitan Universities in the Utilization of Knowledge: A Policy Analysis*  
Spring 1991

Working Paper #9: --- NEW ---  
Sandra Kanter  
*The Buck Stops Here: Outside Grants and the General Education Curriculum Change Process*  
Fall 1991

Working Paper #10: --- UPCOMING ---  
Ted I. K. Youn  
*The Characteristics of Faculty in Comprehensive Institutions*  
Winter 1992

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