Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

NELSON MANDELA
In this edition of *Research Annals*, we focus our attention on two central issues facing postsecondary educators: teaching and learning, and academic governance and leadership.

What it means to teach and to learn have always been core questions for colleges and universities. They may seem more challenging to us now because we feel the press of increased accountability and assessment, calls for “seamless learning environments” within and across educational sectors by legislators and funding agents, the demands of an increasingly diverse group of learners across the lifespan, and the rapid pace and impact of technology on postsecondary education. Insights about—rather than answers to—these questions constitute part of the work of our faculty.

What it means to lead an academic institution and who should do so may be questions with context-specific answers and yet our collective conversations seem focused on similar themes. The selection of both a new president and provost at Michigan State University in 2005, for example, has allowed us to examine many beliefs about faculty governance, the role of boards of trustees, and the involvement of the breadth of constituents in campus decision making. These questions are not germane only at times of leadership change, but are finding a new level of interest among researchers and scholars as well.

I hope you find the insights gleaned from the faculty’s research informative and accessible and we look forward to highlighting areas of concern for postsecondary education in the next issue of *Research Annals*.

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For anyone in postsecondary education, it would be difficult not to have taken at least some notice of the increasingly intense public scrutiny of undergraduate education. For anyone in general, it would be difficult not to have heard of the need to retrain displaced workers or the increasing competitiveness in everything from manufacturing to high tech from places like China and India. Tectonic shifts in business and industry and the changing nature of the workplace have brought with them a host of issues for the country and postsecondary education.

Retraining, learning across the lifespan, and undergraduate education are all—at heart—issues of teaching and learning. Although the issues have always been salient in postsecondary education, they have taken on urgency in a knowledge society and a digital world. To be sure, many of these issues are inextricably linked to K–12 education and the oft-criticized quality of American schooling. Perhaps not coincidentally, some of the language that has long been the province of the contentious public school debate, from learning outcomes and reform to curricular changes and even per-pupil funding, has begun to reverberate in higher education.
In this section of Research Annals, we examine some of the issues of teaching and learning in postsecondary education. We do so by focusing on the work of Matthew Wawrzynski and his understanding of how professors matter in student learning, Kristen Renn and her efforts to integrate technology into the preparation of student affairs professionals, James Fairweather and the nature of undergraduate education reform, and John Dirkx and the role of transformative learning in adult education.

**The Matter of Faculty in Student Learning**

It is without question that faculty matter when it comes to undergraduate education. But how professors matter in terms of student learning is far less definitive. What, for example, is the affect of a faculty member’s behaviors or interactions with students in the classroom on learning? Can we ferret out those faculty practices that create a cultural context for learning that encourages engagement and, ultimately, strong student learning?

These are the kinds of questions that Professor Matthew Wawrzynski has been investigating. For him, faculty matter mightily both in ways that are obvious and in ways that may not be so apparent. His research makes clear that on campuses where faculty report frequent use of active and collaborative learning techniques, students are more likely to be academically challenged and interact with faculty. In addition, the cultural context created by faculty is an important factor in student learning. For example, campuses where faculty members emphasize best practices have students who are engaged, perceive they are supported, and gain from their college experience. “At those colleges and universities where faculty create an environment that focuses and emphasizes effective educational practices, you are going to have students who are active participants in their learning and perceive greater gains from their undergraduate experience,” he said.

And what types of institutions tend to create these cultures of best practices? Wawrzynski said his work with colleague Paul Umbach at the University of Iowa and other research over the years has found that liberal arts colleges are more likely to promote effective educational practices. It’s a kind of self-perpetuating cycle. Liberal arts colleges are successful in attracting faculty members who place a high value on undergraduate education and, thus, these professors add to the strength of the institutional culture of teaching.

In the end, Wawrzynski believes that it is essential to factor faculty behaviors and attitudes as important variables in student learning and engagement. Faculty practices such as emphasizing active learning, higher-order cognitive activities, and collaborative learning all appear to create an environment that relates to student engagement and, ultimately, student learning.

**Technology and Student Affairs**

One of the most powerful currents of change in teaching and learning since the 1990s has been technology. Nowhere has that been truer than in American higher education and perhaps the most visible artifact is the online course or program. The rapid spread of the virtual classroom has drawn increased scholarly attention. For Professor Kristen Renn, the research makes clear that online learners require an array of student services, but student affairs graduate preparation programs lag behind in addressing both technology and the needs of students in these new learning environments.

Renn is among the first researchers in the field to begin mapping the geography of technology teaching and learning in coursework in student affairs. Although there are now many examples in the literature of ways in which technology is influencing teaching and learning across higher education, Renn said there is no evidence of what outcomes might occur if technology skills and attitudes were the explicit focus of a graduate course in student affairs. So she has sought to understand what actually works when it comes to teaching and technology in student affairs.
In one study, she followed the progress of students in an introductory course in student affairs administration. As part of the course, there was a five-week section on technology and student affairs, which was taught entirely online. She found that although the students entered the course with varying levels of comfort using computers, by the end of the course all of them reported being at least “somewhat comfortable” with the technology. It was a surprise to her that not all the students were savvy users of technology. That realization has caused her to call on the field to include explicit instruction in computer technology, and specifically such things as desktop publishing, Web authoring, scanners, and digital cameras.

Her research, she said, indicates that teaching students these skills can be done in a relatively short period. The goal is not to turn students into computer scientists who will transform student affairs functions into computer-mediated environments. Her point is that technology is and will remain a powerful presence on college campuses and preparation programs must help the next generation of student affairs practitioners and administrators to carefully consider and understand the possibilities for using technology in serving students.

Reforming Undergraduate Education

Professor James Fairweather knows that reforming undergraduate education based on innovative instructional practices can work because he has firsthand experience. He led a grant project funded by the GE Fund to reform the early engineering course, Electronic Instrumentation and Systems (ECE 345). The team developed a new section of the course that included revised course content and incorporated innovative instructional tools that ranged from course-management software to laboratory videos and assessment instruments. The course also emphasized active learning and collaboration among students.

Fairweather and his colleagues then surveyed students in the various sections of the new course and those in the traditional sections. Almost across the board, students in the innovative sections of ECE 345 scored significantly higher than those in the traditional sections on self-reported outcomes that included such things as problem solving, design, knowledge of the engineering profession, and the likelihood of becoming an engineer. “This was really a remarkable achievement because there were a number of instructors, lab assistants and, of course, students with different backgrounds,” Fairweather said.

The experience has left Fairweather with a strong sense of the potential reform affords undergraduate education, as well as the challenges to institutionalizing these kinds of changes. He believes that if such reforms are to gain a foothold, they will need to be championed by faculty and senior administrators. Moreover, Fairweather also recommends giving faculty and teaching assistants opportunities to incorporate innovative teaching strategies in order to improve the quality of learning outcomes.
Over the last 20 years, transformation theory has deepened our understanding of what it means to learn in adulthood. Collectively, the work of Paulo Freire, Phyllis Cunningham, Laurent Daloz, and Jack Mezirow, among others, addresses the sociocultural and personal dimensions of transformative learning. Dominant views of transformative learning emphasize rational, cognitive processes related to critical reflection. An additional perspective on transformation, however, has emerged, led by Robert Boyd and his colleagues (Boyd 1989, 1991; Boyd and Myers 1988). This work focuses on deeper emotional and spiritual dimensions of learning that many have suggested are underdeveloped in dominant conceptions of transformative learning (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). In this article, I expand on Boyd’s notion of transformative learning, discussing the role of image and imagination in transformation.

Boyd’s notion of transformative education reflects a psyche- or soul-centered psychology (Dirkx 1997; Moore 1992; Scott 1997). That is, what matters most in learning is what matters to the deep ground of our being, the psyche or soul. In depth psychology, soul represents a third way, in addition to mind and matter, of thinking about human nature. Some authors have loosely equated soul in education with “heart.” This way of knowing is felt to be mediated largely through emotion-laden images rather than directly through concepts or traditional forms of rationalism. These images convey the ways in which we invest or withdraw meaning from the social world. By image, we intend here not mental pictures derived from perception or memories but more in the sense of poetic usage, a kind of psychic representation with no actual correspondence in an outer reality. For this reason, I refer to this perspective as the “mytho-poetic” view of transformative learning (Dirkx 1998). The mytho-poetic view relies on images and symbols, the language of poetry.

Many learning situations are capable of evoking potentially powerful emotions and images among adults. In a transformative pedagogy informed by the mytho-poetic perspective, these emotions and images are given voice, expression, and elaboration. Strategies to foster this form of learning engage the adult imaginatively with the content or processes of the learning situation. Educators working from this perspective will make substantial use, regardless of the subject matter, of story, myths, poetry, music, drawing, art, journaling, dance, rituals, or performance. Such approaches allow learners to become aware of and give voice to the images and unconscious dynamics that may be animating their psychic lives within the context of the subject matter and the learning process.

Transformative education has focused mostly on rational processes but attention to emotional and spiritual dimensions has much to offer adult learning and all of postsecondary education.  
By John Dirkx
These unconscious aspects of psyches are almost continuously seeking expression within our lives, often in unconscious and disruptive ways. The intent here is to deepen a sense of wholeness by, paradoxically, differentiating, naming, and elaborating all the different selves that make up who we are as persons. Engaging in dialogue with these structures is a way of consciously participating in the process of individuation and integrating them more fully within our conscious lives. Research and theory in depth psychology provides us with some ideas about how to work with the images that might arise within educational contexts (Sells 2000; Ulanov 1999). This process, referred to as the “imaginal method,” reflects a general collection of strategies useful in fostering learners’ insight into those aspects of themselves and their worlds that remain hidden from conscious awareness, yet serve to influence and shape their sense of self, interpretations of their external world, and their day-to-day actions. The specific steps of this process vary but generally involve: (1) describing the image as clearly as we can; (2) associating the image with other aspects of our lives; (3) amplifying the image through use of stories, poetry, fairy tales, or myths that present us with similar images; and (4) animating the image by allowing it to talk or interact further with us through additional fantasy, or imaging work. These processes may be used with writing, drawing, dialogue, story telling, performance, dance, or other methods. In addition, learners and educators may decide to use all or only some of these steps, depending on the particular images presented and the directions for work they suggest.

From the perspective discussed here, we are all influenced and shaped by the forces of individuation going on unconsciously within our lives. Whether or not we are aware of them, these forces propel us along a journey and certain courses of action. Transformative learning refers to processes through which we consciously participate in this journey of individuation. Through imaginative engagement with the images and symbols that characterize this journey, we can come to a deeper understanding of ourselves and our relationship with the world around us. Often through such learning, much to our surprise, we find that the direction and nature of this deeper journey do not always reflect the choices and judgments of our ego-dominated consciousness. This lack of parallel between our inner, unconscious life and ego-consciousness is often reflected in feelings of “swimming upstream” or “rowing against the current.” When we con-sciously engage the poetic messages the unconscious offers to us, we begin to experience an alignment of our outer lives with the movement of individuation.

We have much to learn about how these processes manifest themselves within adult learning. The work of Boyd and his colleagues represents only a very modest beginning. Much of what is published thus far related to this view of transformative learning represents theoretical work, grounded in the research of depth psychology.

Research approaches in education, even into transformative learning, are largely dominated by rational, logical, ego-based conceptions of knowing. To begin to “see” the mytho-poetic manifestations of transformative learning within adult learning, we need to be willing to entertain learning and knowing as imaginative processes. Although the theoretical and methodological challenges are large, Boyd’s pioneering efforts in this area point to the possibilities and rewards of such an effort. In characterizing the powerful role of the imagination in our lives, Hollis (2000) quotes Novalis, a Romantic German poet and theorist: “Poetry heals the wounds reason creates.” Boyd’s view of transformative learning invites us to embrace a more mytho-poetic understanding of education, to deepen our sense of its emotional and spiritual depth.

John Dirkx is a professor in the Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education program. The article is based on prior articles and a book-in-progress on transformative learning.

References

Market Forces,
s higher education a public good? The answer to such a question likely would have been obvious even a generation ago.

But the tenor of the times has given rise to a conception of education across the PK–16 spectrum as most meaningfully understood as a personal quest undertaken for individual gain. Such a conception has brought with it the language of economics, of markets and marketing, supply and demand, and return on investment. It is in this altered environment that higher education leaders and administrators must make decisions about programs, policies, personnel, and budgets.

Given the changing context for higher education and the long and steady decline in state funding of public universities, effective governance and leadership of institutions of higher learning will be more essential than ever. University presidents, provosts, trustees, and faculty leaders are in unique positions to articulate most forcefully the value of higher education and react to changes in the academic marketplace. What the result of the new economic and market realities will be for the academy remains an open question. Will the future include vigorous government funding of research and financial aid, state investment in higher education, or a broad societal understanding and awareness of the centrality of colleges and universities in fostering innovation and ideas?
In examining the issues of governance and leadership, we focus on Roger Baldwin and the responsibilities of trustees as stewards of academic institutions, James Fairweather and his exploration of the various market forces shaping higher education, MaryLee Davis and her conceptions of the five core missions of universities, and James T. Minor and the governance of historically black colleges and universities.

**Trustees or Trespassers?**

Professor Roger Baldwin is not without some personal experience when it comes to understanding the role of trustees in the governance of colleges and universities. He happens to serve as one. It is Baldwin’s experience as a trustee of Hiram College that animates much of his understanding of how board members can play a constructive role in the thorny issue of academic decision making.

Traditionally, governing boards have taken a hands-off approach to academic matters such as adding new programs or degrees, deferring to their institution's academic leaders and faculty. For Baldwin, that model is no longer sustainable. The educational marketplace has become too competitive and society’s needs for innovative academic initiatives and delivery systems too great for trustees to focus solely on hiring the next president, or coordinating the long-range plans for their institutions.

But how do boards go about engaging more fully in academic matters without raising the ire of faculty and being resented as what Baldwin calls “trespassers in the groves of academe?” Baldwin wrote about his experience at Hiram College in the magazine *Trusteeship*, describing how the Board of Trustees asserted itself when it was asked to approve a master’s degree program, which represented a sharp departure from the institution’s long history of providing undergraduate education. The board ultimately approved the program, but it was the process of engagement and questioning that Baldwin says served well both the development of the program and the institution.

Instead of deferring to the wishes of the faculty and having no involvement, the board developed a series of questions for academic administrators that ranged from whether the proposed program was consistent with the college’s mission to the resources required and the affect it would have on existing programs. Other questioning involved technology, competition, marketing, sustainability, and evaluation. The questions led to “informative dialogue” between the proponents of the program and the board, and even uncovered some aspects of the plan that needed more attention.

In the end, the process was devoid of rancor or turf warfare but made clear that the board would not rubber-stamp major new programs without a thorough discussion of implications. The key, Baldwin is convinced, is striking a delicate balance that respects the prerogative of faculty and administrators and trustees’ responsibilities as stewards of an institution. It may not always be easy, he said, but is essential if boards are to exercise their most essential duties.

**The Higher Education Marketplace**

Professor James Fairweather has sought to understand governance and academic decision making by studying how external forces, namely government control and markets, affect universities. He has come to view the American system of higher education as kind of amalgam of interactions of markets, government policies, institutional cultures, and university actors from presidents and trustees to professors and students. Fairweather focuses on three types of markets that tend to most affect the cultural and structural nature of universities: the market for academic institutions, the market for academic programs, and the labor market for faculty.

Understanding the market for academic institutions is fairly straightforward, Fairweather said. Universities compete for students and do so by trading on their prestige or...
status. The greater the prestige, the more competitive the institution is in the marketplace. One aspect of Fairweather’s research has shown that because status depends in large part on the visibility of the faculty, colleges and universities competing for students tend to imitate higher-status institutions.

There is also a market for nontraditional students. In this milieu, institutions compete based on the nature of their programs in terms of utility or accessibility. Fairweather said this corner of the educational marketplace has seen the entrance of such things as online programs and operations like the University of Phoenix, a for-profit institution with locations across the country. In terms of the labor market for faculty, Fairweather said his research has convinced him that there has emerged a national labor market for faculty in four-year institutions based on prestige fueled by research and scholarship. He has conducted two studies based on national data in recent years to determine whether or not trends in faculty pay have changed to match new policies meant to enhance the value of teaching. In both cases, the more research and writing a professor does, the higher the pay and it holds true at public and private colleges and universities.

For Fairweather, the result is an American system of higher education that both works in favor of homogeneity with its national labor market for faculty and pursuit of prestige and status, and leaves open the opportunity for distinctiveness and innovation by its responsiveness to such things as changing demographics and evolving technology.

**Leadership, Governance and the Future of Academe**

For Professor MaryLee Davis, when it comes to higher education, the future is now. And that future requires a different kind of leadership and governance, one that conceives of the university and its missions in a broader, more encompassing way. Davis is preparing to issue a report later this fall that examines the roles and responsibilities of American universities in the new century. Through her engagement with such academic leaders as former University of Michigan President James Duderstadt and former MSU President John DiBiaggio and her experience as an administrator, she has honed her conception of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for higher education by examining five core issues: diversity, globalization, learning, technology, and leadership.

For Davis, it is key that university presidents, governing board members, and other higher education stakeholders not only make those five areas central to their planning, but that they move away from narrow definitions of issues like diversity or technology. Diversity, for example, must be conceived not only as an issue of gender, race, and ethnicity. She calls on university leaders to include within the definition of diversity an expanded notion of age, culture, and diversity of institutional types. Likewise, the American university is no longer the sole player in the information world. Therefore, she warns that technology should not be viewed simply as a convenient way to deliver courses online. University leaders must view technology as a powerful tool for collaboration across regions and continents. In fact, how universities collaborate, cooperate, and compete at local, state, and international venues is critical to the way they will need to transform themselves for viability and success. She is clear that policy makers must make a greater investment of research dollars a priority in order to enable universities and the nation to compete in an increasingly competitive global market.

The one issue that cuts across each of the areas is leadership. Davis asserts that if universities are to prosper in an environment that is significantly less hospitable, it is essential that university leaders unite to create a sense of urgency in order to change the increasingly prevalent view by policy makers that higher education is largely a private good. This perception is dangerous, she said, because it can lead to a rationale for public disengagement—in terms of funding and otherwise—with public universities. Davis speaks passionately of the importance of empowering and supporting university leaders as courageous spokespersons not only for higher education, but also for the greater society. “All of these issues focus very strongly on the critical importance of leadership,” she said. “The challenge that higher education leaders have is to align incentives for progress and success for faculty, students, and administrators, as well as to engage policy makers in the broader discussion about higher education as a public good.”
The survey findings provide evidence that shared governance exists at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), both in theory and in practice. However, the data also suggest that the context for decision making at HBCUs differs from that at traditionally white institutions—although strong participation among HBCU faculty in academic decision making and minimal involvement in nonacademic matters resembles the pattern at predominantly white campuses. The data also point to significant differences between administrators and faculty concerning the quality of shared governance on campuses.

Although these findings provide a sense of the scope of governance at HBCUs, they raise many questions. For example, we clearly need studies that define the relationship between the quality of campus governance and institutional performance. Understanding the role governing boards play at HBCUs would also help us better comprehend HBCU governance. In addition, it would be useful to determine contextual or structural differences that exist across institutional types. Similarly, the development of models of effective governance at HBCUs would provide a reference point to evaluate institutions.

Obviously, then, one sure way of gaining a better understanding of governance at HBCUs is through research. In conducting such research, however, the level of sensitivity surrounding scholarship on HBCUs must be addressed. Some of those who work at HBCUs worry, for example, that researchers may either misinterpret practices at HBCUs or not properly contextualize a study or its findings. Research that does so usually casts HBCUs in a negative light. Perhaps the most infamous misrepresentation of HBCUs occurred in a 1967 article, “The Negro College,” in the Harvard Educational Review. As a result, many at HBCUs are suspicious of the motives of researchers “snooping” around their campuses.

Another form of sensitivity exists among higher education scholars. At a recent professional conference, scholars interested in HBCUs shared disparate and strong views concerning the appropriateness of research methods used to conduct studies at HBCUs. Of particular concern was the usefulness of comparisons to white campuses, the concepts used to construct research questions, and the aptitude of individual researchers to understand the context and culture of HBCUs. The purpose of mentioning these sensitivities is to highlight how they, too, affect the tenor of conversations about HBCUs. In some circles, the credibility of the researcher is scrutinized as much as the target issues.

Recent negative incidents associated with Morris Brown College and Dillard University, as well as problems at institutions such as Grambling University and Prairie View A&M University, might indicate decision-making challenges. But they wrongly serve as the governance poster for all HBCUs. The reality is that we are uncertain about the nature and extent of governance challenges at HBCUs or how best to address them. I am not suggesting problems do not exist, but rather our reporting of challenges should be based on evidence rather than speculation or overgeneralizations. HBCUs need effective governance to improve their financial stability and academic quality, and to fight the battle of public perception. The policy implications of research conducted in this sector of higher education make its trustworthiness critically important. My intent here was not to decide unequivocally the state of governance at HBCUs, but to advance a conversation based on data and a better understanding of institutional context.

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