

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO ENHANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Richard Shavelson, Project Area Director

This project aims to improve postsecondary pedagogy with a special emphasis on community colleges. This project investigates the effectiveness of professional development initiatives and the potential for these initiatives to improve student learning and seeks to extend to postsecondary institutions lessons learned regarding successful teacher development in the K-12 and higher education arenas. The project also includes national/comparative research activities, designed to place community college teaching in the context of undergraduate teaching and learning more generally.

## **The Changing Condition of the Academic Profession in Community Colleges**

Mary Taylor Huber, Principal Researcher

This activity compares the working conditions and priorities of community college faculty with those of faculty in other types of institutions. This project utilized information from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's 1996-1997 National Survey of Faculty, which surveyed faculty members from each of the nine Carnegie Classification groups. This survey of more than 5,000 faculty members examined faculty working conditions, professional activities, governance of institutions, the goals of higher education, campus community, the role of higher education in society, and the international dimensions of higher education.

The sampling methodology allowed researchers to compare the working conditions and priorities of community college faculty with those in other types of institution in the Carnegie Classification system. Because many of these issues have been addressed in Carnegie's previous national surveys of faculty, it was also possible to explore how the condition of the academic profession in community colleges has changed during the last 30 years.

### **Findings**

Community college faculty are—as one would expect—more oriented to teaching than faculty at other types of institutions, but like their counterparts, they recognize a need to develop a scholarship of teaching. Community college faculty do not seem to feel much conflict among their varied professional activities, perhaps because their commitment to teaching is so clear. Indeed, more than 80 percent of community college faculty say that teaching effectiveness should be the primary criterion for promotion of faculty—far higher than their colleagues at other types of institutions.

The issue is not only one of institutional priorities, but also one of how to better evaluate teaching. Faculty throughout higher education find evaluation an area that could be improved. Understandably, fewer faculty at community colleges report a need for better ways, besides publications, to evaluate scholarly performance in research. But they join their colleagues elsewhere in claiming that better ways are needed to evaluate teaching performance. Indeed, at all types of higher education institutions, 75 percent or more of the faculty agree that peer review should be used in evaluating teaching effectiveness. And while few faculty report new developments in the evaluation of research and applied scholarship, about one-third of faculty overall, including those at community colleges, report that new methods of evaluating teaching have been developed in their departments.

While not losing sight of the special missions of the community college, there is much to be gained by looking at community college faculty as an integral part of the professoriate at large. The recent emergence of teaching and learning as a key issue in higher education reveals shared concerns about how well elementary and high schools are preparing young people for college, and about what colleges and universities can do to re-engage students in learning. Increasing diversity of students and programs across higher education has renewed interest in the quality of campus community and given new life to the old question of whether faculty and administrators can work collegially toward

common goals. The growing use of part-time faculty raises urgent questions about the health of the academic profession and the well-being of academic programs on campuses of all kinds. And finally, there is the continuing challenge of encouraging a broader range of faculty work. In two-year colleges, especially, there is a need to recognize and reward faculty who use research and professional service to link students to resources in the local community. Throughout higher education, there is a need to encourage innovation in the classroom and to increase social awareness of the need to strengthen scholarship in teaching.

#### Publications

Huber, Mary Taylor (1998). "Community College Faculty Attitudes and Trends, 1997."

Huber, Mary Taylor (1998). "A Changing Understanding of Community College Faculty," in *Change*, November/December.

#### **Exemplary Teaching Models in Community Colleges**

Mary Taylor Huber, Principal Researcher

This research activity identified models of innovative teaching in community colleges through examination of The U.S. Professors of the Year program, which the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching conducts jointly with the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). The Professors of the Year awards are designed to recognize "outstanding instructors for their commitment to teaching" and has provided awards for faculty in each of the four major types of higher education institutions (including community colleges) since 1994.

#### Findings

Analysis of the applications revealed that perceptions of commitment to teaching in community colleges take into account not only what professors do inside the classroom but also what they do beyond classroom doors. Many of the students' letters of recommendation concentrate on the time and energy their instructors put into work with students outside of class. The instructors themselves, as well as their colleagues and superiors, emphasize "service" to the teaching mission of the institution. These teachers go beyond the classroom and traditional notions of curriculum development in a number of ways: by sharing their knowledge and professional experiences with colleagues; by sharing their teaching and activities with people not traditionally part of an academic setting; and by encouraging and enabling their students to use their classroom learning to help people in the larger community.

#### Publications

Kerekes, Julie and Mary Taylor Huber (1998). "Exceptional Teaching in Community Colleges: An Analysis of Nominations for the U.S. Professors of the Year Program, 1995-1997."

#### **Teacher Preparation and Retention: Evaluation and Community College Collaboration**

John Baugh, Principal Researcher

This project sought to discover whether programs within two-year colleges intended for prospective teachers could help alleviate the anticipated shortage of K-12 teachers. Researchers analyzed and evaluated existing and developing teacher preparation programs at the community college level in order to identify exemplary practices that might inform institutions in supporting the preparation and retention of future teachers.

The project's research design combined quantitative and qualitative methods, including descriptive accounts of existing programs and surveys of procedures that institutions have adopted in developing new programs. Additional data was collected and interviews conducted with participants at each case study site. Researchers also analyzed the extent to which issues pertaining to English fluency are relevant to efforts to expand the role of two-year colleges in the preparation of teachers.

## Findings

Collaborations between state universities and two year colleges may increase the number of student teachers from diverse backgrounds, thereby enhancing prospects that future teachers may more closely resemble the changing demographics of student populations.

Community colleges have adopted several creative strategies to develop prospective teacher programs. Some programs have established web sites, and have expressed a willingness, if not eagerness, to encourage others to review and replicate their efforts.

Researchers found evidence of individuals who are actively involved with the implementation of K-12 teacher preparation programs at two-year colleges across the country. Community college teacher educators that strive to tailor their efforts to their needs of their students must possess the ability to coordinate strategic local opportunities with institutions of higher learning that grant teacher credentials. In some instances these opportunities extend to local school districts as well.

The topic of English proficiency among prospective teachers is indirectly related to policies for language minority students, with variation among community colleges in how to address bilingual education and remedial English.

## Accelerating the Education of Remedial Students in Postsecondary Education Henry Levin, Principal Researcher

This project examines ways to accelerate the education of students underprepared for postsecondary education. In its first phase, the project investigated the contours, content, and consequences of remedial coursework. Specifically, the project undertook a literature review and interviews with experts in remedial education to understand the extent of participation in as well as the pedagogy and curriculum of remedial programs. Moreover, the project examined how remedial coursework affects student achievement and persistence in and graduation from postsecondary institutions.

In its second phase, researchers assisted a limited number of postsecondary institutions engaged in designing and implementing a promising alternative to traditional remedial coursework. The project provided technical assistance in designing an appropriate evaluation model for the promising intervention and collaborated with the institution in evaluating the program's results. The ultimate goal of the project is to improve the methods of evaluating programs for underprepared students and to build on the knowledge of "what works" in accelerating the education of underprepared students.

## Findings

*The extent and contours of remediation in postsecondary education.* The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) published in 1991 and 1996 two nationwide reports on the extent of remediation in the U.S. According to those reports, the great majority of public 2-year and 4-year postsecondary institutions offer remedial courses, while nearly 30% of all first-year college students take some type of remedial course. In addition to the extent of remediation in higher education, the project also has developed an understanding of the demographic makeup of those who take remedial courses, including information regarding the race/ethnicity, language status, socioeconomic status, and gender of those in remedial education.

*Criteria for assigning students to remedial courses.* The project has unearthed much less systematic information regarding the criteria for remedial placement, although it has found that placement tests are a common device used to assign students to remedial courses.

*Content of remediation.* Although anecdotal evidence suggests that basic skills are often delivered through drills and repetition independent of college-level content, some practitioners claim that the better practice among remedial instructors includes integration of college-level content and cooperative learning strategies. Unfortunately, the literature on remedial education is largely bereft of description regarding how basic skills are taught in the “typical” remedial course. Like most issues in remedial education, there is likely no single model of content and pedagogy, but one future direction for the project will be gaining a better understanding of the teaching strategies and content of “typical” basic skills courses.

*Consequences of remediation in terms of student achievement and persistence in college.* The project has found that there is virtually no comprehensive information available that addresses this question because, in part, there is a dearth of evaluative studies on remedial programs, the criteria for placement and “success” in remedial courses are so varied, and the types of remedial services offered are so diverse. As experts with whom the project has spoken agree, more research needs to be done in this area. Nevertheless, the project has compiled some information concerning the consequences of remediation at specific institutions and in specific, innovative programs. This preliminary research suggests that content-based or adjunct courses may enhance the persistence (and, possibly, the achievement) of students taking remedial courses. The project will continue to explore the effectiveness of content-based remediation and the theoretical underpinnings of this success.

*Exemplary remedial interventions.* Through the project’s literature search and initial contact with certain experts, it has identified certain exemplary remedial interventions. Broadly stated, many of the exemplary remedial programs identified by the project seek to link together skill-building with college-level content. These programs include paired/linked courses, supplemental instruction, and learning communities. Though each of these strategies differs in its structure and goals, all share the common understanding that skill-building cannot be taught independent of college-level coursework. Skill-building should be integrated when possible into the college learning experience. Apart from the integration of skill-building and college-level content, the project has also identified several “critical thinking” programs that seek to improve critical thinking and problem solving across the college curriculum and claim to enhance the performance and persistence of underprepared students.

Researchers’ study of underprepared students at both community and four-year colleges suggests that there will need to be vast improvements made in elementary and secondary education to raise the quality of preparation for postsecondary education. Meanwhile, for the foreseeable future, U.S. higher education will be faced with the formidable challenge of assisting large numbers of underprepared students to succeed in higher education. In that respect, researchers offer the following assertions:

1. Adult learning approaches hold promise as a model for community college remediation efforts.
2. Faculty need sufficient time and resources to design and implement better approaches.
3. Community colleges need to create formal evaluations to test the efficacy of different approaches and to apply cost-effectiveness analysis to setting policy for remediation interventions.

Higher education institutions need to become “experimenting institutions” if they are to improve their productivity. Experimenting institutions need to have clear goals, incentives to reach those goals, information on present performance, and information on the consequences of alternatives. Instead, researchers have found that at the decentralized levels of schools and departments there is no clear picture of institutional goals; institutional incentives are linked more to routine functions such as maintaining or increasing enrollments than to qualitative educational outcomes; institutional accountability rarely addresses educational performance goals; and there is virtually no capacity to do experimentation.

It makes sense to establish a central resource to assist schools, departments, and individual faculty to establish experimental interventions and to provide evaluation support. Faculty and administrators can collaborate with evaluation staff in order to specify the appropriate outcomes and control variables, to help administer the data instruments, and to assist in the interpretation of results.

#### Publications

Levin, Henry and William Koski (1998). “Accelerating the Education of Remedial Students in Postsecondary Education.”

Henry M. Levin and William Koski (1998). “Administrative Approaches to Educational Productivity,” In James Groccia and Judith Miller (eds.), *Enhancing Productivity: Administrative, Instructional, and Technological Strategies*, New Directions for Higher Education, No. 103, pp. 9-22.