

Fostering the “Whole Student” Development Through Collaboration

Larry Braskamp,

Loyola University-Chicago

Introduction

In this presentation, I will present a summary of the research findings of the project, “Fostering student development through faculty development.” The report of the project can be found on the web site “www.luc.edu/projectfaculty.” I will also offer future directions for campus academic leaders to consider as they discuss and make policy and programmatic changes regarding the role of faculty in fostering “whole student” development.

Context

With the openness, increased tolerance and even celebration of individual differences of all students enrolled in our colleges, the social and intellectual life on many campuses, both state supported and private, is changing around us at a rapid pace. Thus in many ways our colleges have newly formed opportunities to play an important role in addressing the spiritual, faith and religious development of students. Recognizing the many multicultural backgrounds of students, the pluralism of our society, the need to better understand the faith and cultural backgrounds of our students, the openness and comfortableness of our students in expressing their spirituality, and wanting to be engaged with others including the faculty, are all areas which are needed to be further addressed if we are to fulfill the challenges of educating the “whole student.”

Reason for the project

Church and faith related colleges have the opportunity to contribute significantly to the faith and spiritual development of students, given their legacy and long traditions of developing the “whole student.” In the early days, this meant building character, usually based on some religious faith tradition. In years that are more recent the saliency of campus involvement in fostering this whole student development is viewed as waning and not as intense. Thus, we were interested in learning more about the role of faculty in developing students at colleges that have as their mission whole student developmental goal. Moreover we were interested in the extent to which faculty are to be involved in fostering student development. We decided to focus on faculty because in many ways they determine and influence the culture and mission of the institution. They have the most direct and often influential contact with students, although the “hidden campus” the after hours associations among students and with residence life professionals, and student affairs and ministry professionals are very important.

In this project, we initially wanted to understand better the expectations of faculty, i.e., what are faculty expected to do, what types of feedback do they receive, what types of assessment processes and procedures are employed, and what types of faculty development programs exist on these campuses to foster their own personal as well as their professional development?

Thus, we surveyed the CAOs of nearly 500 colleges that are affiliated with, associated with, or members of one of 10 church denominations or religious associations. The list of the

colleges is found on page 17 of the report, Fostering student development through faculty development.

Research results and conclusions

Faculty contribute through their teaching and mentoring, research and creative activities, engagement in external communities, and citizenship. We want to use the word contribute rather than work, since faculty can influence students by who they are as well as what they do in their professional work on a daily basis, e.g. family, church activities.

Teaching and mentoring

Teaching and mentoring are especially valued by the CAOs. As shown in Table 1, all CAOs consider excellence in teaching as extremely important. In-classroom teaching is extremely important. However, the CAOs place less importance on the role of faculty in contributing to the moral, spiritual, and religious development of the students.

One of the major issues in the contributions of faculty are their relationships with students—how faculty serve as role models and mentors. Two of every three CAOs consider it important—extreme and considerable—for faculty to assist students to foster their personal, ethical, and moral development—whereas less than one in three expect faculty to assist students to develop their spirituality, faith, and religious perspectives. This finding is consistent with the perspective of students as reported in the UCLA study of students. More than 3 in 4 juniors reported that they discuss religion and spirituality with friends, and two in three stated that they are feeling unsettled about spiritual matters. But 62% said their professors never encourage classroom discussion of religion or spirituality, Alexander Astin comments, “There is a (gap) between the degree of interest in these issues that young people display, and the extent to which colleges inspire students to explore them.”

In my interviews with CAOs and their responses to the survey question, “In what ways does your campus culture encourage and discourage faculty to share their personal values and faith/values perspective as teacher, researcher, and colleague?” CAOs vary significantly in what they expect of faculty in their role as mentor and advisor to students on personal matters.

Some of the responses are:

- ☐ We encourage people to be open. We do not care about their personal lives.
- ☐ This is not part of our campus culture
- ☐ Open dialogue is encouraged.
- ☐ Faculty are free to share their values as they please
- ☐ Faculty are encouraged to share their values/faith perspectives with the churches conservative evangelical perspective.
- ☐ This is the number 1 priority in assessment
- ☐ The central core of our general education builds specific points of faith and value development into the curriculum.

A comment by one CAO is a good summary of this issue. “Faculty want to remain at the head level and not go into the personal “or heart” level.” That is, faculty consider their primary and to many their only role as a teacher and scholar, not a counselor or

pastor. They were trained to foster the intellectual and not the affective dimension of student development.

Research

As shown in Table 3, CAOs desire faculty to be engaged in research but not to the same extent as they do as teachers. In my interviews with CAOs, they often stated that they expect faculty to be scholarly in all that they do, but vary considerably in how much production of scholarly work is required. Faculty are to be scholarly in their work even though they may not be productive researchers. The teaching focus of these colleges sets limits on what is realistic to expect.

When it comes to actually addressing ethical issues in scientific discoveries and technological advances, about 4 in 10 consider it very important in the work of faculty. Only one in ten of the CAOs consider it important for faculty to integrate science and religion in their research and teaching. Thus, we can conclude that faculty at most of these colleges are not expected to communicate, discuss in class, or conduct research in such a way that it includes a religious or worldview.

Engagement-External Service

As shown in Table 5, faculty are expected to contribute in ways that reflect their professional expertise, but they are not themselves being asked to be actively engaged in communities beyond their campus. In general they are not expected to be active in social service agencies, churches, and civic organizations as a part of their role as a faculty member. They are not evaluated for this contribution, but many do so under their own volition. It is a part of who they want to be. There is however, one important avenue connecting faculty to external communities, and that is through their students, particularly by helping the students get involved in ways to serve the larger society. One important strategy is service learning. Service learning can be used as a pedagogical strategy to influence both the head and the heart—the intellectual and affective dimensions. At many campuses, the organization of service learning is under the direction of the office of students affairs or ministry. However, service learning is also about learning—reflections, tying experience to theory and a body of knowledge, and making plans to be an advocate, or to engage in program planning and implementation.

Citizenship—Internal Service

The CAOs expect faculty to respect the tradition of the college and its mission as shown in Table 7. Faculty are expected to be leaders among their peers and demonstrate qualities of character like integrity, perseverance, and courage. Given the small size of most of the colleges, a faculty member will need to fit in to contribute. As one CAO noted, “if a faculty member does not enjoy being close to students and fellow faculty members, this may not be the place for her.” However, faculty do not necessarily develop programs that reinforce the church or faith perspective of the college. Thus, faculty are given freedom about how they wish to contribute—a respect for faculty autonomy and independence was noted by many CAOs in the interviews.

Community is very important for these colleges to be effective. Shared values among the staff, faculty, and students are important. Many CAOs referred to students having strong commitments at entry into college and had an interest in their spiritual and religious growth and development. The one common theme noted by the CAOs is balancing two opposing

goals--sense of unity and purpose, a set of common values and recognition and celebration of pluralism and diversity. Unity and diversity is a part of the culture and community in most colleges. Here is what two of the CAOs stated about the character of the college community.

â€¢ We get nervous if we become too homogeneous. We want diversity. We worry we can become too clannish. (Presbyterian, liberal arts college)

â€¢ How do we maintain the core values and identity and yet create a genuine openness to all students, especially those with different faith backgrounds? (Lutheran, liberal arts college)

Faculty Assessment

Pretenure reviews. About two in three of the CAOs state their college has a formal program, with many having reviews at the end of the second year and at the end of the fourth year. Most of the review processes are developmental in function and purpose, since many faculty leave on their own volition if they feel that they do not fit into the existing community.

Post tenure reviews. Nearly one half (46%) have some type of formal program, with a focus on reenergizing faculty, assisting them to redirect their efforts, or encouraging them to continue to remain active members of the community.

Faculty assessment practices exist, especially during the early developmental years of the faculty at the college. As faculty gain more experience at a college and receive tenure, they are less inclined to undergo formal evaluative scrutiny.

Faculty Development

Church related colleges do select faculty, orient and socialize them, and provide them with programs that foster their development as persons and as career/professionals in light of their goals and mission. The colleges take faculty development seriously, through a number of policies, programs, and practices.

Recruitment and hiring. The CAOs are becoming more explicit and intentional in hiring faculty, because they realize the importance of the fit in the campus community. The procedures vary considerably. Colleges with a strong religious or faith tradition ask candidates to write about how they would contribute to the community and how they would express their values with students, faculty colleagues and the community. Many CAOs have discovered that there is a considerable amount of self-selection by prospective faculty once these requirements and practices are put into place.

Orientation programs. About three in four (73%) of the CAOs commented that their college sponsors an orientation program to socialize the new faculty. Many commented that the graduates of research and state supported universities do not have a good understanding of work expectations and the culture of their colleges. Faculty who have graduated from the college or a similar type of church related colleges can assimilate to the expectations of the church college the easiest. However, many young and junior faculty need to unlearn what it means to be a faculty member.

Mentoring. Nearly one half (48%) of the colleges have a formal mentoring program. Some are required and others are voluntary. Most often, the mentor is not in the same

department to give the new faculty member some "space" to function, make mistakes, and learn from them without unnecessary judgment.

Faculty development programs. Nearly one half (44%) reported they have some type of program for faculty development. Most of the programs focus on improving teaching rather than on personal development. The programs are needed to fill the gap in the preparation of the faculty who come from state or secular supported universities, where the culture is different.

Future directions

The four suggested directions are based on the survey and interviews and they all relate to this question, "what do academic leaders need to reinforce and change their social cultural environment, and their academic and co-curricular programs to most effectively foster vocation as well as career preparation of their students?" We suggest four major directions to follow. (See p. 4 of the report)

1. Focus on the mission and identity of the college. This charge stresses the interior life "shared values, and sense of direction" of the college community, rather than the structural and organizational components of the institution. A strong sense of institutional purpose and character is important. Presidents and academic leaders serve as the primary communicators and advocates of the mission and identity of the college. The President sets the tone and is critical in maintaining or developing the college identity, especially on the saliency of spiritual and religious traditions on campus. As one CAO stated, "We the President and I-- are the gatekeepers."

The CAOs spent considerable time discussing the legacy of the college. Some leaders want to reenergize it, others want to extend it, and others prefer to build on or have begun a new legacy, e.g. a strong liberal arts college with little affiliation with the religious tradition of the college. All however know they cannot go back to an earlier day, since cultural pluralism and multiple faith traditions exist on every campus. The context is different.

2. Assessment must be designed and implemented that reinforces a person's development and vocation. This pertains to everyone in the community "students, staff, and faculty. The issue for the future is the extent to which the assessment practices mirror the college's mission and identity. Do a college's practices reflect an approach of "sitting beside" rather than "standing over"? Some of the implications are more faculty peer evaluations, evaluation practices that incorporate both merit and worth, and taking note of "fit." Faculty contributions to the local campus need to be sufficiently recognized if the college expects to fulfill its goals and support the personal and career development of the faculty member, and the staff member, and the student.

3. Development of faculty and staff must include vocation and the identity of the individual faculty member. Student development often employs the concept of identity, but recently vocation as a calling to lead a life that is authentic and of service to others is a concept that has powerful implications. However, vocation is also an excellent way for faculty to think about their contributions at their campus. It can motivate those of all ages, especially those with considerable experience. Vocation is more than a career, giving faculty the opportunity to learn that they can serve as models and mentors to students as well.

4. The entire campus must be involved to develop students holistically. Collaboration among campus leaders "faculty, student affairs, and ministry" is needed. Developing students

holistically requires the participation of everyone in the campus community, in and out of the classroom.

How can faculty, student affairs professionals, and ministry at church colleges more fruitfully work together? What are some avenues that connect colleagues and enhance the spiritual and religious development of students? This collaboration is not viewed by CAOs as an easy one. Often the CAOs have different views about how best to develop students. As one stated, "The faculty often tend to focus on the challenges students need while those in Student Affairs stress the importance of support. Thus negotiation is needed."

Next steps

One of the major goals of this project is to create a dialogue among CAOs and other academic leaders about the changing expectations and responsibilities of faculty. We offer two practical suggestions for next steps in this dialogue.

1. At your campus, ask the faculty, administrators, and yourself to use the results of the Tables in the report as points of reference. How does your institution compare with others and do you have a defense and rationale for the differences? What changes in your policies, practices, and programs would seem to be ripe for discussion?
2. Create a "Campus Conversation" around these four issues. Each is important to moving a college community closer to enhancing the growth and development of students. The challenges do not always directly impact students. We are assuming that faculty thinking about their own vocation will influence students in their thinking about their vocation and career. However, spiritual development takes time and relationships among students, faculty, and professionals in ministry and student affairs are important in the journey. Students need good guides and leaders.