“The university is an integral part of a social system that has given more opportunity, more freedom, more hope to more people than any other system yet devised.”

John Hannah, president of Michigan State University, 1941–1969
One hallmark of the graduate program in Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education (HALE) at Michigan State University is the belief in the importance of a community of postsecondary education scholars. *Research Annals* is our effort to bring together the varied work of our community of scholars into one publication. Not only does this intellectual community involve faculty; it is a venue for developing our scholars-in-training and engaging our administrative colleagues around the pressing issues facing higher and adult education.

Our work as postsecondary scholars is closely linked to the 21st-century land-grant movement. We value active engagement with the problems of society, listening and responding to society’s needs and forming partnerships with educational institutions, communities at all levels at home and abroad, and with business and industry. Moreover, we believe in the importance of communicating with our colleagues and policymakers in ways that are accessible and engaging, posing questions around issues of national importance and offering insights from our research and scholarship on pressing educational problems.

In this inaugural issue, we focus on three research streams: faculty work, institutional policy, and student life. These are certainly critical areas of research for us, but they are by no means the sum total of the work of our faculty. In future editions of this publication, we will highlight other initiatives of HALE scholars, not only showcasing the research endeavors of individuals but also the ways in which work coalesces into a deeper understanding of issues. I hope you find *Research Annals* informative and we look forward to providing you with future editions in the months and years to come.

MARIlyn AMEY, Coordinator
Graduate Program in Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education
The Changing Face
There may have been a time when higher education in America was an ivory tower and the scholarly life was a fairly straightforward affair. The demographics of the day meant surging enrollments, which made higher education a growth industry in a marketplace of teaching and ideas that was steady and established, even arcane and insular. More students meant more jobs and for those new to the professoriate came the promise of tenure given productivity in research, teaching, and service.

If such an ideal and cloistered world ever really existed may be a matter of debate, but what is clear is that academe today is in anything but a steady state. There has been an ominous drop in public trust and confidence in higher education at the very time when a college degree is viewed as an essential requirement for entry into the middle class. The decline in government funding is well chronicled, as is the spiraling cost of a college education. And even the academic marketplace has turned more competitive with the entry of institutions designed to turn a profit.

The nature of faculty work, too, has come under public scrutiny. There are persistent questions about the value of
tenure. Public skepticism has given rise to an effort to balance faculty work in favor of undergraduate teaching over long-dominant research. And there is technology and the increased employment of non-tenure-track professors. These are contentious issues that may augur changes in the very nature of faculty careers. At the graduate program in Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education (Hale), scholars have long been focused on issues that affect faculty careers, and you will find articles that touch on these issues throughout this booklet. In this section, however, we chronicle the work of a group of faculty members who have sought to understand faculty lives from the inside (Steven Weiland and the academic autobiography), the outside (James Fairweather and state and institutional policies, and Ann Austin and the faculty of the future), and from both perspectives (Roger Baldwin and non-tenure-track faculty).

The Adjunct Academy

The host of a lifeless cocktail party can always invigorate the conversation by raising the topic of faculty tenure. Few subjects these days stir more controversy than the idea of permanent employment of college and university professors after a relatively brief probationary period.

— Roger Baldwin & Jay Chronister

If American higher education is in a state of change, nothing brings that into sharper relief than does the increasing presence of full-time non-tenure-track faculty. Once at the periphery of the academy, non-tenure-track professors now account for more than a quarter of full-time faculty nationwide. It is an unmistakable break from past staffing practices, and the impact of such a major shift on faculty and higher education is not yet fully understood. Professor Roger Baldwin has delved deeply into the issue and with colleague Jay Chronister published what is perhaps the most comprehensive analysis to date of the subject, Teaching Without Tenure: Policies and Practices for a New Era.

For Baldwin, the increased presence of non-tenure-track faculty is linked to myriad internal and market forces from which universities were once largely immune. These forces involve a decline in government support, rising costs, an aging faculty, a diversifying student body, and the appearance of new, more aggressive competitors. The pressures have led universities to develop alternatives to traditional tenure. Non-tenure-track faculty members are often hired at lower salaries and Baldwin has found that the most common contract length for such professors is one year.

And who are these non-tenured professors?

They tend to be younger than their tenured colleagues and Baldwin says that women and minorities are disproportionately represented among the ranks of the non-tenure track. They can be found across campus, as teachers, researchers, administrators, and as clinicians or technical specialists. They are less likely to have a doctorate than their tenured or tenure-track colleagues.

What has emerged, Baldwin says, is a two-class faculty system with many institutions treating non-tenure-track faculty members as short-term solutions who are easily replaced. He and Chronister have called for reforms, including investing in nontraditional faculty resources and completely integrating those not on the tenure track into the academic community.

Written Lives

Autobiographical memory is for adults an indispensable resource for learning, and for reflecting on it. For scientists, scholars, and poets it is the foundation for recognition and representation of how they realized their vocations.

— Steven Weiland

For Professor Steven Weiland, understanding scholarly and scientific lives requires that we study what is personal about these activities: What brings scholars and scientists to their subjects, how do they come to understand their work within their disciplines and society, and how do they change over the life course? The answers to such questions define academic and intellectual identities. Weiland focuses on academic autobiography, and on reading scholarly and scientific work for what it reveals about the lives of authors. Both approaches can provide much insight into what motivates teachers and scholars and gives meaning to their work.

Over the years, he has chronicled the “flourishing” of autobiography in academic and intellectual life. Weiland,
whose Ph.D. is English, believes that personal narrative can help us to gain a better understanding of intellectual and scientific development, including the commitments professors make to teaching, mentoring graduate students, and to public life. Autobiographies are reflections on the past and important guides to academic memory, but they also contribute to research we can do on processes of socialization and learning in intellectual and scientific careers. His subjects, in a book in progress called *The Scholar's Tale: Life Stories and Intellectual Identities*, include academic luminaries like anthropologist Clifford Geertz, biologist Edward Wilson, psychologist Jerome Bruner, and literary scholar Carolyn Heilbrun.

Weiland has written about the perspective that academic autobiography can provide on the nature of faculty life at mid-career and after. He also has explored how these personal stories can contribute to graduate education by calling attention to such things as the influence of teachers, the formulation of scholarly interests and directions, and the overcoming of personal and institutional obstacles.

Policies and Faculty Work

In the 21st century, the mantra of state higher education policymakers has changed from “how much money should we spend?” toward “do these dollars make a difference?”

—James Fairweather & Andrea Beach (Ph.D. ’03)

Professor James Fairweather refracts his research through the wider prism of institutional control and state mandates. Like his colleagues, Fairweather is keenly attuned to the changing demands of the life academic and has amassed a body of research on faculty roles and rewards. The question that has driven his research in recent years has been whether these policies have any impact on the nature of faculty work.

Fairweather and his colleagues have examined the trend of state lawmakers enacting legislation designed, in one form or another, to improve undergraduate teaching. Ohio, for example, required faculty members in all four-year public universities to increase the amount of time they spent on teaching by 10 percent. Other states now link funding to universities meeting certain teaching goals. Some universities have responded by establishing policies that emphasize undergraduate teaching. The movement is driven, Fairweather says, by a clamorous public and those within higher education who would recalibrate faculty work to emphasize undergraduate teaching.

But has this movement had much impact on the status quo? Do professors change what they do because of these policies? Fairweather has studied how these mandates have played out at the most prestigious institutions in the educational firmament, research universities. Based on his analysis and national survey data, Fairweather believes that the answer to the question is no. State (and institutional) policies are blunt instruments that don’t take into account this variation within institutions. In fact, Fairweather and his colleagues could find no effect of the Ohio workload requirement at any Ohio State University department that they studied.

Potentially effective strategies to improve the balance of teaching and research, Fairweather says, should take into account the fact that all colleges and departments within a university are not the same. Some are intensely focused on undergraduate teaching, while others are not. The same is true for policies that use funding as an incentive. Some departments are much less dependent on institutional funding than others.
New faculty today are entering an academic workplace that is changing rapidly and dramatically. The forces affecting higher education are well-known: public skepticism and demands for accountability, the need for fiscal constraint, increasing public expectations for institutional involvement in economic development, the rise of the information society, new kinds of educational institutions, and increasing emphasis on learning outcomes. Because of these pressures on higher education institutions and the changes within them, faculty members must be prepared with a range of abilities and skills. Although faculty members have long needed a number of these abilities and skills, the next generation of faculty must expand their preparation to include new areas of expertise in the context of the changes occurring in higher education (Austin, 2002).

What will be expected of future faculty? The list of necessary skills and abilities highlights the need for thorough and thoughtful graduate school preparation. The next generation of faculty members must have command of a range of research abilities, appreciation for a variety of ways of knowing, and awareness of the ethical responsibilities researchers will encounter. Faced with a diverse array of students, they must understand how teaching and learning processes occur, and they must be effective teachers. They must know how to use technology in their teaching and understand the meaning and practice of engagement and service appropriate for their institutional type. Faculty members must be effective in communicating to diverse audiences, including government and foundation leaders, members of the community, parents and students, institutional leaders and colleagues. Furthermore, they must know how to work effectively, comfortably, and collaboratively with various groups both inside and outside the academy. The next generation of faculty also must understand how to be responsible institutional citizens, comprehending the challenges facing higher education and the implication of these challenges for their roles in the academy and as academics in society. Boyer (1990), for instance, in his now widely cited treatise, suggested, “for America’s colleges and universities to remain vital a new vision of scholarship is required. What we are faced with, today, is the need to clarify campus missions and relate the work of the academy more directly to the realities of contemporary life” (p. 13). Others, such as Richlin (1993), who wrote about new approaches to scholarship, followed through with suggestions for helping educators think about the role of graduate education in preparing students for faculty roles in a changing academy.

The next generation of faculty members needs more than simply an expanded set of abilities and skills. These new faculty members also must be prepared for a variety of faculty appointments (Austin, 2002; Finkelstein & Schuster, 2001; Finkelstein, Seal, & Schuster, 1998), including part-time, contract, and term appointments as well as tenure-stream and full-time appointments. In fact, scholars increasingly are appointed into term and part-time appointments rather than traditional full-time tenure-stream positions. Furthermore, although they are trained in research universities, new faculty members ultimately find employment in a range of institutional types, including community colleges, comprehensive institutions, and liberal arts colleges. The specific expectations for faculty work—including the balance of teaching, research, and service responsibilities, the kind of interactions that are customary with students, and the roles of a faculty member in the academic community and in society—vary by institutional type. A graduate student who has observed faculty work and roles in the research university should not expect this model to be the norm in other types of intuitions.

It may be argued that, given the changing expectation for faculty work and the range of types of faculty positions, it is no longer adequate or appropriate for current faculty members to prepare graduate students as “clones” of themselves. Gaff, Pruitt-Logan, and Weibl (2000) suggested that, although the nineteenth-century model of graduate education grounded in German models of research and scientific discovery is widespread, “it is inadequate for the challenges
future will have to develop new areas of expertise. By Ann E. Austin & Donald H. Wulff

confronting the professoriate of the twenty-first century.” They argued that “a mismatch exists between doctoral education and the needs of colleges and universities that employ new Ph.D.s” (p. 3) . . .

In addition to contextual changes that affect the nature of faculty work, there is a very practical reason for thinking seriously about the preparation of the next group of professors. Universities and colleges are moving into a period when they will be hiring in significant numbers. Finkelstein and Schuster (2001) have pointed out: “The number of retirements, and accordingly, the need for replacements, is increasing rapidly. . . . The continuing aging of the faculty—now it seems, the highest average ever—means huge numbers of retirements looming, leaving wide open the prospect for an even more rapid makeover” (p. 7).

In sum, institutions of higher education are facing new challenges and significant transformation. Faculty work is changing—the expectations, the kinds of appointments, the necessary skills and abilities. Large numbers of retirements will require extensive hiring in the near future. At the same time that the new generation of faculty members must be prepared to enter a changing context, many analysts and observers remain concerned about shortcomings in the current preparation of graduate students for their future work.

In response to the challenges facing higher education institutions and changes in faculty work, various programs and projects have been designed and supported by foundations to address issues in graduate education and improve the preparation of future faculty. Such programs include Preparing Future Faculty (PFF), which is in place at many institutions, Re-envisioning the Ph.D. (sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and hosted at the University of Washington), the Responsive PhD initiative (a program of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation), and the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate to create Stewards of the Discipline. In addition, as noted earlier, many universities have implemented new programs designed to prepare graduate students more successfully not only for their current teaching assistantship positions but also for their future professional roles. As evidence, the Re-envisioning the Ph.D. Web site contains a list of several hundred “Promising Practices” in place at universities committed to enhancing graduate education as preparation for future careers.

Efforts are under way to enhance the preparation of future faculty, and lessons can be learned from the efforts made to date. To continue to address the changes in the academy and the need for new faculty members, university leaders, professors, and leaders of professional associations and foundations must think practically and critically about the paths to the professoriate and strategies for enriching the preparation of the future faculty.

REFERENCES
It isn’t too much of an exaggeration to say that at times it seems as though institutions of higher education are being pulled in three or four directions—at the same time. External and internal forces have coalesced over the past few decades to make this an extraordinary time—perhaps even a crossroads—for higher education not only in the U.S., but throughout the world.

Access and equity. Funding and tuition. Diversity and multiculturalism. Institutional mission. Technology. The litany of issues is long and complicated, posing for colleges and universities both challenges and opportunities in societies that are changing as fast, if not faster. In this section, we examine higher education from an institutional perspective. We look at systems, policies, and practices that are affecting higher education in any number of ways. In specific, we canvass the work of Reitumetse Mabokela and
her analysis of South African higher education in the wake of apartheid, James T. Minor and the role of faculty governance in decision-making, Ann Austin and the processes of change and institutional transformation, and Marilyn Amey and interdisciplinary collaboration.

South African Universities, Equity and Access

It is hard to imagine a system of higher education in the world that has undergone more fundamental change over the past two decades than the one in South Africa. It was only in the 1980s that laws barring historically white universities from admitting black students were changed. Even more profound changes would come in the 1990s as the system of apartheid that had riven the country along racial lines was finally dismantled. Today, access to higher education is open to all. But for Professor Reitumetse Mabokela, the realities of South African higher education are more complicated than simply doing away with a system that was separate and unequal.

Mabokela is an expert on South African higher education and has studied how the system has sought to transform itself in terms of access and equity for those disenfranchised under apartheid. What Mabokela sees is a very mixed picture. On the one hand, the system has truly changed in that there are no longer institutions reserved for privileged whites. Some of the more progressive historically white universities have since the 1980s increased substantially the number of black students they enroll. And yet problems persist.

Overall, Mabokela has found that the overt racism of apartheid has moved below the surface, couched in the context of institutional culture. Although some universities have increased the number of black students, others have not and she has found that white professors often do not view black students as academically capable and gifted. In surveying black students, she has found that many of them feel that their universities do not value them and have done little to embrace them. These institutions have required blacks to adjust to them and have made no effort to accommodate the new students. Moreover, Mabokela says there isn’t a university in South Africa that had been historically white that has more than 10 percent of its faculty made up of black professors—and they are almost nonexistent among the senior ranks.

One of the lessons for Mabokela from South Africa’s efforts at transformation is the strength and intractability of institutional culture. It is one thing to change the laws and do away with formal barriers. It is another to truly embrace change and create learning environments that value and support students of color. For Mabokela, it is a lesson that ought not to be lost on American higher education.

Faculty Governance and University Decision-making

What role should the faculty play in making critical decisions affecting their institutions? Should professors have a voice in decisions to end programs, implement new initiatives, or even on issues related to the budget and athletics? These are questions of academic governance, which has been a flashpoint between faculty members and administrators at universities throughout the country. Professor James T. Minor has studied the issue by focusing on the role faculty senates play in the governance process.

Faculty senates are ubiquitous on college campuses (90 percent of four-year universities have one) and thus have become the most common way for formal faculty participation in university decision-making. Minor’s research has showed that although faculty senates are widespread there is little clarity about how governance should be shared among the various campus constituents. Some define shared governance as the key stakeholders working together to make decisions, while others view it as each group having authority over specific areas of the institution, and still others consider the faculty’s role as consultative, voicing its opinion but granting the majority of the decision-making authority to administrators.

Minor also has found that there is a disconnection
between the idea and actual function of governance. Minor conducted a survey of senior administrators, senate presidents, and faculty members at more than 700 universities and found that nearly half of the respondents view shared governance as collaborative in which the faculty is actively involved in the major policy decisions. But the data show that professors have decision-making authority mostly over academic issues. In many cases, the idea of shared governance simply doesn’t match the actual process of decision-making. That kind of incongruence, Minor says, leads to cynicism and lack of interest and participation in faculty senates. He has developed four conceptual models for understanding faculty involvement in governance, and he has called for more research to better understand senate activity. “The literature on faculty involvement in governance has been marked by an ‘us against them’ dichotomy and it hasn’t helped create governance systems that are equipped to handle the challenge of the 21st century. We need to move beyond that model toward governance practices that focus on the most effective ways to make major university decisions that position institutions for success.”

The Levers of Institutional Change

Change may be the byword in higher education these days. But how do colleges and universities go about the process of change, of rebalancing missions or altering established practices? Throughout her distinguished career, Professor Ann Austin has maintained a research agenda that includes these kinds of questions. She has studied change processes at public and private universities throughout the world.

What Austin has come to understand about change in the academy is that how successful universities are at realigning their missions, for example, depends on their use of strategic levers. By this, she means that university leaders have at their disposal an array of strategies, or levers, that they can use to produce change. How they use these levers can have a powerful effect on the ultimate success of change efforts. Austin says institutions are most likely to achieve change when strategies are used in systemic and connected ways. Using one lever, such as articulating a mission or vision, without employing others ranging from incentives and rewards, planning and evaluation, faculty socialization and development, and institutional policies and procedures will likely not result in change. She also has found that effective change involves all levels of an institution from the university as a whole and colleges and departments to individual faculty members, administrators, and staff.

What does this kind of change look like? Austin did the initial evaluation of a program at a state university designed to foster institutional transformation by increasing the number and success of women faculty members in the sciences and mathematics. The institution used multiple levers. On the one hand, the institution offered support from the top in that the provost heartily supported and articulated the importance of having a diverse faculty. The initiative also had a bottoms-up approach in that a faculty member took the initiative to secure a significant grant, and a mentoring program and support network of female professors was established. In addition, department chairs were actively engaged, and the program had enough funding that it could help departments in their recruitment efforts by supplementing salary packages offered to prospective women faculty members. It is the kind of connected and systemic approach, Austin says, that can lead over time to effective and fundamental change. ■
Faculty roles have grown increasingly complex in research universities, as well as other postsecondary institutions, but these responsibilities have been added with little reshaping of the surrounding environment, with little reorienting of institutional reward structures, or with little examination of the interrelated components of the institutional structure in which the work takes place (Colbeck, 1998). We have not stopped to ask “should we?” and “how does this really make a difference?” as often as we have just accepted the increased work, albeit begrudgingly. So when we talk about finding ways to support interdisciplinary collaboration as a form of faculty work, we want not to fall into the same trap. We have asked ourselves whether or not faculty should be involved in interdisciplinary collaboration and whether or not it really makes a difference, and have found affirming answers to both questions.

What we find ourselves asking with less clear responses is how do we enhance, expand, or recreate organizational and disciplinary cultures to support interdisciplinary collaboration while still affirming the tradition of the discipline? Most interdisciplinary collaborations are temporary and shorter term within the faculty career. After the problem at the epicenter of work has been resolved, the interdisciplinary collaboration usually disbands. Faculty return to their home departments and return to the traditional values of the expert model. Given this, we propose at the very least, that faculty are not penalized for participating in interdisciplinary collaboration. This requires, at a minimum, a systemic policy to not penalize faculty for participation and one that allows for renegotiations of faculty roles and departmental resources allocations. . . . In the scheme of academic work, this is a small change in the value system initially, but may be necessary to begin a culture of tolerance for interdisciplinary behaviors. As interdisciplinary behaviors become more successful on campus, perhaps the academic

Breaking Out
Why the academy must change its value system
value system can be more receptive to the values of interdisciplinary collaboration.

In the end, improving the environment for interdisciplinary collaboration requires understanding the complex relationships that affect academic work, which includes a deep understanding of how disciplinary culture manifests itself regularly in most aspects of faculty life. A more systemic approach (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Senge, 1990) takes into account the interrelationships among the array of external, disciplinary, institutional, departmental, and individual factors influencing academic departments, faculty work, and priorities (Massey & Wilger, 1995), and activity such as interdisciplinary collaboration. Using an holistic approach to examine interdisciplinary collaboration’s inclusion means looking at patterns of behavior, including their antecedents, attempting to assess implications of actions and trends. It allows us to examine not only the existence of interdisciplinary collaboration but, as importantly, to understand more clearly how various aspects of the environment (particularly disciplinary orientations and academic architectures) influence and interact to affect involvement in this form of scholarly engagement. A systems approach also allows us to develop synergistic understandings for how interdisciplinary collaboration might be more successfully integrated into the complexities of faculty work.

Without utilizing a more systemic or holistic approach to look for ways of accommodating interdisciplinary collaboration (and other forms of academic work), most change efforts are relegated to the individual with another faculty member from a different discipline. Certainly, this one-by-one approach is fine. It may reflect the ways in which faculty exercise control over their own work choices and probably means that innovative academic work is more common than research findings would ever suggest. Yet, we argue that the opportunity for innovative faculty work, including interdisciplinary collaboration should be built into the university system rather than left only to the wherewithal of individual faculty who feel at liberty to take the perceived risk.

For example, university administrators and faculty leaders can influence an expanding academic culture to value interdisciplinary collaboration behaviors by using financial resources to encourage and reward faculty who participate in this work. Seeing such policies and practices reinforced by university administration and faculty leaders may foster more acceptance of interdisciplinary collaboration behaviors in faculty throughout the organization. The more faculty who participate in interdisciplinary collaboration are rewarded for it, the more support will be created for expanding the values system to complement the expert model. We believe this will be a long and probably heated process, but nothing encourages change like success. Like participation in interdisciplinary collaboration, changing the academic culture to include the values of interdisciplinary collaboration can be a risky adventure. And like most things of value, the outcomes are worth the risk. We believe interdisciplinary collaboration warrants the risk.

Marilyn Amey is professor and coordinator of the Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education program. Dennis Brown is executive director of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. The article is an excerpt from Breaking Out of the Box: Interdisciplinary Collaborations and Faculty Work by Marilyn J. Amey and Dennis F. Brown © 2004. Used by permission of Information Age Publishing, Inc.

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The Dizzying New World of C
t is the truism of truisms that colleges and universities are in the teaching and students business. Each fall, tens of thousands of first-year and transfer students arrive on college campuses and universities endeavor to make them feel welcome and guide them through a process that will ultimately lead to a degree. But who are these students and what do they need to succeed in this most critical of educational rites of passage? In this section, we deal with those kinds of questions by chronicling the work of two faculty members, Kristen Renn and Matthew Wawrzynski, who through their research help us understand the evolving nature of the student experience in the 21st century.

Mixed Race Students and Demographic Change

If you ask Professor Kristen Renn, she will tell you that American postsecondary education is about to experience a substantial demographic shift. Until now, the academy has not paid much attention to it but the numbers are unmistakable. Racial and ethnic groups in America are intermarrying to such an extent that 2.7 percent of respondents to the 2000 census indicated more than one racial category. What’s more, 4 percent of those under the age of 18 and 7.7 percent of those under the age of 18 reporting Hispanic or Latino ethnicity indicated more than one category. For Renn, mixed race students will emerge as a major presence, as common on campus as Asian students are today.

Understanding these students has been a consuming interest for Renn since her days as a student affairs dean, and she recently published findings from several years of research in Mixed Race Students in College: The Ecology of Race, Identity, and Community on Campus. What Renn has found is that mixed race students face a different reality in college. There are well-established support networks for various groups, ranging from black and Asian to Hispanic and Native American. It is a different story for mixed race students. They can sometimes struggle to enter and gain acceptance in these monoracial communities. In fact, Renn found that mixed race students do not all identify racially or ethnically in the same way. She documents five identity patterns:

- the student holds a Monoracial Identity (“I’m black.”
  “I’m Asian.”)
the student holds *Multiple Racial Identities*, shifting according to the situation (“I’m half white and half Chinese.” “I am Mexican and black.”)

- the student holds a *Multicultural Identity* (“I’m biracial.” “I’m mixed.”)

- the student holds an *Extraracial Identity*, deconstructing race or opting out by refusing to identify according to U.S. racial categories (“I’m Jamaican.” “I won’t check any boxes.” “I don’t believe in having a race.”)

- the student has a *Situational Identity* (“When I’m with my fraternity, I’m like them—white. When I’m with the Japan Club, I’m Japanese American.”)

Given the different realities for mixed race students, Renn believes that universities will have to alter practices and policies that have been predicated on what she describes as one body, one race. Universities will need to engage in a full-fledged assessment to determine numbers of mixed race students on their campuses. Without such numbers, she says it will be nearly impossible to chart demographic growth and, perhaps more importantly, outcomes, including retention and graduation. Renn also calls on institutions to create a specific support structure for mixed race students, which could be similar to those in place for monoracial groups. Efforts could range from establishing a mixed race student group to organizing a speakers’ series on mixed race issues and providing role models among the faculty and staff. She cautions universities, however, that without recruiting and admitting a critical mass of mixed race students it is unlikely that a formal multiracial support network will emerge.

The Importance of Academic Transitions and Student Success

Of all the educational transitions we make in life, few have as much riding on them as the one from high school or community college to the university. Fail to make this transition successfully and the implications for earnings power alone will likely be enduring and significant. The research shows that students make the decision whether to drop out or transfer in the first six to eight weeks of their collegiate experience, and thus universities have developed orientation programs to help students make a successful transition. Professor Matt Wawrzynski has sought to understand students at this crucial juncture as they arrive on college campuses as first-year or transfer students.

An essential aspect of Wawrzynski’s work is the importance of fully understanding the noncognitive variables that students bring with them to college. Universities have long relied on cognitive measures, such as the SAT, to gain an understanding of students. Yet the research has increasingly shown that noncognitive variables such as motivation, student perceptions, and expectations can be equally, if not more, important in academic performance in college.

Wawrzynski played a key role in developing the Transfer Student Survey, a questionnaire that focuses on such things as student academic perceptions, self-conception, social connections, diversity, leadership, and goals and desired outcomes. He used the survey in a study of nearly 2,500 transfer students at a public research university. His findings countered a number of myths about transfer students. For example, Wawrzynski found that transfer students attend universities with a set of expectations that are as valid as those entering college for the first time. The students he surveyed expressed an interest in working with faculty members on research projects, participating in community service, and joining campus organizations. Moreover, African American and Asian American transfer students expressed more interest in working with faculty members or interacting outside of class than white students. Traditionally, higher education has viewed transfer students as less interested in engaging in the campus community and focused only on their academic course requirements.

Wawrzynski also has studied new-student orientation seminars and found that they can be valuable in developing peer interaction or social adjustment, especially for minority students. However, whether such programs are as effective as they could be is difficult to determine because institutions simply don’t collect noncognitive information. For Wawrzynski, SAT scores and grade-point averages don’t provide enough information to base the various transitional support programs. It is an issue that university will have to deal with as students become increasingly diverse. “The better we can understand students entering our institutions the better we can provide different programs to meet student needs. The ultimate goal is to better understand our students so that we can determine what programs we need to offer and which programs we need to change to help students make that transition.”
Coming in the next issue . . .

- John Dirkx and the role of emotion and imagination in adult learning and how they can facilitate personal transformation and change

- MaryLee Davis and the roles and responsibilities of American universities in the 21st century

The Michigan State University College of Education’s graduate program in Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education (HALE) is among the finest in the nation. U.S. News & World Report magazine consistently has ranked the program as one of the five best in the country. Deeply committed to research, teaching and service, the faculty is widely published in academic journals and engages in projects that span postsecondary education. The program offers master’s degrees in student affairs administration and higher, adult and lifelong education. The Ph.D. program is in higher, adult and lifelong education. More information about the program can be obtained by logging onto its Web site (http://edweb3.educ.msu.edu/ead/HALE/HALE.htm).