

## CHAPTER ONE

# THE CHANGING CONTEXT FOR FACULTY WORK AND WORKPLACES

For almost four hundred years, higher education institutions have played a critically important role in American society. Colleges and universities prepare educated citizens, advance knowledge, and engage in service in ways that benefit individuals, communities, states, the nation, and the broader world. Ideas incubated within academe enrich our culture and help solve societal problems.

Today's institutional leaders, however, are faced with myriad challenges that only seem to grow more difficult with each passing year: for example, maintaining technological infrastructures that address both user needs and budgetary constraints; recruiting and retaining students well-matched to their institutional missions; creating environments that value student diversity; finding new sources of revenue as traditional sources of support decline; responding effectively to increasing accountability requirements; and continually enhancing the prestige and prominence of the institution. In recent years, these and other forces have been affecting American higher education institutions, challenging their traditional missions, and shifting the contours of organizational structures. The pace and extent of changes currently affecting higher education far surpass "business as usual." James Duderstadt, former president of the University of Michigan, observed that "we are entering a period in which the capacity to nourish and manage change will be one of the most important abilities of all" (2000, p. 35).

To a significant extent, it is the faculty that enables higher education institutions to meet these numerous demands and fulfill their missions. The teaching, research, creative endeavors, community involvement, professional service, and academic decision making—the work of the university or college—is carried out each day by committed faculty members. Certainly administrators provide much of the vision, leadership, and support essential to institutional success. Their work should never be undervalued. Nevertheless, it is the work of the faculty that is essential to achieving the excellence that colleges and universities envision.

Indeed, the faculty's intellectual capital, taken collectively, is the institution's foremost asset. It is also the institution's only appreciable asset (Ulrich, 1998). Other institutional assets—buildings, laboratories, classrooms, residence halls, power plants, and technology infrastructures—begin to depreciate the day they are acquired. But colleges and universities depend on their faculty members' competence and commitment to increase steadily over time to meet the institution's ever changing circumstances and goals.

Although faculty members are the primary resource for meeting today's escalating demands upon colleges and universities, these same demands are simultaneously altering the context within which they work. Today's challenges place new expectations and require new skills and abilities of faculty members. Nevertheless, many institutions have not seriously considered how support for faculty must evolve to better enable them to accomplish their work. Adding to the complexity of today's changing educational landscape, faculty members are also more diverse than ever before, as are the appointments they hold. Further, many early career faculty members seek to make their personal lives a higher priority than their senior colleagues have often done.

Taken together, these changes mean that traditional academic appointments, employment policies and practices, and supports for faculty work are no longer fully appropriate for today's faculty members and the work they undertake. For example, if faculty members working in nontenure track appointments are to be in a position to do their best work, leaders must provide equitable working conditions and ensure these faculty members' inclusion in the campus community. If today's diverse faculty members are to satisfactorily balance their personal and professional lives, current expectations

for academic careers will have to become more flexible. Likewise, as faculty members are challenged to increase their use of technology in the classroom, help generate more resources for the university, and create an academic environment that values students' diversity, many will need easy and continuous access to professional development opportunities that help them obtain the appropriate skills.

In this changing environment, developing and supporting the intellectual capital that each faculty member represents is fundamental to the ability of higher education institutions to manage change and move with strength and effectiveness into the future. For administrative leaders facing constant challenges, an energetic, diverse, and engaged faculty is their most important resource. Investment in the faculty and in the quality of the academic workplace becomes a college's or university's most critical strategic choice.

The stakes are high for institutions that choose not to make this investment. As this and later chapters point out, faculty work and workplaces have not always changed for the better, and some faculty, like their counterparts in other occupations, will leave for better circumstances. People today are not as wedded to their employers or their careers as in previous decades (Downey, March, Berkman, and Steinauer, 2001; Judy and D'Amico, 1997; Cintrón, 1999). For example, in a study focused on corporate management, Ulrich (1998) found that 50 percent of high potential managers at a global company did not think they would stay with that company long enough to retire and 90 percent personally knew someone who had voluntarily left in the past six months.

Similarly, successful faculty members make choices about where and for whom they will work. One third of respondents to the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) survey indicated that they had considered leaving academe for another job and 28 percent had received at least one firm offer (Lindholm, Szelenyi, Hurtado, and Korn, 2005). Data regarding potential faculty members at the beginning of the academic pipeline also warrant institutional leaders' attention. Sixty-two percent of faculty in a national survey observed that their graduate students pursue academic research careers less often than in the past (Wimsatt and Trice, 2006).

How then can higher education institutions most effectively support faculty in their work and encourage commitment to the college or university? They must rethink the nature of today's academic workplace in recognition of the many and complex demands facing faculty, the shifts in faculty appointment patterns, the diversity of faculty characteristics, and the changes in societal perspectives on work. Moreover, they must also reassess and modify their current policies and practices regarding faculty work in light of the changes that have occurred. The following questions are the focus of this book:

- What changes in faculty work, faculty characteristics, and faculty appointments, as well as in the broader societal context, require fresh perspectives on the academic workplace?
- What are the essential elements of academic work and workplaces that should be part of all faculty work, regardless of the type of appointment?
- What specific institutional policies and practices contribute to academic workplaces that support all faculty members in carrying out excellent work in service to institutional missions?

Attention to the well-being of the faculty and to the quality of the academic workplace strengthens the institution's capacity to achieve its mission and maintain its excellence, effectiveness, and health. This kind of attention enhances the quality of key outcomes, such as recruitment and retention of a diverse and highly talented faculty, increased faculty satisfaction with their work, and a higher level of faculty commitment to the organization. In sum, this kind of attention is a strategic investment in the intellectual capital of the institution.

## MAJOR CHANGES AFFECTING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Contextual changes affecting higher education institutions today require the best from faculty members even as they simultaneously change the playing field, necessitating new skills and abilities in addition to the traditional talents and competencies expected of professors. Certainly, the specific impact of these forces on a particular

institution is mediated by the institution's history, mission, geographical location, size, resources, and a host of other factors. Yet overall, they are having major impacts across the higher education sector and will be familiar to all institutional leaders. Of particular importance for this book is how these forces are affecting faculty and creating an environment within which focused attention on the nature of the academic workplace becomes strategically essential.

This chapter highlights four of the most significant forces creating challenges for higher education institutions:

1. Fiscal constraints and increased competition
2. Calls for accountability and shifts in control
3. Growing enrollments and the increasing diversity of students
4. The rise of the Information Age along with expanded use of new technologies to facilitate learning

The chapter then examines the specific impacts of these four forces on faculty work and workplaces.

## FISCAL CONSTRAINTS AND INCREASED COMPETITION

Fiscal constraints and shifts in financial support for higher education form one of the most powerful pressures affecting universities and colleges today. In addition to meeting the ever-increasing costs of operating expenses and compensation packages, universities and colleges are also pressed to increase their instructional technology and overall technology infrastructure, to provide additional student services to meet the needs of more diverse student bodies, to address deferred maintenance, and to handle rising energy costs. Many higher education institutions have enriched their physical plants in recent years, as one strategy to stay competitive in response to growing student expectations for a range of amenities or expanded research endeavors. Some colleges and universities are using tuition discounting as a way to enhance their attractiveness; this strategy, however, is another pull on institutional budgets.

Although rising costs and fiscal pressures are a major challenge for private as well as public institutions, the latter are also dealing with considerable volatility in state budgets. Not only are budget

allocations for higher education constrained, allocations are also unpredictable and unstable. In general, there is little expectation that state support for higher education will improve significantly if at all over the coming years, in view of the constantly rising costs of such mandated state programs as Medicare and elementary and secondary education. In a recent article, Don Boyd of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government noted that “even if state and local governments close their current budget gaps with regular sources of revenue, instead of relying on gimmicks that provide only temporary relief, the sad conclusion is that most states will face continuing problems in financing current services and will not have sufficient resources to support real increases in spending” (Boyd, 2005, p. 1).

Federal funding, which primarily takes the form of student financial aid as well as research grants and contracts in areas deemed national priorities, also has been stagnant since the late 1970s (Breneman, Finney, and Roherty, 1997). Moreover, as public perception has shifted toward viewing individuals rather than the general society as the primary beneficiaries of higher education, financial aid has shifted from grants to loans.

These factors together contribute to a general scramble for resources by colleges and universities. As Newman, Couturier, and Scurry assert (2004, p. 4), “the search for truth” in higher education institutions “is rivaled by a search for revenues.” The need for resources is fueling greater orientation toward entrepreneurialism in colleges and universities as well as increased competition and market orientation among higher education institutions. These circumstances have led some observers to assert that higher education is increasingly functioning as a commodity in a marketplace that values the knowledge and expertise that institutions compete to provide (Eckel, Couturier, and Luu, 2005; Newman, Couturier, and Scurry, 2004; Slaughter and Leslie, 1999; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004).

Colleges and universities are responding to these fiscal pressures by using budget reductions and cost-containment strategies, striving to build their endowments, seeking to attract foundation support and private gifts, and privatizing some institutional functions, such as food services, bookstores, and remedial support for

students. Under these circumstances, some institutions are urging academic departments to develop revenue-producing continuing education programs, or to seek collaborations with industry for technology development and transfer. Faculty members especially are under pressure to engage more aggressively in grant seeking.

As many institutions become more corporate in their outlook by their increasing dependence on the bottom line, the culture is changing on many campuses. Entrepreneurialism, quantifiable productivity, and efficiency are high on the list of expectations that faculty must meet. Leaders need to consider these and other potential outcomes of these shifts:

- How might a culture of increasing entrepreneurialism affect faculty members' commitment to their institutions and thus retention?
- To what extent are financial pressures creating a competitive environment that challenges a spirit of collegiality on the campus?
- Are pressures for faculty to produce revenue creating environments where those who bring in less revenue feel less respected and less equitably treated by their institutions?

### CALLS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND SHIFTS IN CONTROL

At the same time that higher education institutions are struggling with financial constraints and increased competition for scarce resources, they also face heightened calls for accountability and responsiveness to societal needs and expectations. The public wants to see wider access; high-quality research; engagement with their surrounding communities and social and national problems; and contributions to economic development (Duderstadt, 2000; Newman, Couturier, and Scurry, 2004). Overall, however, the public appears to have less confidence and trust in higher education institutions as pillars of society than was the case a few decades ago. Criticisms are not hard to find. Employers have expressed reservations about higher education, worrying about the quality of new college graduates' preparation for the workplace. Newspaper articles and television coverage publicize high tuition, scientific misconduct, and

student misbehavior. In some states, legislators have felt enough uncertainty about what is happening in public colleges and universities to deliberate over regulating faculty workloads, to institute faculty post-tenure review, to link funding directly to measurable outcomes, and to mandate periodic program reviews. As one recent example of legislative interest in regulating higher education, lawmakers in Virginia, in a broadly supported move, unanimously passed a bill requiring faculty to consider costs when selecting books for their courses (Schmidt, 2006).

The federal government is also seeking to influence the financial decisions of higher education institutions through regulatory policies pertaining to federal student financial aid and research funding. Institutions are being encouraged to refrain from tuition increases, and there are some hints that eligibility for participation in federal student aid programs could be linked to institutional decisions about tuition levels (Zusman, 2005).

Thus institutions need to pay more attention to external pressures for greater accountability and tighter control, and this need has impacted colleges and universities in several ways. At some institutions, presidential authority has increased in response to accountability and budget pressures. Simultaneously, however, decentralization has been the institutional response as some colleges and universities have chosen to push accountability down to the unit level. Strategies such as responsibility-centered budgeting provide departments and units with more autonomy, coupled with greater responsibility to engage in entrepreneurial plans to increase revenue (Zusman, 2005).

Demands for increased accountability are also changing the context in which faculty work. The following questions are worth consideration by institutional leaders:

- Do faculty members feel diminished respect for their work as tighter controls and an increased number of checks and balances become part of their daily reality?
- To what extent have faculty members experienced a loss of autonomy as, for example, requirements for quantifiable outcomes from teaching and institutional review board demands and controls have increased dramatically?



## GROWING ENROLLMENTS AND INCREASING DIVERSITY OF STUDENTS

Over the past twenty-five years, total student enrollments have increased almost 50 percent, to around 17 million. Demand is expected to expand even more: the National Center for Education Statistics predicts that, by 2014, enrollments will increase another 15 percent from 2003 levels (Hussar, 2005).

In addition to general growth in the numbers of students on campus, the student body is increasingly diverse in terms of age, background, race and ethnicity, and educational expectations (Keller, 2001; Syverson, 1996). Of particular interest is the considerable growth in the number of students over the age of twenty-five; students in this cohort expect their educational experiences to be characterized by quality, convenience, low cost, relevance, and institutional responsiveness to their needs (Levine, 2000). According to the most current statistics, students twenty-five and older account for about 40 percent of undergraduate enrollments. Further, since 1980 the percentage of the student body that is composed of ethnic and racial minorities has increased, from 16 percent to more than 25 percent (Snyder and Tan, 2005).

Students and their families often view a college education as the ticket to economic success and a middle-class lifestyle. Students are looking for educational experiences that are relevant to their employment prospects, convenient to their personal commitments and life circumstances, and reasonable in cost. Nondegree programs are in demand, as are certificate programs that respond to shifts in the labor environment. Older learners with multiple responsibilities benefit from educational providers who offer extended office hours for educational services, or who provide options (for example, child care) that make pursuing education more possible. The increase in first-generation college and university students makes the availability of academic support services especially important.

Higher education institutions must have the necessary infrastructure to provide a welcoming and supportive environment and to meet the needs of this diverse student body. They must be able to create multicultural environments in which each member is valued

and respected. Colleges and universities are also striving to help students enhance their international awareness and knowledge and gain facility in speaking and understanding other languages. These skills help learners prepare for work in a global economy and for participation as responsible and tolerant citizens.

As faculty members are faced with the significant challenges this diverse student body poses, institutions should consider questions such as these:

- Do faculty members across appointment types have the necessary skills to address the learning needs of first-generation students and students from diverse backgrounds?
- As students become increasingly consumer-oriented, is this adversely affecting the nature of student-faculty relationships?

#### THE RISE OF THE INFORMATION AGE AND THE AVAILABILITY OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The rapid expansion of knowledge and the pervasiveness of new technologies are two additional challenges confronting colleges and universities and their leaders. This expansion of knowledge is leading to the emergence of new areas of specialization that challenge the structure of the traditional disciplines. Simultaneously, however, the boundaries between disciplines are blurring, and new interdisciplinary fields of study are emerging. Some institutions have established cross-disciplinary units to support new developments in knowledge and the application of knowledge to societal problems. Faculty members are increasingly working in interdisciplinary contexts and participating in collaborative teams to teach or conduct research. Duderstadt (2000, p. 3) has captured the challenge and the promise confronting faculty members engaging in interdisciplinary ventures for the first time:

It has become increasingly clear that those within the academy will need to learn to tolerate more ambiguity, to take more risks. This may mean we will be less comfortable in our scholarly neighborhoods; we may have to relax the relatively stable professional selves that we have preserved for so long. Yet most will find working

together much more fulfilling than working apart. Ultimately this will release incredible creativity.

Closely connected to the emergence of the Information Age is the explosion of new technologies that facilitate teaching and learning. Gumpert and Chun (2005, p. 402) have suggested that advancements in technology are affecting higher education in three ways: “(1) the nature of knowledge, (2) the process of teaching and learning, and (3) the social organization of teaching and learning in higher education.”

Technological developments contribute to the knowledge industry, in which faculty members become, in the words of Gumpert and Chun (2005, p. 403), “knowledge consumers and knowledge producers functioning within market forces.” One result is the emergence of people and policies to manage intellectual property issues that arise for faculty and for the institutions in which they work. In short, in a society that values knowledge, issues of “ownership and management of academic knowledge” (Gumpert and Chun, 2005, p. 403) can affect faculty autonomy as well as academic freedom. Technological developments have also produced new research strategies that expand disciplinary inquiries while contributing to the blurring of boundaries between fields, and offer scholars new ways to interact, unbounded by time and distance.

Technological advances also affect the processes of teaching and learning. At one level, the use of technology in class and in facilitating communication simply builds on typical teacher-learner roles and relationships to make the learning process more efficient. At another level, technological innovation has had a much greater impact, bringing major changes to how learning and teaching occur. Thus, for many years, the typical learning environment involved teachers and students engaging in face-to-face classroom interactions, using books and blackboards to aid the processes of teaching and learning. But the explosion of available technologies over the past two decades has led to new ways of finding information, communicating, learning, and applying knowledge (Twigg, 2002), and even to the formation of new types of higher education institutions that specialize in online learning at any time and in any place.

These technological advances have caused faculty members to find themselves in new roles as they interact with learners and assess students' learning. Students are engaging in more individualized learning experiences, and the issues of time and location for learning are becoming more flexible (Gumport and Chun, 2005), thus requiring faculty to adjust their roles as teachers. They must learn to design and organize learning materials that can be provided via the Web. They must cultivate meaningful relationships with a diverse array of students even in virtual, computer-mediated environments, and they must be able to manage their time now that students can seek faculty interactions via computer any time of the day or night, seven days a week.

The possibilities offered by the Information Age, with its array of new technologies, seem unlimited and exciting—but the challenges, especially for faculty who use these technologies, can also be significant. The following questions are therefore worth consideration:

- To what extent does technology isolate faculty from each other even as it aids communication?
- How is technology affecting faculty members' ability to establish boundaries between their professional and personal lives?
- How can faculty members most effectively and efficiently stay current with technologies that enhance their work?

## EFFECTS OF THESE MAJOR CHANGES ON FACULTY

The various factors that cause challenges for higher education institutions are also leading to significant changes in faculty careers and academic workplaces. Specific effects on faculty include:

- Changing patterns in faculty appointments
- Declines in faculty autonomy and control
- An escalating pace of work and expanding workloads
- Increasingly entrepreneurial and high-pressure environments that hinder community and institutional commitment
- A need for continuous, career-long professional development

## CHANGING PATTERNS IN FACULTY APPOINTMENTS

Major changes in the nature of faculty appointments constitute one of the most significant responses by universities and colleges to the challenges posed by fiscal constraints, and by the need to stay competitive in a rapidly changing environment where flexibility, responsiveness, accountability, and cost-efficiency are key.

Changes in faculty work are situated within a general restructuring of work throughout the global economy. Handy (1994), an astute observer of societal change, has compared the emerging workplace in the global economy to the three leaves of a shamrock. One leaf contains the professional core, which is becoming a smaller proportion of the workforce. The second leaf includes freelance professionals and technicians who are self-employed and hired by organizations on an ad hoc, per-project basis. The third leaf is made up of the ever-increasing group of contingent workers who are available by the hour. In many employment sectors, the core workforce is becoming smaller as the number of contingent employees increases.

In the United States, changes in higher education have brought about a noteworthy resemblance between Handy's shamrock and the academic workplace, as Rice (2004) and Finkelstein and Schuster (2003) have highlighted. The major structural changes in faculty appointments have resulted in a tripartite system of appointments: tenure track, renewable contracts, and fixed-term or temporary. In this restructuring of academic appointments, full-time tenure-track faculty members typically follow the traditional path of the "prototypical American scholar" (Boyer, 1990) or "complete scholar" (Rice, 1996b) engaged in research, teaching, and service. Faculty with contract-renewable appointments often specialize in either teaching or research and provide flexibility to the employing institution. More and more faculty members, those who constitute the third leaf in terms of Handy's metaphor, are hired temporarily to teach specific courses.

By changing the types of faculty appointments into which talented individuals are hired, colleges and universities usually hope to gain some immediate flexibility or cost savings. But some institutions have shifted the pattern of appointment types without carefully considering the long-term impact on faculty members and the

academic workplace. The shifts in faculty appointment types have created a bifurcated faculty, where those with full-time tenure-track appointments enjoy the traditional benefits of professorial work—respect, autonomy, collegiality, and opportunities for professional growth—while those who are not on the tenure track do not necessarily receive those benefits, at least not to the same extent. Furthermore, these different types of appointments cause inequities, which can undermine the sense of commitment that faculty should bring to their work. Institutions need to look carefully at the support and benefits that are in place across the various appointment types now in use. Otherwise, the intellectual capital of many faculty members may be underutilized, if they do not feel supported, respected, and thus committed to the work of the institution.

### DECLINING AUTONOMY AND CONTROL FOR FACULTY

Fiscal constraints, calls for accountability, and the availability of new technologies have important implications for the nature and extent of the autonomy and control that faculty traditionally have experienced in their work. In regard to fiscal pressures, Slaughter (1993, p. 276) concludes that retrenchment in the face of budget constraints has “generally undermined faculty participation in governance and faculty authority over the direction of the curriculum.” Moreover, as colleges and universities take on more entrepreneurial activities, often to attract more revenue, faculty members’ autonomy and control over their work may diminish and shift toward the administrators who manage these revenue-producing activities and make important decisions about them. Furthermore, the efforts of state legislatures to hold public higher education institutions to higher levels of accountability have implications for faculty autonomy. In the context of these trends, Rhoades (1998) has suggested that faculty are losing autonomy and becoming “managed professionals” who are increasingly accountable to administrators, state legislators, governing boards, and funding agencies.

The new technologies are another major factor in faculty autonomy and control. Market forces demanding that higher education institutions be more efficient and cost-effective have caused “unbundling,” or differentiation, in faculty work. The development of technology-mediated learning experiences requires an array of

different skills. Traditionally, a faculty member envisions, prepares, delivers, and evaluates a course that he or she teaches. In this age of technology, however, these processes of production, distribution, and evaluation are being separated. Curriculum designers may prepare a course; technology specialists may develop the appropriate software to facilitate teaching the course online or in another technology-mediated environment; public relations specialists may market the course; a teacher may work with the students; and an evaluator may determine the effectiveness of the course, of the related technology, and of the instructor. The faculty member is still involved in helping students learn, but the course itself has become a commodity. Faculty members have traditionally believed that they “owned” their courses, but the differentiation of these aspects of teaching has diminished faculty control and ownership.

Academic freedom and autonomy have long been cherished aspects of academic work, yet the current pressures affecting higher education institutions are chipping away at faculty autonomy in subtle ways. Faculty members, regardless of their appointment types, need a sense of control and autonomy over their work, whether they have the traditional full array of teaching, research, and service responsibilities or more focused responsibility for particular parts of the academic enterprise. The creativity and energy of faculty members are enhanced when the autonomy to do their work as they think best is integral to their assignments.

## ESCALATING PACE AND EXPANDING WORKLOAD

What is often called “ratcheting” is another outcome of the major factors affecting higher education institutions. External calls for greater accountability and demonstrable outcomes, institutional pressure for faculty to generate revenue, and the necessity of keeping up with the never-ending expansion of new knowledge all conspire to create seemingly endless demands and expectations of faculty members. In fact, ironically, even as the public sometimes expresses skepticism about the amount and quality of work that faculty members are perceived as doing, many faculty members themselves report that they face constant pressure to turn their attention in too many different directions, and that they find the

pace of work hectic and relentless (Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin, 2000). There does not seem to be any limit to or boundary on the amount of work for faculty to do.

Fiscal constraints lead to greater faculty workloads when support staff are reduced or course loads are increased. The prevalence of computer use adds to a sense of “information overload” and to a growing expectation among students, and often among colleagues as well, that faculty members should be available every day, around the clock. With the wide use of e-mail by both students and faculty, asking questions and sending messages at any hour is easy to do and often seems to imply an expectation for rapid response (Young, 2005). These changes in faculty workload are evident in the frequent stories published by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about faculty members who are grappling with the pressures of work and family responsibilities, or who report that the work involved in gaining or awarding tenure in their departments continues to escalate, or who express doubt about whether the long hours of work are sufficiently balanced by intrinsic rewards to make an academic career desirable.

Many new faculty members, and graduate students aspiring to be faculty members, are expressing concern about what they perceive to be increasing expectations for higher levels of productivity. They often report feeling pulled in many directions simultaneously and wonder whether they can find workable ways to manage their personal and professional responsibilities. Finding enough time to do their work was one of the most frequently mentioned sources of stress among early-career faculty in a range of institutional types (Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin, 2000). Some graduate students and new faculty, as they observe the stress and long hours that characterize the work lives of their senior colleagues, express uncertainty about wanting to continue pursuing their academic careers. One faculty member echoed the comments of many other respondents: “The main issue on everyone’s mind is maintaining equilibrium” (Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin, 2000, p. 17).

Finally, public calls for accountability and state oversight have led to numerous reporting requirements that involve faculty as well as administrators. Faculty members must account for how they spend their time and must justify their teaching, research, and community engagements with documented evidence of outcomes.



They must prepare annual public reports enumerating the products of their work, often for distribution to a public audience. They must be able to document students' achievement and learning outcomes or explain their research in language that is accessible and interesting to the general public. Such accountability requirements take valuable faculty time.

As colleges and universities seek to recruit and retain excellent and diverse faculty members, provisions for flexibility in how faculty construct academic career paths and organize their personal and professional commitments are likely to be key ingredients of an attractive workplace. In the face of demanding workloads, faculty members—men and women alike—can work most effectively when they have the flexibility to organize their work in ways that enable them also to manage the responsibilities of their personal lives.

#### POTENTIAL LOSS OF THE SENSE OF AN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Taken together, the array of factors affecting higher education institutions—fiscal constraints, calls for greater accountability, the increasing prevalence of new technologies to facilitate teaching and research, and a diverse student body and faculty—seem, to many, to be changing the nature of the academic community. More specifically, the ratcheting of the workload experienced by many faculty members diminishes time available for casual and serendipitous collegial interaction. The commitment of many faculty members, both male and female, to handle significant personal as well as professional responsibilities means that time is at a premium for virtually everyone. The unbundling of aspects of faculty work separates faculty into specific groups by function so that fewer people see the whole picture in regard to the institution's overall mission. Some faculty members are segregated from others by institutions' failure to fully welcome and integrate non-tenure-track faculty into the intellectual life of their departments or their academic institutions. Today's faculty members' diverse backgrounds can also make the formation of strong relationships more challenging. A vibrant sense of academic community requires opportunities and occasions for faculty members to interact—and time to do so. All these trends undermine those necessary conditions.

Early-career faculty, like doctoral students planning to pursue academic careers (Austin, 2002), are especially concerned about the nature of the academic community. When early-career faculty discuss what they value and look forward to experiencing in their careers, they often mention the hope of participating in a “culture of collegiality” (Austin, 2003; Boice, 1992; Finkelstein, 1984; Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin, 2000; Sorcinelli, 1988; Tierney and Ben-simon, 1996; Whitt, 1991). Yet early-career faculty, as they begin to experience their careers, often express surprise and disappointment that their experiences do not match their hopes and expectations (Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin, 2000).

A strong academic community that values and includes all faculty members contributes to the intellectual vibrancy of a college or university, supports the bonds of commitment that link faculty members to the institution, and creates a climate that enhances students’ learning. When institutional leaders recognize the value of nurturing a community that includes all faculty members, regardless of their appointments, they enhance institutional health and success.

## THE NEED FOR CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In order to work creatively and effectively in a rapidly changing context, faculty must engage in continuous learning so as to constantly expand their repertoires of talents and skills. Support for faculty to engage in professional development directly strengthens the quality of their teaching, research, and outreach.

### *Understanding Students*

A faculty member must understand the characteristics of diverse learners and have command of a repertoire of teaching skills in order to address different learning needs. A major challenge facing higher education is how to teach a greater number of people, who are diverse in their needs and goals, in a more efficient and less costly way. Faculty members must be able not only to meet the needs of many different students but to do so in ways that are efficient—for example, knowing a variety of strategies for teaching large classes effectively or interacting with students via the Internet.

### *Using Technology*

New technologies present exciting opportunities for responding to students' needs, enhancing learning environments, and enriching research activities. But new technologies also require faculty to learn to think and work in new ways and to stay current with new technological developments. The World Wide Web has transformed the ways in which people interact with information, requiring adeptness at navigating myriad paths to pursue information, at developing judgments about the relative value of information, and at formulating syntheses of meaning even while knowledge changes and expands (Brown, 2002). Online teaching also involves skills additional to and different from those used in face-to-face teaching. In distance learning, for example, faculty members may teach groups of students whom they never meet in person. Through the use of computers, they have the option to incorporate real-time conversations with experts on relevant topics into their class sessions. Many faculty find it useful to know how to use instructional platforms such as Blackboard or WebCT to facilitate student-faculty interaction, ensure that students have ready access to learning materials, and monitor students' progress.

### *Engaging in Entrepreneurial Activity*

Many universities and colleges are urging their faculty to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities—for example, expanded extension services, continuing education, patents, new programs and certificates, or new options for distance learning—that attract new revenues and constituents. But raising funds and engaging the public in new ways are activities that require skills and knowledge that not all faculty members possess. Faculty need to learn how to write successful grant proposals to obtain support for new programs, how to interact with funding agencies, and how to present their ideas in ways that convince a public outside higher education.

### *Increased Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity*

The rapid expansion of knowledge is resulting in greater knowledge specialization and, simultaneously, in an increase in interdisciplinary work. New units are appearing on many campuses to facilitate cross-disciplinary work addressing complex problems.

Such cross-disciplinary work often involves new collaborations among scholars as well as new theoretical developments and research strategies.

Although the expansion of knowledge has created greater specialization and more fragmentation of knowledge (Rice, 2004), it also, somewhat paradoxically, requires faculty members to join interdisciplinary conversations, teams, or units, to learn to think in new ways, to make new connections, and to develop new skills.

Faculty members accustomed to individual autonomy and disciplinary specialization find that they must engage in decision making with others who often, at least metaphorically, speak a different language. Such collaborations raise many questions for faculty members. For example, what are the rules of ownership of intellectual work? How does decision making occur when a number of people are involved? These questions require faculty members to sort through the values and practices that most appropriately guide academic work under new collaborative conditions.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This chapter has highlighted four major external factors that create opportunities and challenges for higher education institutions: fiscal constraints and increased competition, calls for accountability, the increasing diversity of students, and the rise of the Information Age along with its new technologies. These external factors challenge today's faculty members and the traditions of academic work and life. They have led to

- Proliferation of faculty appointments off the tenure track
- Shifts in faculty members' control over and autonomy in their work
- Continuously expanding workloads
- Increasing fragmentation of faculty work, which undermines a sense of academic community
- Continuous need for faculty to engage in professional growth

Because faculty represent the institution's greatest asset, institutional leaders must pay attention to faculty work and to the quality of academic workplaces, placing these concerns among the

highest institutional priorities. As we pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the intellectual capital and commitment that faculty bring to their colleges and universities are essential to the excellence and health of their institutions. Finding ways to maximize the intellectual capital represented by the faculty—in other words, investing in the faculty—enhances the health and success of a college or university. To thrive, colleges and universities must face this strategic imperative and realign their institutional support of faculty members in ways that more fully address today's institutional missions as well as faculty members' goals and priorities.