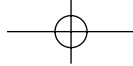


1

The Collegial Culture

The collegial culture: A culture that finds meaning primarily in the disciplines represented by the faculty in the institution; that values faculty research and scholarship and the quasi-political governance processes of the faculty; that holds assumptions about the dominance of rationality in the institution; and that conceives of the institution's enterprise as the generation, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge and as the development of specific values and qualities of character among young men and women who are future leaders of our society.

Since American and Canadian higher education were first inaugurated in the colonial college, faculty members have worked predominantly in a collegial culture. Today, the collegial culture continues to hold sway over the norms and values of most North American colleges and universities. This culture encourages diverse perspectives and a relative autonomy in one's work. Relationships are informal, nonhierarchical, and long-term. Men and women who are successful in this culture usually are actively involved in or support from the outside the faculty governance processes of their institutions. Alternatively, they hold positions of high prestige based on scholarly activities, research, or longevity on the faculty. Leadership emerges from committee and deliberative group activities or from autonomous academic



activities. While most employees in North American colleges and universities who are fully aligned with the collegial culture tend to come from the faculty, many members of the administrative and support staff often embrace and even help to sustain this culture.

Leadership that is based on scholarship and research became dominant with the emergence of the German-style research university in the United States in the mid-1800s and the Scottish university in Canada (modeled after Edinburgh) in the late 1800s. Leadership that emphasizes collaboration and quasi-political activities is directly influenced by the original colonial liberal arts college, which in turn is designed after the British universities at Oxford and Cambridge (often referenced by the contracted phrase *Oxbridge*). In Canada Edinburgh once again serves as the primary model for the liberal arts. The collegial culture in Canadian and American colleges and universities is thus based on the English, Scottish, and German models of higher education. Interdependence and collaboration are more actively supported by the British model, whereas faculty autonomy is more prevalent among institutions resembling the German and Scottish universities.

The British and Scottish Collegiate Models in Colonial North America

It is not surprising that colonial Americans and Canadians looked to Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh when designing and establishing their first colleges. As Frederick Rudolph (1962) noted in his excellent history of American higher education, the original British university contained many elements that served as guidelines for the formation of Protestant (often rural) colleges in North America.

The British Model in Colonial America

Many characteristics of the collegial culture in Britain transferred to virtually all colleges and universities in both the United States and Canada. Several characteristics, however, were unique to

the United States, whereas others were unique to Canadian colleges and universities. Parochialism, a focus on quality, and an emphasis on the liberal arts were much more prominent in early American higher education institutions than in their Canadian counterparts.

Controlling Environment. One of the most prominent characteristics of both the British university and early American colleges and universities was total control over the environment in which the young students lived and learned. Cohen (1998, p. 66) has suggested that “the concept of *in loco parentis* does not accurately describe the disciplinary measures the colleges attempted to install because most of them were considerably more stringent than parents would have prescribed.” Residential living at the university was a given in both England and the colonial United States: “It is what every American college has had or consciously rejected or lost or sought to recapture Adherents of the collegiate way . . . pointed with satisfaction to the extracurriculum, to the whole range of social life and development, to the benefits of religious influence and orientation” (Rudolph, 1962, p. 89). Faculty members in America were expected to engage with their students in all aspects of life at the university, because a complete liberal arts education incorporated heart and muscle as well as mind. According to Rudolph (1962, pp. 136–137), the American colonial college “became an arena in which undergraduates erected monuments not to the soul of man but to man as a social and physical being.”

Focus on Quality. In the United States a second characteristic—one that continues to be influential—was the English university’s emphasis on complexity of thought and the educational process. Faculty and students were judged on their manner of thought and discourse rather than on the basis of any specific body of knowledge. Quality counted more than quantity.

The faculty was suspicious of any curriculum that was too practical, concrete, or contemporary.

Attention was directed, in particular, to the cultivation of quality in the students attending the American institution. In his study of the impact of the Oxbridge model on American colleges and universities, Alex Duke (1996, p. 46) notes that the Oxford or Cambridge man of the eighteenth century “displayed social and intellectual skills far beyond those of the typical American undergraduate [T]he exemplary Oxonian or Cantabridgian was at ease in social gatherings, well read, well spoken, and dedicated to assuming a position of leadership in his nation’s service.”

Emphasis on the Liberal Arts. It was assumed that the young men attending Oxford or Cambridge were already in a social position to obtain work after graduation. (And indeed, in those days, it was young men; very few women attended college.) Similarly, in the American colonial college, emphasis was placed on liberal education. The proponents of a liberal arts education who wanted to educate the whole individual agreed with Woodrow Wilson, then serving as president of a prestigious liberal arts institution, Princeton University, that “the college ought to cultivate the students’ intellectual and spiritual life. ‘What we should seek to impart in our colleges,’ Wilson maintained, ‘is not so much learning, but the spirit of learning.’ In this vein, they saw the totality of college life, not just the classroom, as an instrument of personal development” (Duke, 1996, p. 40).

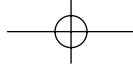
Although liberal arts colleges currently account for less than 5 percent of all baccalaureate degrees awarded in the United States, the foundations of higher education in the United States were laid down in the colonial liberal arts colleges. One can even declare, as have Koblik and Graubard (2000), that the liberal arts college has become uniquely American, for the British institutions soon grew much too large and embraced much too

diverse a set of educational purposes to be defined anymore as a pure liberal arts college. Thus, although the American colonial college initially emulated the British liberal arts tradition, it soon stood alone in promulgating this tradition—and was soon to lose out (as in England) to the pressures of scientific research and technologies, the emergence of the course elective system, the demise of residential life on many campuses, and eventually, the democratizing emphasis on career preparation (Duke, 1996).

The Scottish Model in Canada

In Canada the collegial culture has its roots in the Anglican-dominated colleges and universities of eastern Canada. Generally speaking, the early colleges in Canada were religious and the universities were secular. There was a strong influence from the Scottish university model—and specifically the University of Edinburgh—in Canada, since the influential leaders were Scottish. Although a few American universities were also influenced by life at the University of Edinburgh (William and Mary) or the University of Aberdeen (College of Philadelphia) (Cohen, 1998), the English schools held sway during the early years of the American colonial college.

The Anglican church dictated the design of colonial institutions in British Canada, as well as their curricula. The Family Compact left the Anglican clergy in control of much of the early decision making in colonial Canada. They were in a minority even among the Protestants, but they were able to infuse an Anglican bias in Canadian colleges and universities. Different characteristics were borrowed by the colonial Canadians from the British universities—primarily because Canadians tended to emulate the University of Edinburgh rather than either Oxford or Cambridge. More like the German research universities, Canadian institutions relied on a curriculum that focused on the pure and applied sciences. Like the University of Edinburgh, Canadian universities and colleges focused on memorization and



development of facts, and relied on lectures as the chief means of instruction. Furthermore, like the University of Edinburgh, Canadian universities tended to be less elitist, and from their founding, more democratic than either the Oxbridge or colonial American institutions.

Leadership in the Colonial College

Various properties of the English and Scottish academic culture were appropriated intact by leaders of the first colonial colleges in both America and Canada. Several characteristics of these colleges, however, were unique and not specifically borrowed from their distinguished sister institutions in Great Britain. The first colonial colleges—notably, Harvard and Yale—were led by strong presidents who dominated their institutions and considered faculty members to be hired underlings. Typically, the president of a colonial college himself taught the final course in the students' senior year to ensure that students left with the correct philosophy of life and appropriate ethical standards.

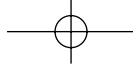
Jencks and Riesman (1968, p. 6) noted that college presidents in early American institutions were “far more domineering than they are today, carrying the business of the college around in their briefcases or even in their heads, entrusting very little to committees of faculty members or lower-level bureaucrats, and imposing their personal stamp on the entire college The vision of a college professor as an independent expert with a mission transcending the college where he happened to teach was almost unknown.” Thus, in the early history of American and Canadian higher education, a precedent was set for strong administrative leadership and weak faculty influence. Rudolph (1962) even suggests that faculty in these institutions were extensively exploited by presidents and the boards of trustees that these presidents effectively controlled.

This precedent of having controlling presidents was soon overturned as the colonial institutions were secularized in both

Canada and the United States. The faculty in these institutions matured, became more firmly established, and began to influence the curriculum that they were asked to teach and monitor. Nevertheless, the role of a strong administrator, who rules by moral force and even fiat, continues to influence the professional lives of many leaders in contemporary postsecondary institutions. There is still room in many colleges and universities for a strong president—especially in those institutions that preserve a religious heritage, such as was found in the colonial colleges. This kind of strong collegiate leader gains authority because of his or her quality of thought and character. To use Max Weber's (1947) term, the effective colonial leader held *charismatic* power, rather than attaining authority from the presence of specific administrative expertise. Just as colonial college presidents taught the final course, so, according to the dictates of the colonial culture, ideal college presidents led their institutions by educating fellow administrators and faculty members and serving as an example to them. There is still the presence of (or at least the yearning for) charismatic leadership in many twenty-first-century colleges and universities.

The Colonial College's Relationship to Other Educational Institutions

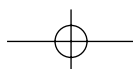
Another distinctive characteristic of the colonial college in the United States (and a difference between it and Canadian colleges and universities) was its isolation from primary and secondary schools. When the American colonial college was being established, the only existing educational programs were offered to young men (and a few young women) who needed a rudimentary introduction to reading and writing in order to conduct commerce and read the Bible. Colonial colleges were established for older students, in part to provide teachers for those young students. These "college preparatory schools" filled the gap by expanding on the rudimentary elementary

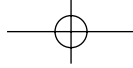


programs the young people had attended. They were, therefore, the precursors to today's high schools and junior high schools. Thus, an important characteristic of the American colonial college was its autonomy from lower levels of education. In general, administrators and faculty members in those colleges had not previously been employed in either elementary or secondary schools. Rather, they were specifically educated and prepared from the beginning (at first through the undergraduate colleges and later through graduate programs) to assume positions in colleges or universities. In Canada there was a stronger link with the secondary schools—representing the egalitarian spirit inherited from Edinburgh.

The Influence of the German Research Model

Clearly, certain aspects of the North American colonial college influenced the collegial culture of contemporary colleges and universities. Other powerful forces, however, had an even greater impact on these institutions, and in particular, their collegial culture. In the mid-nineteenth century, just at the time when the North American public, through its federal and state representatives, was expressing an increased commitment to higher education and giving newly formed universities a big boost (Cohen, 1998)—through the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1862 in the United States—the leaders of many North American institutions were becoming enthralled with the achievements of German research universities. Brubacher and Rudy (1958, p. 171) noted that “the impact of German university scholarship upon nineteenth-century American higher education is one of the most significant themes in modern intellectual history. Just as the American college has derived its structure from an English prototype, so the American graduate school [and university] has taken its pattern from the Philosophical Faculty of the German university.” Although there was some interest in the French university model, many North Americans were apparently turned off by





French liberalism and were enamored with the promise of major scientific and technological advances through the formation of powerful new universities (Cohen, 1998).

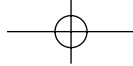
Unfettered Scientific Research and Faculty Dominance

The essential concept behind the German university system was that an institution of true higher learning should be, above all, the workshop of free scientific research. This university, unlike the American and Canadian colonial college, was dominated not by a willful president but by a willful and autonomous faculty. In their pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake, German faculty members were given great freedom in their selection of course offerings and their choice of scholarly projects. The German university, similar to the Scottish institutions, emphasized not only the liberal arts but also the sciences. Paradoxically, the German university—and later the American and Canadian research university—was both more theoretical and more practical in orientation than either the British university or the American colonial college.

The strange mixture of theory and application became even more pronounced in the American and Canadian university. The reputations of major midwestern research universities, such as the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Minnesota, and the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta in Canada, were built on a solid record of technical achievement as well as scholarly excellence (Brubacher & Rudy, 1958).

Faculty and Discipline Focus

Another important characteristic of the German research university was its emphasis on the discipline and work of faculty members rather than the education of young people. Whereas

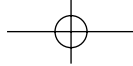


British universities and American colonial colleges were expressly devoted to educating their young students, the German research professors often found undergraduate education to be a nuisance. Leaders of the German research universities typically directed their most valuable educational resources to produce more researchers and scholars in order to expand their own influence and that of their particular fields of study.

In some ways, however, the German university resembled the British, Scottish, and American colonial institutions. Usually, only an established scholar or researcher was allowed to preside over these academic institutions. The German university also remained independent of elementary and secondary educational institutions. General education was considered the prerogative and responsibility of these lower-level institutions. In the United States, many nineteenth-century leaders of major research universities actually argued for the adoption of a six-year secondary school plan, such as was found in Germany. Such a plan would eliminate the first two years of undergraduate education at the university. This scheme led to the creation of two-year junior and community colleges (to which we turn in describing the managerial culture).

The Decline and Fall of the British Collegiate Model

Although the British and American colonial college models remained dominant in the small American and (to a lesser extent) Canadian liberal arts colleges through the mid-twentieth century, the German research university model reigned at most large, tax-supported universities and even at the larger, more prestigious private universities. The prevalent notion of quality among American and Canadian college and university leaders was built during the colonial era on the image of Harvard, Yale, Stanford, McGill, and other prestigious universities. These universities, however, converted from the British to the German



prototype by the beginning of the twentieth century, and the notion of quality shifted in alignment with this conversion.

Shifting Role of Higher Education Institutions

The shift in the notion of quality occurred not only because the prestigious universities were changing their own orientation but also because the old elitist model of quality proved irrelevant in the design and creation of new colleges and universities that were serving an increasingly diverse population of young men and women:

Once fully integrated into the American college—by the late nineteenth century—the blend of British, Scottish, French, and German influences combined with America’s own Jeffersonian democratic ideals to produce in the twentieth century a new conception of college education based upon meritocratic standards More emphasis was placed on the development of intellectual skills so that college graduates would be able to keep up with an expanding body of information and facts. Moral training and education for personal growth became less prominent in the college. [Gaff, Ratcliff, & Associates, 1997, p. 56]

Whereas the more practical, career-oriented approach to college education was becoming more prevalent and putting the traditional British college out of business, the ultimate demise of not only the elitist liberal arts college model but also the British criteria of educational institutional quality can be blamed on the German research university. Jencks and Riesman (1968) note that the university college model, which emulates the German research university and defines its primary purpose as the preparation of students for graduate work, dominates North American higher education, even in the small state-supported and private colleges and universities where such a model is inappropriate.

Much of the growth in American higher education occurred during or immediately after the satellite *Sputnik* was launched—the 1950s—partially in response to the need for trained scientists and partially in response to the baby boom. As a result, a large proportion of the faculty members who now teach in American and Canadian colleges and universities received graduate training at a time when the German research university model was particularly prominent. Consequently, many of the tacit assumptions about the role of faculty in a postsecondary institution and about the proper place of an academic's discipline, scholarship, and research are based on the German model (Parsons & Platt, 1973).

Although the leaders of many smaller colleges and universities imitate the British university model because they are unable, financially or intellectually, to create a first-rate research university, they are inclined to view their own institutions as second-class. In his study of eight postsecondary institutions varying widely in size, programmatic emphasis, and structure, Warren Bryan Martin (1969) offered convincing evidence almost forty years ago on the extent to which the research university prototype—and more broadly, the collegial culture—dominates the consciousness of American faculty and academic administrators. Martin found that these academicians shared attitudes about “educational assumptions, values and goals; the criteria for institutional excellence; and the prospects for professional or institutional change” (p. 206).

The Elitist Backlash: Closing of the North American Mind

Although we must declare the British model of elitist education to be in profound decline, we cannot yet announce its death, for periodically there are groundswells of support for a traditional, highly selective liberal arts–based approach to undergraduate and graduate education. This elitist backlash is noteworthy in the popular writings of former U.S. Secretary of Education

Edward Bennett, in Allan Bloom's best seller *The Closing of the American Mind* (1988), and in the movement away from special focus programs (most often programs begun during the 1960s—such as women's or African American studies) to programs that emphasize the often Western culture-oriented "fundamentals."

In his sharp critique of contemporary American education, Bloom (1988) encouraged college and university leaders to reconsider their core requirements, the proliferation of electives, and an emphasis on career preparation. Although educators rarely harken back to the colonial roots of American higher education, they do reinvoké many of the values and aspirations of the colonial college and dress these values and aspirations in contemporary clothes (Garcia & Ratcliff, 1997). Although Bloom's work has been declared racist and elitist, it has opened a valuable dialogue about the values of traditional liberal arts education.

Living and Working in the Collegial Culture Today

What about life in the twenty-first-century college and university? Are there any sustained patterns in academic institutions that may be explained through understanding of the collegial culture? What about those institutions that are shifting way from this culture?

In most academic institutions, although its strength is diminishing, the collegial culture is still very powerful and has a strong influence on the ways in which faculty members interact, as well as on what they value and reward. We will explore several dimensions of the contemporary collegial culture to see how old patterns persist.

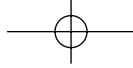
Disciplinary Orientation

Initially, the colonial college and university were institutions that welcomed teachers and students who wanted to explore many fields. However, the collegial culture soon began to place great

value on faculty work directed toward disciplinary scholarship and research and the inculcation of a disciplinary orientation in students. This led to what Arthur Cohen (1998) called the *centrifugal curriculum*—with the compelling movement away from a coherent, universal core curriculum to a curriculum dominated by disciplinary requirements and electives. John Millett, president of Miami University, once spoke of the dominance of disciplinary specializations: “It is often said that faculty members have a major loyalty to their discipline or professional field of knowledge rather than to the college or university in which they practice their profession” (1962, pp. 70–71). His observations may still hold true today in many colleges and universities that are strongly influenced by the collegial culture. It is not just a matter of loyalty to a specific discipline but also a matter of diverse perspectives. Or to borrow from Cohen, it is a matter of “centrifugal” (divergent) professional identities among faculty members in different disciplines.

The study of intellectual revolutions by Thomas Kuhn (1970) suggests that disciplinary paradigms create a powerful identity among practitioners in a specific field of study. Rice (1986) similarly writes about this powerful identity (which he labels the “assumptive world of the academic professional”) and describes ways in which faculty members are socialized in their discipline. The power of the discipline seems to be further reinforced and amplified by the housing of the discipline in a specific organizational structure—that is, the academic department. As Gumpert and Snyderman (2002) suggest, the academic structure of an institution plays a big role in shaping the boundaries and character of knowledge for those who work in the institution.

Although there is an overall pull toward disciplinary identification in most colleges and universities that are strongly influenced by the collegial culture, there are important differences in the strength of this identification among the various academic disciplines that affect all aspects of a faculty member’s



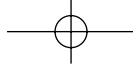
professional life, both inside and outside the classroom (Donald, 1997). Colbeck concluded:

[T]he degree of paradigm consensus influences social relations among faculty and expectations for faculty behavior within a discipline Hard disciplines [physical sciences] are characterized by widespread agreement about curriculum content, research collaboration, competition for recognition and funding, clearly defined intellectual boundaries, and gate keeping of those boundaries by a powerful elite In contrast, low paradigm consensus or “soft” disciplines [humanities] consider knowledge as recursive; scholars use new lenses to explore intellectual territory already mapped by others Soft disciplines are characterized by idiosyncratic curricula, weak boundaries, independent research efforts, and tolerance for unusual ideas or methods. [1998, p. 651]

Colbeck comes to a particularly important conclusion: opportunity for integration of teaching and research is much greater among faculty in the soft disciplines than among faculty in the hard disciplines. “The knowledge and social structures of hard disciplines,” according to Colbeck (1998, p. 651), “appear to define faculty work behavior more rigorously than the knowledge and social structures of soft disciplines. Faculty in hard disciplines, therefore, may have fewer opportunities to integrate teaching and research than faculty in soft disciplines.”

Research and Scholarship Orientation

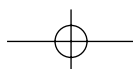
The search for a way to integrate teaching and research has long been postponed because of the collegial culture’s long-standing emphasis on research and scholarship, usually at the expense of teaching. Faculty members in many colleges and universities still find it very difficult to integrate their interest in research and scholarship with their teaching interests, and the latter

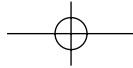


suffered when these faculty members were given the opportunity, through their various grants, to do more of the former. Why the long-standing emphasis on research? We believe that the dominance of research is due in large part to the emergence of the German research university as the prevalent model of prestigious higher education, and the reinforcement of this status by the collegial culture that continues to pervade most institutions of higher education.

This shift is not inevitable. Twenty-first-century faculty members can integrate their diverse interests in teaching, research, and scholarship. There has been renewed interest in integrating teaching and research. This renewed interest began with Ernest Boyer's (1990) proposal on the scholarship of teaching, and the growing interest among academics in using research methodologies to improve the quality of their teaching (Cross, 1990). This recent emphasis on scholarship and research associated with teaching flies in the face of the collegial culture's emphasis on research (particularly in the hard disciplines) and scholarship (particularly in the soft disciplines), and reinforces the interdisciplinary orientation of the developmental culture (to which we turn in Chapter Three). Although the bow to teaching is certainly in keeping with the British tradition and the soft disciplines, it requires a shift in attention away from one's home discipline, unless one's discipline is education or the behavioral sciences. This is unacceptable, because all elements of the collegial culture veer toward a disciplinary orientation. Ultimately, research and scholarship are placed at a higher point in the hierarchy than either teaching or community service, which are the other two elements in the traditional collegiate trinity.

When viewed from the perspective of the British and German models of higher education, the strong emphasis on disciplinary loyalty in the collegial culture seems to have produced a division in the lingering influence of these two models based on the faculty member's discipline (Kreber & Cranton, 2000). Faculty members



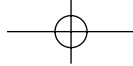


in the hard disciplines seem to adhere to the German research model, with a relative deemphasis on teaching and upholding strong paradigmatic strictures and structures. Conversely, faculty in the humanities seem to be the keepers of the British flame, emphasizing teaching as it intermingles with their own interests in research and scholarship, and leading in recent years to the new, so-called scholarship of teaching and greater attention to classroom research.

Faculty Autonomy

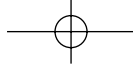
No matter whether they emphasize research, scholarship, or teaching, all members of the collegial culture value autonomy. They value it so much that, unlike most other professional groups, faculty members have never appealed to their local, state, or federal government for regulation or for assistance in monitoring admission to the field. There are no medical exams, bar exams, or licensing requirements for faculty members (Cohen, 1998). This kind of autonomy parallels the more general and unique autonomy of American colleges and universities in our society (Ben-David, 1972). When academics in the collegial culture are reviewed for promotion and tenure, their accountability rarely extends to direct observation of faculty performance in the classroom or to assignment of priorities to specific research or scholarship activities. Many faculty members in the collegial culture would take great offense at being asked, let alone required, to accept an observing colleague in their classrooms. Ironically, even though classroom teaching is certainly a public event, it is considered an intimate exchange between faculty member and student. This exchange might be profoundly disrupted if observed and judged by another faculty member.

The value of autonomy is particularly manifest in and reinforced by the doctrine of *academic freedom*. This is one of the dominant norms of the collegial culture. It originates, according to Millett (1962, p. 56), in the distinctive role of American



colleges and universities as vehicles for social change in our society: “The whole concern in the United States and in the Western world with academic freedom is an effort to acknowledge the unique relationship between higher education and society. Higher education is dangerous.” Statements like this are reinforced throughout the collegial culture by its emphasis on “pure scholarship” and reason. Faculty members are given the freedom to choose the area in which they will conduct research as long as it lies within their disciplinary domain. If colleges and universities are truly sources of change for contemporary society, then academic freedom becomes essential to safeguard the society as well as the academy. Unfortunately, this freedom and the underlying assumption about the academy as an agency of social change and a moral force in society are upheld at a price. They tend to isolate the academy and its faculty members from mainstream life in North America. Both perpetuate a destructive isolation of the academic from the nonacademic world.

Academic freedom translates on a daily basis into an emphasis on independent work and the right to be different in dress, manner, and even professional interests. Millett (1962, p. 62) identified the strength of this individualism in the collegial culture and related it directly to the basic mission of the post-secondary institution: “The goal of the academic community is to provide an environment of learning, not a product of learning. Knowledge is acquired by individuals.” Millet further suggested: “The goal of education is realized in individuals. It is conceivable that the learning process could be carried on with just one scholar and one student” (1962, pp. 68–69). For many faculty members, one of the most attractive features of the collegial culture is this tolerance for and even encouragement of autonomous activity. Whereas the other academic cultures, and most of the other dominant cultures in our society, reinforce collaboration and corporate activity, the collegial culture nurtures the “lone wolf,” the “eccentric,” and the socially oblivious “absent-minded professor.” In his humorous but thoughtful book

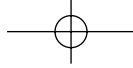


titled *The Academic Tribes*, Hazard Adams (1976, p. 13) notes that in higher education, “eccentricity is not merely tolerated, it is positively admired.”

Prestige and Dominance of Large Research Universities

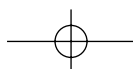
An even deeper and (some would say) pernicious aspect of the collegial culture is its alignment with values and perspectives that are decidedly male-oriented. Eisler (1987) describes two worlds, one of them forged on the masculine anvil of competition and hierarchy, the other forged on the feminine anvil of collaboration and egalitarianism. She uses the metaphor of the blade (quest for dominance) and the chalice (search for a holding and supportive environment) to distinguish these two worlds—while suggesting that neither is occupied solely by one gender (see, for example, Gilligan, 1982, and Belenky et al., 1986, in their studies of feminine and masculine epistemology).

Quite clearly, the traditional collegial culture is a world of the blade, with a strong emphasis on often subtle but nevertheless quite powerful competition and striving for prestige and dominance. During the twentieth century this competitive commitment occupied the primary attention of many traditionally male faculty members who could rely on a wife (and other family members) to fulfill most domestic obligations (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007). Apparently, this division of labor has not completely died with the liberation of gender-based roles: “The traditional academic career leading toward tenure continues to be one that is based on a male model and on men’s normative career path [which requires that the faculty member] is free from competing family responsibilities because those are handled by someone else” (Gappa et al., 2007, pp. 75–76). Because this career path is still normative—especially for faculty on tenure track—the female faculty member often faces the prospect of abandoning hopes for marriage and children.



The blade (and not the chalice) prevails at the institutional level as well as at the individual faculty member level. It is not just a matter that some faculty members succeed by devoting their lives to the pursuit of tenure and disciplinary status, it is also the case that entire institutions compete with one another and can be placed on a hierarchy from high levels of prestige to low levels—and the general public is very aware of this hierarchy. The large research university is placed at the top of the collegial culture's pyramid, and the liberal arts college, along with other types of colleges, including community colleges and vocational colleges, are placed at much lower points on the pyramid. There is something inevitably attractive about university status for any postsecondary institution that is saturated by the collegial culture.

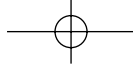
Research Is King. The prestige and dominance of the research university comes not just from the triumph of the German model of higher education over the British liberal arts education model but also from other factors that are directly aligned with the values of the collegial culture and the aspirations of those members of the academy who dwell in this culture. First, it is important to note that there is no national university in either the United States or Canada. Although there have been numerous proposals over the years for a “federal” university in both countries, this has never occurred. Instead, there are a few highly visible private and state-supported public institutions that serve a national and even international purpose. To claim this greatly expanded leadership role in American and Canadian higher education, these institutions must do something better than any other institutions do—and this something is basic research. Quite clearly, major universities are more successful in sponsoring research and scholarship than most liberal arts or community colleges. Since research is at the top of the list in the collegial culture, it stands to reason that those universities which are held in high regard by the general public should also be those that are saturated by the collegial culture.



Powerful Academic Disciplines. Not only is research king in the highly prestigious universities, but academic disciplines are the powerful fiefdoms in which this research reigns supreme. The disciplinary orientation of the collegial culture is likely to be nourished more in the traditional university than in the traditional liberal arts college—and much more than in the two-year community college or vocational college. This is a second reason why universities hold the top position in the collegial pyramid. It is much more likely that each discipline will have its own department in a large university than in a smaller (and often financially strapped) liberal arts or community college.

Autonomy. The third reason why research universities tend to hold a higher position than liberal arts and community colleges in the collegial culture involves the norm of autonomy. Faculty members are more likely to be left alone to do their work in a large university than in a college. Even in a large community college or liberal arts college, faculty members usually have heavy committee assignments and live in a much more “intimate” and engaging setting than faculty members who work in more disengaged, or even alienating, universities.

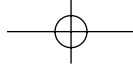
Collegially Oriented Leadership. A fourth reason for the prestige of the large research universities is the collegially oriented leadership found there. Frankly, the high-level “administrators” in most universities are not required to do much administration. Those who actually run the university are often substantial in number and highly competent, since they are often well-paid and have considerable job security in these well-heeled institutions. Conversely, the administrators of liberal arts colleges often have to serve as real-life administrators, monitoring expenditures, managing staff, and overseeing the implementation of institutional policies and procedures. The administrative staff in these often financially strapped colleges is usually small in number, overworked, and insecure about the college’s future. The emphasis



on administrative tasks is even more the case in community colleges—where the managerial culture is more prominent and academic administrators are more oriented toward this type of work.

Ability to Carry Out Research. The fifth reason for the prestige of the research university aligns directly with the collegial culture's deemphasis on teaching—especially undergraduate teaching. The university is much more likely than either the liberal arts college or the community or vocational college to have substantial external revenues that are not directly tied to the teaching and learning enterprise. Universities are likely to have large endowments, receive research grants and funds to conduct scholarly activities, and support various profit-making ventures, such as “big-time” college athletics and many forms of continuing education. Independent liberal arts colleges are usually dependent on tuition. Even public universities are much less tied to governmental appropriations, which are usually aligned with teaching, learning, and career preparation, than are either public community colleges or private (or public) liberal arts colleges. The government funds that private colleges receive—in the form of government-sponsored student loans—are tied directly to student satisfaction with their education.

Bigger Is Better. The remaining three reasons for the prestige of the big research universities concern the relationship between the postsecondary institution and society. These reasons involve not only the collegial culture's values and priorities but also the broader social context in which this culture operates—and ultimately the emphasis on dominance and prestige that characterize Eisler's masculine culture (“the blade”). Universities are usually bigger than the colleges against which they are compared—and that means that they are seen as better in a society where “big is always better.” The collegial and managerial cultures tend to agree in this one area, thereby adding even



more weight to the prestige factor. When we turn in Chapter Six to one of the two new cultures—the tangible culture—we will see yet another expression of this preference for large size. The tangible culture values the physical assets that usually accompany the large university: an expansive and beautifully landscaped campus, imposing buildings, and substantial library holdings.

Public Expectations of Postsecondary Institutions. The seventh reason for the university's pride of place concerns the multiple expectations held by the general public in both the United States and Canada about the purposes to be filled by postsecondary institutions. Universities are much better equipped to handle the many different demands of the society in which they are situated than are colleges. Furthermore, they can handle these demands without sacrificing the fundamental values of the collegial culture. Money from one source in a university can often be diverted to support other programs—those most valued by the collegial culture. Most universities have traditionally been able to use profits from their high-priced (but prestigious) career-oriented programs to support the humanities, and they can afford endowed chairs, special library and museum collections, and distinguished visiting professorships—all of which are greatly valued by members of the collegial culture—because they were generating substantial funds through many diverse sources. Very few liberal arts colleges or community colleges can afford these academic luxuries, nor have they been able to be “all things to all people.”

Ability to Broaden Scope. Finally, the university has been able to outperform and overshadow the liberal arts college and community college—at least from the perspective of the collegial culture—because it can readily broaden both its internal and external scope of operations. Universities can not only expand laterally, by adding more departments and special programs, and expand vertically, by adding higher-level degree programs, but

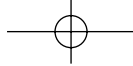


can also expand outward from their home bases. Universities are often positioned to offer a broader range of field placements, internships, and residencies than can most liberal arts and community colleges. This capacity for breadth places the university at a distinct advantage from the perspective of the collegial culture. It takes some pressure off faculty members who are oriented to research and scholarship rather than teaching. To put it bluntly, many collegially aligned faculty members would love it if their students could “learn from someone else for a while!” The broad outreach of the university also engenders more financial support, which, in turn, means that faculty members can expect greater administrative support, fewer student contact hours, and more funds for events that bring prestige to the university.

The Collegial Pyramid and the Megauniversity

Major public universities in both the United States and Canada that are funded by state or provincial dollars have taken the place of nationally funded institutions. The large tax-supported universities are accompanied by large private universities that were once affiliated with a religious denomination but are now funded by a mixture of private and public dollars. Such mega-universities as Harvard, Yale, the University of Michigan (and other Big Ten schools), the University of California and UCLA in the United States, and McGill, the University of Toronto, and the University of British Columbia in Canada began to serve regional, national and international needs by the middle of the twentieth century. These institutions, which probably number fewer than fifty in all, now serve as de facto national universities for both the United States and Canada.

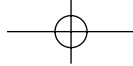
There is even greater breadth today in these megauniversities as they become international in scope, serving the research, scholarship, educational, and community service needs of people in many different countries and representing many different societies and cultures. It is not uncommon to read that a newly



inaugurated leader of a Third World country received his or her education at a North American university. Young men and women from many countries around the world—even those that are hostile to American interests—are sent to American or Canadian universities for a prestigious education. Research contracts and scholarly projects in North American universities are often global in perspective or are focused on regional issues from outside the North American continent, and in these cases, often funded by the outside sources.

All of this is directly aligned with the values of the collegial culture and the academic aspirations of those who are aligned with this culture. The international scope of the megauniversity adds to its prestige, while leaders of the university further diversify sources of funds and its faculty members are provided with an even broader range of opportunities for research and scholarship. The potential for international travel and study makes the university more attractive to prospective students. Although students choosing to attend a major university may have to sit through some dull lectures taught by graduate students in very large lecture halls, they anticipate a chance to study or work in an exotic location and interact with other students from many other countries. Whether or not this expectation will ever be realized, prospective students enroll in the university with a willingness to tolerate an environment that is dominated by the collegial culture—a culture that is led by faculty members who are unlikely to place any of them at the top of their list of priorities.

Thus, the collegial culture thrives, and the megauniversity becomes a world that is highly attractive to many people, and not just academicians. This academic sanctuary seems in many ways to be a throwback to another place and time. As Brent Ruben (2003, p. 27) suggests: “The ivory tower presents an image of the academy as a place that is different and disconnected, a sort of academic fantasyland where students prepare for their transition into the so-called real world. It’s an interesting image.”

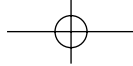


Institutional Influence and Change

How is influence exerted and how is change initiated in institutions with strong collegial cultures? Is the answer to be found in leadership? Faculty members who dwell primarily in a collegial culture generally assume that effective leadership is exerted through the complex give-and-take of campus politics. General education programs are created that serve to protect disciplinary turf. Negotiations take place inside and outside interminable and frequent curriculum committee meetings. Personnel reviews of faculty occur in multitiered, unpredictable committee meetings that incorporate both subtle horse trading and thoughtful discussion about the ultimate merit of the diverse activities and accomplishments in a faculty member's portfolio. The successful faculty leader at any institution dominated by the collegial culture will have learned how to live in and even enjoy these committee meetings and will have gained power by working skillfully inside this structure as well as working outside it by meeting individually with colleagues and making artful use of memoranda, agendas, action-oriented proposals, and multiple e-mails.

These political skills are not easily gained, and a faculty member's credibility is not readily built. As a result, most faculty members do not gain much power until they have served in a specific higher education community for many years. Until the late 1970s, the result was that each college and university had its own built-in hierarchy. Old, skillful, knowledgeable faculty members sat at the top of the pecking order and new, inexperienced faculty members sat at the bottom.

Several factors are now disrupting or soon will disrupt this hierarchy. First, with the decrease at most institutions in new positions and the severely reduced mobility of most academics, there are fewer young, inexperienced faculty members to take their place at the bottom of the pecking order. Second, this static situation may be short-lived, because as many senior faculty members begin to retire there will inevitably be an influx of new



faculty members (Bland & Bergquist, 1997). Third, even with the influx of new faculty members, it is not clear that they will have much power in their institution because many of them may be part-time and may not be appointed to tenure-track positions. We turn more fully to this issue in our discussion of the virtual culture in Chapter Five.

A faculty member who tacitly accepts the norms, values, and rules of precedence of the collegial culture will usually assume that institutional change takes place primarily through—and power resides in—the quasi-political, committee-based, faculty-controlled governance processes of a college or university (Millett, 1962). All faculty members expect that all members of their community will recognize the important role played by them and offer them dignity and consideration. Faculty members do not think of themselves as employees of a college or university. Because of the real or imagined power of faculty governance, collegial academics believe that the road to increased influence comes through assuming leadership—usually acting as chairpersons of major college or university-wide committees. On many campuses, a faculty senate presides over the affairs of the institution. On other campuses, one or more faculty members sit on the president's cabinet as the university's central decision makers.

Conclusions

Faculty members in a collegial culture face a formidable task: how to judge the effectiveness, let alone worth, of subtle and complex endeavors such as basic research, service to other people, and in particular, classroom teaching. It is very tempting for these faculty members to search everywhere for some clear indicators of achievement and quality—even if these indicators seem at times to be trivial or a bit off the mark. In keeping with the German research university tradition, many college and university



faculty members look primarily to non-teaching-related criteria, even if their institutions are primarily in the business of teaching and learning.

These faculty members tend to see themselves and their colleagues as effective if they have established a strong publication record in refereed journals, a large percentage of their undergraduate students decide to attend and are accepted into prestigious doctoral programs in their discipline, they have chaired major institution-wide committees or wielded informal influence in their deliberations, and their teaching is heavily oriented toward advanced undergraduate or graduate courses. Some faculty members and academic administrators (particularly those from the developmental culture) suggest that publications play a major role in faculty review procedures precisely because publication outputs are readily quantifiable and enable a faculty member's colleagues to avoid making qualitative judgments. It is this ambiguity about accountability in the collegial culture that has moved many administrators, and faculty too, both often under pressure from a demanding citizenry, toward a quite different culture—the managerial culture.

