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*The long-standing continuing education issues of mainstream and marginality are no longer germane. The mission of continuing education closely approximates the mission of a metropolitan university. Continuing education is, therefore, functionally poised to participate in the agenda of the university. The article shows how, by realigning its structural organization, continuing education will be well positioned to assume a primary role in helping the university fulfill its metropolitan mission.*

# Tradition and Transition

## *Emerging Continuing Education Leadership*

### Continuing Education Tradition

Unlike many disciplines and professions in higher education, continuing education has no rich and readily identifiable tradition upon which to build. The field of continuing education has attempted to serve so many masters with such disparate agendas that it now has great difficulty presenting a coherent and credible *raison d'être*.

Over the years, continuing educators have relied heavily upon their institutional distinctiveness to articulate their identity. The institution historically serves full-time students; the continuing education (CE) unit serves part-time students. The institution is predominantly a day operation; CE is open evenings and weekends. The institution serves traditional-age students; the CE unit serves the new majority—adults. The institution recruits students for the campus-based programs; the CE unit takes programs off campus and into the community. These and other overstated dichotomies have been used by continuing educators to lament their loneliness as well as to proclaim their unique position within the university. They have even driven the stakes that define their territory and ensure their marginality. They manage programs, and they develop new programs, but only within prescribed boundaries.

But such acceptance of structural fixity is an inhibitor to creative leadership. Dynamic and visionary leaders accept the notion that change and chaos are not just a temporary situation to be managed; rather, these conditions characterize the ongoing

nature of today's complex world. The continuing educator who breaks the mold of structural fixity—of ideas, knowledge, and role—is well positioned to emerge as a vital university leader.

## Continuing Education in Transition

The transitions that now affect CE units have roots in the programs that they once exclusively offered and now find elusive in terms of ownership. The outreach to business and industry, community organizations, and government is now shared by many providers within the university as the institution assumes an increasingly interactive role, forging new external relationships. More academic departments and forward-thinking faculty envision a linkage between their research and its application to economic and community development. This interest is supported by a growing institutional expectation that ties its faculty expertise directly to public service. Within many universities, centers and institutes have been established to respond to community and regional needs, applying research to identified regional problems and providing educational outreach activities to targeted segments of the community. At Towson State University, for example, the decade of the 1980s witnessed the development of the Center for Area Resource Development, the Center for Suburban Studies, the Writing Center, the Center on Aging, the Center for the Study and Prevention of Campus Violence, and the Center for Teaching and Research on Women. An Institute for Wellness is currently under study for possible implementation. The implications for CE units of such multiple providers of community and regional educational outreach are enormous as they lose their position as sole providers within their institutions.

Similarly, the dedication of continuing education units to providing education to nontraditional, adult learners, on campus and within the community, is diluted with multiple providers and institutional mainstreaming. Never before have so many adults flooded the campuses and their extension centers to enroll in college courses. At the same time, the number of eighteen- to twenty-two-year-old college students has declined. Universities have been scrambling to gain the competitive edge for programs to appeal to a diverse clientele, looking more closely at the adult cohort. The education of adults moved to the main agenda of a number of institutions. Decisions were made by campus leaders regarding how and where adults could best be served. In some cases, new degree programs were approved that were more relevant to the adult learner with greater experience. In other instances, adults were mainstreamed into the existing policies and programs of the institution.

The issue became a dilemma for many continuing educators. What they had discovered and for years nurtured was being pulled away from them. They wanted the best possible educational conditions for adult and part-time students, but they were not at all certain it would occur if adults were mixed in with the traditional-age students without appropriate changes in policy, procedure, and pedagogy. Mixed with this genuine concern for the welfare of adult students, there was also an underlying

element of self-serving. Continuing educators had served adults before it was popular or profitable. Now, in a number of universities, this population was being eased away from them, both academically and administratively. Their sense of feeling integral to the institution was short-lived; they were back in the margins again, while their product, adult education, was in the mainstream.

As a result of these changes, continuing educators may be in the midst of an identity crisis. Or they may be on the verge of discovery, moving toward a mature and abiding philosophy and practice.

## Continuing Education in the Metropolitan University

The challenge faced by continuing educators is particularly accentuated in the growing number of universities that realize a new institutional concept is needed to meet the challenge of a rapidly changing and knowledge-based society. This clarion call, to awareness and action, was emphasized by Ernest Lynton and Sandra Elman in their 1987 book *New Priorities for the University*. The emerging model of the metropolitan university is both sensitive and responsive to the changing needs of its region. As noted by Charles Hathaway, Paige Mulhollan, and Karen White in the first issue of this journal, the metropolitan university accepts an institution-wide obligation to extend its resources to the surrounding region, to provide leadership in addressing regional needs, to offer instruction to the full diversity of the regional population, and to work closely with regional schools, municipalities, businesses and industries, and other constituencies in both the public and private sectors.

What then should be the role of continuing education in such an institutional setting? Does it have a place in the metropolitan university at all? One could argue that just as adults previously served by CE units are gradually being supported by the core units of the institution, now the regional outreach work of the CE unit is being subsumed by the emerging mission of the metropolitan university. Perhaps a separate unit for continuing education is no longer vital; perhaps the whole institution has become a continuing education entity.

While some continuing educators may be frightened by the prospects of losing "ownership" of their craft, others will be quick to realize that the emerging mission of the metropolitan university represents a singular opportunity for a CE unit to realize its mission with more institutional support than ever before. Indeed, with the university and the CE unit sharing such similar agendas, both entities should be enhanced and strengthened.

The underlying philosophy of a metropolitan university demands that the commitment of the institution's resources to its new priorities be institution-wide. Fortunately, most universities already have in place a unit that is experienced at bringing together the relevant university resources to match an external educational need. The continuing education function is vital to the metropolitan university as it attempts to take its programs, services, and faculty to various constituents within the community. Continuing educators no longer need to run beside the pack. In a sense, they have paved the way for the metropolitan university's

successful foray into its larger mission. As a result, possibly for the first time in its history, the CE unit is poised to assume full partnership with its institution.

## Continuing Education's Organizational Structure

Although the continuing education organization has functioned in a way that is quite congruent with the mission of a metropolitan university, it typically is not structured to give full-time support to the initiatives of the interactive university. In order for a CE unit to be a major player in the metropolitan league, its leaders must first and foremost apply critical thinking to the problems associated with its changing identity. Its focus will have to change; its mission will most likely have to be expanded.

The future stage has partially been set for continuing education by Lynton and Elman, who point out that it makes eminent sense for the university to continue to "utilize the experience, the expertise and the enterprise" of continuing educators because a piece of the continuing education agenda has become the agenda of the university. Lynton and Elman compare the relationship of continuing education within the university with that of research. Research and scholarly activities are the responsibility of every faculty member. Their oversight is given to department chairs, deans, and academic vice presidents and provosts. Yet, most universities have a centralized research office with staff responsibilities for stimulating, assisting, and supporting research-related activities.

While this comparison between research and continuing education may not be perfect, it suggests ways in which various groups and individuals with similar objectives can work collaboratively, to their advantage and to the advantage of the university. One significant difference should be noted, however. Participation in continuing education outreach activity is not necessary for faculty in order to fulfill the service component of the promotion and tenure process. Nor is participation in continuing education outreach necessary in order to fulfill the teaching or scholarly components of faculty evaluation. It is necessary, therefore, for the continuing education unit to continue to assume a major role in planning and delivering a number of programs that are not built into faculty contracts.

As more faculty become interested in tying their scholarship to regional needs and concerns, they will increasingly want the convenience of a support group. This could be in the form of a center or institute dedicated to promoting and supporting specific content-related activity, or it could be the continuing education unit, with expertise in planning educational outreach in the form of conferences, seminars, workshops, and so forth.

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Lynton and Elman point out that the CE organization is well placed in academic affairs, and its professionals are well positioned to act as boundary spanners. As such, the CE unit would be responsible for connecting the resources of the university with clients who are not the full-time, recently graduated high school students. Moreover, the various academically based entities such as centers and institutes will find it beneficial to collaborate with the CE office in planning and presenting educational activities for the community and the region.

In this model, the CE organization functions as both a catalyst and a facilitator for the marketing of university resources. It serves as a broker for academic departments, centers, and interdisciplinary initiatives. Additionally, it studies the metropolitan area to remain informed on regional issues and socioeconomic trends. Through this process of environmental scanning, areas of applied research for faculty are identified. In fulfilling such a role, continuing educators function as change agents, and members of the academy participate as stakeholders in the shared ventures.

An example of this emerging paradigm of continuing education is found at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Its CE division has expanded the role of its conference services to include not only program management, but also program development. Its new goal is to develop innovative programs that mirror institutional strengths and meet the needs of the clients it intends to serve. In accomplishing this goal, continuing educators had to learn new skills. They became "scanners and spanners," as they actively sought ways to regionally showcase the strengths of the institution's faculty and programs. At UNL, the scanners are searching for new programs that utilize the scholarship and research of their faculty. The boundary-spanning activities include working with academic and administrative offices to develop programs that support the university's missions of teaching, research, and service.

The UNL case study provides a conceptual model for continuing education that has ramifications beyond conference development. It has broad program applications that include continuing professional education, business and industry contracts, community education, and lifelong learning. Its appropriateness and appeal for the metropolitan university lie in the fact that faculty expertise and university strength, not purely client need, form the basis of program ideas and development. While client need is an important factor, too often it has been the driving force in program decision making and development.

## **Toward a New Structural Concept**

If continuing educators are to act as boundary spanners for the entire university while providing effective support for each participating unit of the institution, they must be organized so as to allow both an institution-wide role as well as a close relationship to the individual units. Because the missions of CE divisions are so disparate, it would be reductionistic to suggest one organizational structure that would work for all CE units. The mission of the institution itself, its culture, and its taxonomy all contribute

to the form and function of its CE unit. As organizations continue to become more complex, they also tend to become more ambiguous; this holds true for continuing education as it reconfigures itself to accommodate a less fixed, more kaleidoscopic vision of its changing roles. The following, therefore, is a conceptual framework that can be adapted to many different institutional conditions.

In this emerging concept, continuing educators continue to do what they do, only within a different institutional structure. The individual in charge of continuing education reports to the provost or chief academic officer. Each college and school within the university is assigned a continuing education liaison, selected from the professional staff of the CE unit. The selection is based upon the educational background, credentials, and interests of the staff member. Personalities and politics within the college or school and the CE unit must also be considered.

The college or school also selects a liaison team from its own area to act as a principal contact group with liaisons from other units as well as with the continuing education liaison. Each liaison team should be composed of individuals who have demonstrated a high level of interest and activity in extending institutional resources to meet regional needs. Directors of college-based centers or institutes are logical choices.

One major responsibility of the divisional liaison teams is to work actively toward identifying major trends and issues facing the region and how the university's strengths and resources can interface in useful ways. Certainly an awareness of the surrounding environment is essential. The environmental scanning system used by the Georgia Center for Continuing Education could be adapted for the regional scanning process. In the Georgia Center, a number of staff members scan the literature, ranging from newspapers and magazines to journals and books, in order to search for signals in all sectors of the environment. The social, economic, technological, and political aspects of the local, state, regional, national, and international environment are all scanned systematically. Once trends, events, or emerging issues are identified, they are recorded as abstracts and classified according to an elaborate taxonomy. Several groups meet quarterly to select the issues that have the most relevance to the center and its strategic directions. This labor-intensive effort is tied to management decisions and organizational objectives on a regular basis. The trends identified by means of the scanning process are also reported in a quarterly newsletter, *Lookouts*, to keep the entire organization informed of relevant issues and resulting educational activities to be planned by the center.

Because the CE unit has multiple liaisons with all colleges or schools, it serves as a hub for communicating and processing environmental data recorded by the divisional teams. The CE unit also acts as a catalyst and change agent in its continued direct relationships with external constituents. Essentially its external functions do not significantly change; its internal role, however, is expanded and clarified through a systematic communication process and institution-wide team approach.

The liaison teams from all divisions meet regularly as a university team to present their findings, ideas, and even hunches. Their information is based upon research, input from academic colleagues, and feedback

from regional and local businesses, government, and community associations. The development and nurturing of strategic alliances form the core of their ongoing activities within the region. Some ideas will be dropped; some will be postponed; and some will be referred to appropriate university units for recommended follow-up activity. The university liaison team is not predicated upon authority or ownership of product; nor is it exclusive in terms of its rights to address regional issues. Rather, it pools the resources of the various academic divisions, acting as a brain trust with an action orientation.

When program development is indicated, depending upon the nature of the need, one or more of the university's centers, with or without the CE unit, may provide the program or solution. Again, the beginning paradigm under consideration here is not territorial; all university units are stakeholders, and the presenting problem helps to determine the response unit. In many instances, though, as agreed upon by the liaison team, several university units may combine resources to address the problem or meet the need. In cases where interdisciplinary expertise is indicated, the CE unit has experience in successfully drawing upon disparate university resources.

### *Staffing Issues*

Changes in the organization of continuing education will usually require, as well, changes in staff responsibilities. In the past, these are usually specified according to campus/off campus, credit/noncredit, or profit/nonprofit categories. Such dichotomous divisions of duties used to be a practical organizational construct. But under contemporary circumstances, it is advisable to reconsider the fixed-fare menu of leadership roles. A broader vision is necessary from continuing education leadership in order to see facts and issues more freely in relation to each other and in order to keep pace with turbulent changes. This means that the nature of some staff assignments will change, in some cases slightly, in others dramatically. In order to substantiate staff reassignments, continuing education leaders will need to conduct organizational audits to determine how the CE unit, as an entity within a metropolitan university, can realign itself to best meet the challenge of full partnership with its university.

The staffing issue cannot be overemphasized. Professional and support staff need versatile skills. The knowledge and background of professional staff are crucial considerations for an organization that works closely and, in the metropolitan context, proactively with faculty, academic departments, and external constituencies. Solid academic backgrounds and unassailable credentials are empowering passports for CE professionals, but staff also need to have the right attitude toward their role. As has been alluded to in this article, some continuing educators have perceived themselves to be the rightful parents of a number of programs and populations that ultimately have been adopted by the institution. In the process, they often felt frustration at having to give up their offspring.

There is no room for such sentiments in the partnership between the CE unit and the institution. The strategic alliances that are formed and nurtured are based upon mutual goals. No ownership is guaranteed, or

even advocated. As Clark Kerr mused, "innovations sometimes succeed best when they have no obvious author." The clarion call is about building bridges, not digging trenches. The spirit is one of complete collaboration with no territorial agendas to promote or resist. President George Johnson of George Mason University focused on this notion when he reminded his institution, "In order to contribute and grow we must participate in the agendas of others rather than preserving our own."

## Institutional Commitment

The university liaison team forms the nucleus of the institution's interaction with the surrounding region, but its effectiveness depends on institutional commitment and involvement at the highest level. The university's commitment to address regional issues should be systematized and incorporated into the regular meetings of the central administration.

Institutional commitment requires, as well, taking the initiative to serve regional needs rather than merely to respond to stated demand. The image of these ivory towers must be transformed into an image of ivory tusks. Universities must sink strong, well-developed, protruding teeth into societal issues and problems with the objective of assisting in regional development.

One means of accomplishing this is by conducting socioeconomic audits with local businesses, professional and civic organizations, and governmental units. Another means of maintaining contact and an action orientation is by scheduling metropolitan invitational meetings to bring the university and sectors from the community together to identify and assess regional problems and the university's progress in addressing them. These meetings, scheduled perhaps annually, would be interactive and require follow-through by all segments represented. An interim newsletter would be useful in reporting status of initiatives and maintaining contact. The University of New Orleans, for example, publishes a newspaper called *The Metropolitan Connection*, that focuses upon the mutual activities of the university and the business community.

*The very process of outreach and interaction with external constituencies is valuable.*

The very process of outreach and interaction with external constituencies is valuable. The connection that is established is important as an end unto itself, and ensures ongoing communication and sharing of ideas and resources. The process, as well as the product, is especially important for continuing educators who need to maintain regular contact with their client base and their community.

An institutional commitment to have the university as a whole take on an interactive role requires, as well, fundamental changes in faculty incentives. This problem has not yet been adequately addressed by metropolitan universities. Lynton and Elman made a strong case for rethinking the place of externally oriented professional activities of faculty in the reward structure of the institution. Historically, these activities have

been categorically viewed as fitting within the service component, and not given the status of traditional scholarship. Yet, the very nature of the professional activity under consideration here is inextricably related to one's academic discipline. It is scholarship more broadly defined. It involves the dissemination of old knowledge, and in some instances, the discovery of new knowledge; it involves teaching.

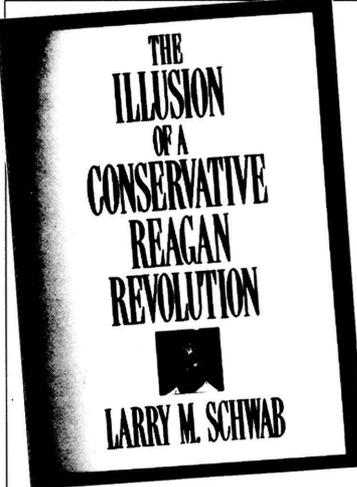
Ernest Boyer's recent report, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, sets forth a thoughtful and powerful argument for broadening the view of scholarship to include not only the discovery of new knowledge, but also the integration and application of knowledge, both old and new. He emphasizes teaching as an undervalued form of scholarship. His cogent rationale lies in the assertion that the three categories of teaching, research, and service are not disparate; they all have scholarship as a core element. Universities that intend to be interactive with their communities would be well advised to revisit their promotion and tenure process and to revitalize their faculty. Such an expansion of the traditional concept of scholarship would enable the institution to better match its faculty reward structure with its metropolitan mission. In doing so, faculty are encouraged to explore new intersections of research and teaching, thus paving the way for an investment in regional development.

As metropolitan universities reach toward fulfilling their regional goals, numerous traditions must be reexamined and basic assumptions must be challenged. Changes will inevitably occur. As part of this, in order for the CE organization to reach full maturity in its emerging role within the institution, it must commit its resources, both technical and human, to the mission of the metropolitan university. As it moves toward its emerging paradigm, the CE organization is exceptionally well positioned to make unique and enduring contributions to the metropolitan university and the region that it serves.

However, one final note about marginality versus mainstream is in order. The continuing debate about whether continuing education is more effective in the margin as opposed to the mainstream of the university is a moot point in the development of a new paradigm. As the vision of its role changes, so will its behavior. Continuing education will never be completely mainstreamed; it is simply too dissimilar from the rest of the university. Nor will the CE unit ever again be as marginal as it was. Rather, it will be somewhere between the two extreme positions, possibly at the threshold of the institution. This threshold position is ideal for the agenda of the institution and of the CE unit. The fact that continuing education is not totally mainstreamed within the university affords the CE unit an objectivity that permits inquiry, examination, dissent, and diversity. Its threshold position causes creative tension and elicits innovation; both are necessary for the interactive institution.

### *Suggested Readings*

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