Lecture, Apr. 17, 2000) is being continued here for purposes of consistency. The intended meaning of service in this context is generic, referring to the full range of interactions that occur between colleges and universities and their constituencies, and not the more limited usage of the term, as implied by "public service" or "support services." The concept is discussed in detail in Chapter Nine.

10. According to studies conducted by the Technical Assistance Research Program (TARP) for the White House Office of Consumer Affairs, the average consumer who has a problem with an organization tells nine to ten people. The research also indicates that organizations don't hear from 96 percent of those who are dissatisfied. See discussion in Albrecht and Zemke (1985).

From: PURSUITING EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION
EIGHT FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGES
Brent D. Ruben, Ph.D.
Chapter 2, pp. 31-63

Chapter Two

Broadening Public Appreciation for the Work of the Academy
Committing Ourselves to Dialogue

It would be ideal if the academy's many contributions to society were self-evident and universally appreciated. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Evidence of the lack of full understanding and support of the traditional values of higher education abounds, and the consequences are numerous and significant. This lack of understanding and support is seen in the flat or modest increases in funding from legislatures, student complaints about their experiences as "consumers," calls for increasing accountability from governing boards and advisory groups, growing attraction of for-profit and other competitors, and a public perception often quite at odds with those of the higher education community (Selingo, 2003; Hebel, 2003).

Clearly, one of the most essential tasks facing higher education is to broaden understanding and support for our work among our many constituencies and publics. As Donald Kennedy (1997) notes: "conversation among thoughtful, well-intentioned graduates of the very institutions they are discussing exposes the degree to which the participants fail to understand how colleges and universities actually work—how they are structured, organized, and financed, what their faculties do, and who is responsible for securing their future. Academic institutions remain mysterious to the many millions of Americans who have attended colleges and universities. . . . When they were students, there was neither
opportunity nor incentive to study their institutions. The resulting misunderstandings are damaging” (p. 15).

A clearer public understanding of higher education and its purposes does not automatically guarantee that our institutions and our work will be as fully appreciated and supported as we would like. It is, however, the place our efforts must begin.

There may be nearly as many ideas about how higher education should be changed as there are individuals thinking about this subject, but neither avoidance nor denial—strategies we sometimes seem to adopt—serves a constructive purpose. Dialogue can help us better understand the perspectives of those who have questions and concerns, more clearly and effectively respond, clarify areas of misunderstanding, and identify areas where change may be appropriate.

**Higher Education’s Multiple Missions and Many Stakeholders**

Being misunderstood is not altogether surprising when one considers the many activities of colleges and universities, and the number and variety of groups and organizations for which programs and services are provided.

**Multiple Missions, Multitudinous Programs and Services, Many Employee Groups**

Considered in terms of organizational complexity, diversity of function, and variety of employee roles, institutions of higher education have considerably less in common with a *school* than they do with a city or a large corporation. The core mission of most colleges and universities includes instruction, scholarship, and outreach, though, as we know, the extent of emphasis and operational definitions of each vary considerably from institution to institution. Boyer (1997) described these mission-critical functions as discovery and integration of knowledge, teaching, and service; more recently, the Kellogg Commission introduced the terms discovery, learning, and engagement to describe these activities (Kellogg Commission, 2001b). Of these, teaching-and-learning is clearly the activity most widely associated with the work of colleges and universities in the perceptions of external stakeholders. Teaching-and-learning takes place through programs and courses in lectures, laboratories, and libraries, and at other locations through service learning, the Internet, or technological support systems. Though perhaps less obvious to those outside the academy, teaching-and-learning also occurs through many other activities sponsored by colleges and universities, among them advising, student life programs, and cocurricular activities that occur under the auspices of the institution.

Research and scholarship also have numerous dimensions, as we know, including conference attendance, professional activity, publication, grant development, and applied scholarship of various types. The numerous outreach and public service initiatives to the community and public groups define the third category of mission-critical component, with a variety of associated activities.

The work of higher education doesn’t end here. Beyond these core mission-related activities are any number of support, service, and administrative functions performed by colleges and universities: the tasks of financial aid offices, physical plant maintenance operations, postal services, recreational facilities, transportation systems, police and fire departments, offices of computing services, human resources, budgeting, institutional research, printing, development, public relations, research and sponsored programs, and on and on.

Each of these mission-critical and support areas has its own array of employee roles, ranging from those highly trained faculty, staff, and administrative specialists to relatively unskilled generalists. Many, but not all, are full-time. The part-time group may include undergraduate support staff, graduate student research and teaching assistants, adjunct faculty, and various staff positions. Thus, in addition to the multiplicity of programs, services, and activities that define a college or university—some widely understood and appreciated, others perhaps less so—there are a great many individuals with wide-ranging levels of expertise, education, and institutional commitment serving in an array of roles. All of these employees function as “official” representatives of the institution in interactions with students, alumni, visitors, and the general public.
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An Endless List of Stakeholders

Just as there is a seemingly endless list of programs and services—and diverse employees—associated with the mission of the academy, so are there myriad groups that colleges and universities serve, or with which we collaborate (Figure 2.1). The academy’s activities touch the lives of many stakeholder groups—variously termed constituencies, publics, audiences, or beneficiaries. By whatever name, the defining characteristic of such groups is that they have a stake in higher education’s work. They are influenced and affected by, and in turn have the potential to influence and affect, our institutions.

Current students are certainly the most obvious stakeholders relative to teaching-and-learning activities. Prospective students, parents, alumni, employers, and graduate and professional schools to whom graduates apply for further degree work are also significant (and often vocal) constituencies relative to this dimension of our mission.

A quite different group of stakeholders relates most directly to our scholarly and research activities: disciplinary and professional peer groups, funding agencies and organizations, journal editors and review boards, national scholarly academies and organizations, and the faculty and graduate students from other colleges and universities.

Yet a third set of constituencies is associated primarily with the academy’s outreach and public service functions. This cluster of stakeholders is composed of community and state agencies and organizations, professional groups, policy planning and legislative groups, donors, alumni, and the general (in the case of publicly assisted institutions, the taxpaying) public.

In addition to these groups—which most directly affect and are affected by the academy’s activities—there are members of groups that relate to our institutions in still other ways. For residents of the adjacent community, the focus may be upon the institution as a neighbor. For the vendor community, the institution is a business. For fans of campus sports or cultural events, the institution may be seen primarily as a source of entertainment or personal enrichment. Another important stakeholder is the federal government, which is a source of resources—and also of regulations and requirements. Indeed, identifying the many stakeholder groups
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for a single academic or administrative department—let alone an entire institution—is a formidable task and, no doubt, the list could be extended considerably.

Mission Complexity and Stakeholder Confusion

Even cursory reflection on the scope of higher education’s mission and the list of stakeholders reveals a fundamental irony: the richness and complexity of our work, the multiplicity of the programs and services we offer, the variety of workers we employ, and the number and diversity of the beneficiaries we serve may well be our greatest obstacle when it comes to being understood, appreciated, and appropriately supported.

Limited Perspective on the Whole

Like the blind man who feels one part of the elephant and thinks he knows the whole creature, our stakeholders are quite likely to have a focused understanding of some of what we do, and a fuzzy understanding of other parts and the whole. Consider the perspective of undergraduates: their concerns center on classes, advising, scheduling, financial aid, housing, residence life, cocurricular activities, social activities, parking, transportation, dining, health services, and whether the institution is preparing them for good jobs after graduation. From this viewpoint quite naturally flow the all-too-familiar questions and complaints: Why aren’t classes smaller, offered more often, and at more convenient times? Why aren’t papers and exams read and returned more quickly? Why are there professors who teach only one class per semester? Why is money spent on improving research facilities when it could be spent on classrooms that are in disrepair, or on building more student parking? Why are courses and labs sometimes taught by adjunct faculty rather than professors? Given their vantage point, it should come as no great surprise that most students may not appreciate the appropriateness of faculty “release time” from teaching to work on research, travel money for faculty to report on their work to colleagues at national conferences, or increases in tuition that go in part to fund staff salary increases.

Likewise, should we be startled to learn that students or others who “pay the bills” are more concerned with campus safety, access to courses, the size of classes, and intelligibility of the instructor than with faculty members’ research experience or publication records? It also should help to explain why these beneficiaries may value the accessibility, courtesy, and helpfulness of faculty and staff more than they do the percentage of Ph.D.s on the faculty, the hours the library is open, the number of research journals to which the library subscribes, or the appearance and safety of the campus rather than the adequacy of support for faculty professional development.

Stakeholders whose connection with higher education is focused on scholarship and research—or service and outreach functions—are likely to have quite different perspectives and concerns. Some undergraduate students, parents, and others who look to the academy primarily for instruction may be interested in the institution’s scholarship and research. For other funding constituencies—agencies, disciplinary and professional peer groups, national academies and organizations, and the faculty and graduate students from other colleges and universities, for example—these activities are the critical basis for institutional linkages. As mentioned previously, public service and outreach activities are the foundation for relationships with community and state agencies and organizations, professional groups, policy planning and legislative groups, donors, alumni, and the general public.

An Intricate Web of Collaborative Relationships

The web of stakeholder relationships for any college or university is exceedingly intricate, and each linkage is vitally important to the support, vitality, and advancement of our institutions. Today’s students are tomorrow’s alumni—and potential donors, employers, and parents of potential students. Employers are potential students, parents of potential students, and potential research sponsors or donors. The general public benefits from the work of colleges and universities, and in turn is an important source of financial and moral support.

Perhaps to a greater extent than in organizations in other sectors, the relationship between the academy and its stakeholders can truly be described as a set of elaborate and interconnected partnerships. This is the case at the institutional (macro) level as suggested in the examples just given, and also at the micro level,
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when looking for the best way to characterize learning relationships between a teacher and a student, a researcher and sponsor, or a faculty member engaged in public service with the community. This insight has often been overlooked in organizational models that characterize students as customers in that such approaches fail to capture the fundamental sense in which successful teaching—and learning—requires a partnership. As in the case of the doctor-patient relationship—to which the teacher-student relationship is quite analogous—each party brings specific perspectives, capabilities, and resources. The most desirable outcomes are possible only when collaboration and mutual investment are present. To the extent that either institutional or individual partners fail to recognize or appropriately assume their role, the effectiveness of the endeavor and the satisfaction of the parties involved are jeopardized.

At both interpersonal and institutional levels, the academy’s mission is fundamentally dependent upon its many partnerships. The viability of each of these partnerships in turn depends upon shared understandings of the nature of the relationships, shared expectations of associated roles and responsibilities, and shared appreciation of the contribution of the other parties involved.

Increasing Economic Dependence on External Stakeholders

The institutional web of relationships is particularly important from an economic point of view. Higher education depends on a mix of private and public support from many individuals, groups, and organizations; in this sense, colleges and universities have always been dependent on the marketplace for their sustenance and growth. The academy has generally enjoyed a comfortable and empowered position within this web of relationships—a position that has allowed a high degree of independence and self-determination. This state of affairs has led to organizational excellence and advancement on one hand, and also to the stereotypic image of the ivory tower as remote, removed, disconnected, unresponsive, and unrealistic on the other.

With changes in marketplace conditions, the consequences of stakeholder misunderstanding and narrow vision of our purposes and aspirations become increasingly problematic. The challenge comes from a marketplace that seeks new terms of relationship, new accountability, and evolving concepts of partnership. Unquestioning acceptance and unconditional positive regard are gone from the relationships between the academy and a number of its stakeholders; in its place are what sometimes seem to be irreconcilable differences that require a new commitment, new humility, and new infusion of attention and energy directed toward reconciliation. This issue was once purely academic, but it now has considerably more pragmatic consequences.

Communication and Perspective

Misunderstanding, failure to appreciate our work, and questions about purpose and value are symptoms. They signal a need to reexamine the web of relationships and to take a much more proactive role in reframing our partnerships with stakeholders.

At its core, the challenge facing the academy is one of improving communication, and in this process devoting more attention to the perspectives and concerns of our stakeholders. The challenge is substantial: multiple missions, multiple jobs, multiple constituencies, multiple perspectives . . . multiple sources of misunderstanding. Are we doing the right things, and doing things right? Are the things we do, and the reasons we do them, understood and appreciated? We need to do a far better job of telling higher education’s story, explaining the nature and significance of our work, soliciting support where it’s warranted, and identifying priorities for change where they are needed. The goal is the creation of shared perspectives—or at least of shared understanding of perspectives—on matters of purpose and priority in higher education.

Perspective Taking

The events of the day are powerful sources of communication. Consider these instances:

- A faculty member informs students in her course that five class sessions will be canceled during the semester because she will be attending conferences.
- An adult part-time student takes time off from work to meet with his professor at a mutually agreed time and drives an hour to campus, only to learn that the professor left for home earlier in the day.
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A visitor to campus stops in several buildings in search of an administrator with whom he has an appointment and is treated rudely by a staff member when he enters the wrong building and asks for directions.

A graduate student waits for months for comments on a preliminary draft of her dissertation from members of her committee.

Most would agree that although these may not be everyday occurrences, neither are they all that uncommon. Faculty members understand why it isn’t always possible to offer immediate turnaround on papers and exams, or why attending a conference is important to one’s research and classroom instruction. We all can relate to the stress that staff members experience during certain peak periods, and the reactions that may lead to “if just one more person asks me just one more question . . .” But can we expect others to naturally understand our faculty and staff perspectives and priorities as we do? In the preoccupation we have with our own work—and the value we and our disciplinary colleagues associate with those endeavors—it is perhaps understandable that we may fail to fully appreciate the perspectives of others who lack our frame of reference. Consciously or unconsciously, however, our actions and inactions are important elements of the stories our institutions are telling—stories that sometimes undermine the respect and support we enjoy from our many publics. Faculty and staff actions are perpetual sources of impression-creating messages about the academy, its purposes, and its standards. Indeed, the public image of higher education is created at least as much through small stories, such as those presented earlier, as it is by our institutions’ large and glossy stories in publications and professionally produced videos, or by our scholarly articles and books.

A poignant example of the communication challenges facing the academy was described in an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education titled “It’s 10 A.M. Do You Know Where Your Professors Are?” (Wilson, 2001a). The purpose of the article was ostensibly to discuss reactions of Boston University faculty members to a proposal from a university committee to require faculty to be in their offices at least four days a week. But comments by those interviewed for the article, and in letters to the editor regarding the article, offer insight into why students and the public at large might sometimes fail to understand and fully appreciate the faculty and its work. The article begins with a scenario:

All the student at Boston University wanted to know was whether he could make up a quiz in his Greek mythology course. But after he set out to track down his professor, he realized that getting an answer wouldn’t be easy.

First the senior went to the classical studies department during the two hours each week the professor calls his “office hours,” but the professor wasn’t in. The student considered sending an e-mail message, but the professor’s address isn’t listed in the printed campus directory. And he would have called the professor at home, but the number is unpublished. Finally, an administrator in the classical studies department reached the professor, who then called the student to set up an appointment. Eventually, the two met [Wilson, 2001a, p. 1].

“If you want to get in touch with him,” says the student, “you really have to try hard” (Wilson, 2001a, p. 1). A faculty member from another department at Boston University, who was also interviewed for the article, had this to say: “I don’t get paid for hanging around my office. I get paid for preparing for classes and because I publish books and articles and reviews” (Wilson, 2001a, p. 2). Two other faculty members offered these observations in subsequent letters to the editor: “Any professor worthy of the title ought to be willing to hold a minimum of four office hours a week,” and “In no case should a faculty member need to be on call for more than 10 hours per week” (Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 2002, p. 1). Commenting on the general issue, another faculty member said of a colleague: “One law professor . . . does so much outside legal work . . . that he has insisted on scheduling important committee meetings at 8 A.M. so he can make a timely escape to a downtown law firm” (Wilson, 2001a, p. 4).

This situation is certainly not the typical one, but the general themes it touches upon are all too familiar. The vignette reminds us that the issue of perceived availability and ease of access to faculty is a salient concern, a frequent topic of dissatisfaction, and a theme of the folklore of higher education. Negative personal experiences are powerful impression-shaping events. When situations such as this occur, they are far more likely to be remembered and retold than positive events, and also likely to contribute to exaggerated stereotypes about life in the academy.
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Commenting on the general issue, another faculty member said of a colleague: “One law professor . . . does so much outside legal work . . . that he has insisted on scheduling important committee meetings at 8 A.M. so he can make a timely escape to a downtown law firm” (Wilson, 2001a, p. 4).

This situation is certainly not the typical one, but the general themes it touches upon are all too familiar. The vignette reminds us that the issue of perceived availability and ease of access to faculty is a salient concern, a frequent topic of dissatisfaction, and a theme of the folklore of higher education. Negative personal experiences are powerful impression-shaping events. When situations such as this occur, they are far more likely to be remembered and retold than positive events, and also likely to contribute to exaggerated stereotypes about life in the academy.
The core issue here is perspective taking. The communication challenge—which is quite simple to verbalize, but very difficult to enact—is to avoid being so engrossed in one’s own frame of reference that it becomes difficult to comprehend and connect with others. In some instances, perspective taking is as simple as pausing to ask oneself “What would I want—or need—to know if I were a student, parent, or visitor in this or that situation?” or “How would I like my son, daughter, or family member to be treated in this circumstance?” Simply stated, we need to listen more to our many stakeholder groups to gain a better sense of what they know and don’t know about higher education, and about the issues that concern them.

The goal of perspective taking is not simply to collect information, complaints, and suggestions, nor to fix every concern that is voiced; rather, it is to be informed by them, and use the insights gained to negotiate increasingly shared perspectives. Perhaps ideally from the academy’s point of view, dialogue would result in stakeholders understanding higher education and its challenges precisely as we do, and with a new appreciation of our work and renewed commitment to help provide the support, recognition, and resources we need to advance the academy. Unfortunately, many of the groups with whom improved communication is most critical may seem—and, in fact, may be—generally less well-informed, less educated, narrower in perspective, more short-term in their outlook, and less systematic in their thinking about higher education than are we. But the impact of their points of view and opinions is not diminished by these shortcomings; sometimes, to the contrary, it leads to forcefully articulated and influential—if frustrating—perspectives on the role colleges and universities should play within society.

For such publics, the challenge begins with finding compelling ways to explain the complex missions of our institutions, and how the various components of that mission are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. For research institutions, then, it is essential to be able to tell a simple story about how the commitment to scholarship leads to efforts to recruit the best and brightest minds and to support efforts to advance the frontiers of knowledge. The institution and students benefit from working with the most informed and knowledgeable faculty in their disciplines. These individuals are current with advances in their field; understand how knowledge is created; are leaders in their disciplines; and are able to bring cutting-edge knowledge, methods, and applications to the classroom, their students, and society. All of this is obvious to those within the academy, but often far less so to those outside.

If the issue is an instructor whom students can’t understand, the conversation may need to be quite basic in its explanation of why some college teachers are not native English speakers, the importance of the role U.S. higher education plays for the world, the vast wealth of experience that individuals with international experience bring to the classroom, the important source of learning that international instructors can be in a time when the world is becoming a progressively global community, and so on. Similar discussions can be held around many other typical sources of concern:

- How do colleges and universities contribute to the economic and social development of their communities, states, regions, and nation?
- How do new faculty research facilities benefit students?
- How can a faculty member be fully contributing to an institution while teaching only one or two courses?
- In what ways are athletic and cultural events potentially important parts of education and community development?
- Why is faculty travel and support for faculty development vital to improved teaching?
- Can we use virtual learning technologies to eliminate the need for campus-based teaching and residential learning experiences? What will be the differences in the quality of education and student development if such approaches are used?
- Why is it important to create an environment where graduate students work with faculty to learn teaching competencies?
- Why is adequate funding for staff salaries and administrative services critical to the core institutional mission?

Viewed from an external perspective, these are all reasonable concerns, and for each there are informative answers that we can offer. In the process of engaging in dialogue relative to these issues, the academy’s partnerships with its stakeholders can be strengthened, and the areas of shared understanding increased. But these answers are of little value if only those within the academy know them, or if they are not addressed persuasively and meaningfully with messages tailored to the perspectives of the multiple stakeholder groups,
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which have varying levels of sophistication and knowledge about higher education and their own individualized interests.

Whether the concern is broad or narrow, the communication process and intended outcomes are essentially the same: learning from stakeholders, acknowledging the legitimacy of their point of view and concerns, working to broaden their perspective and the areas of shared understanding, and identifying areas where changes are appropriate to improve the institution and strengthen relationships with stakeholders.

**Communication with Stakeholders: Who Is Responsible?**

Whose responsibility is it to improve relations with stakeholders and the public? At the national level, organizations such as the American Council on Education (ACE), the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), and the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) as well as initiatives such as the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges have important contributions to make in this regard.

Within each college and university, the department charged with external or public relations has a most obvious responsibility in this regard. As noted previously, important contributions to the effort can be made through publications, video, and Web-based information packages. Opportunities for improving communication don't stop there, however. They also include publication of documents such as the undergraduate and graduate prospectus, recruitment brochures, posters, Websites, alumni publications, events, reunions, media relations, publicity for research, annual reports, and numerous other media and activities (Albrighton and Thomas, 2001).

The advancement or development office also has an important role to play. Those involved in external relations and fundraising are essential in developing positive relations with alumni, corporations, and friends of the institutions. The offices of undergraduate and graduate admissions, alumni relations, athletics, and others also have a vital role to play. A most essential role is played by the college or university president or chancellor, the senior administration, and other leaders from throughout the institution with access to many key opinion leaders—in the community, state, and region, and in various academic and professional fields (Figure 2.2).
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In every institution, there are many individuals in a number of departments who have jobs dedicated to communication and engagement with various stakeholders. But the magnitude of the challenge is such that it requires a much broader effort to be successful. Each and every administrator, faculty, or staff member employed by a college or university is quite literally the face of that institution. In many respects, students and alumni also contribute in much the same way. Intentionally or not, each of us creates impressions and conveys information about the institution—by what we say, by how we say it, and by the way we present ourselves. Each interaction is an opportunity to strengthen the relationships between the academy and its stakeholders, to broaden and deepen understanding of the institution and its work, and to respond constructively to questioning and critique whenever it’s encountered.

Concluding Comments

For all that higher education does, and much of it so well, it is disappointing that our contributions are not more universally recognized and respected. This is apparent from the continuing criticism of higher education by many of our stakeholders. Suggestions about what colleges and universities can and should do to improve come from all quarters, and the academy is often viewed as isolated, resistant, and sometimes arrogant in the face of a need for change.

Clearly, there are gaps between those within the academy whose views of the purposes of higher education are deeply rooted in the classical traditions of the academy, and those constituents who contend that colleges and universities should be more attentive to the needs and expectations of a highly competitive and rapidly changing marketplace. Some of these gaps signal differences in the sense of purpose and priority that can only be resolved by new or redirected resource allocations, revised priorities and goals, or other fundamental institutional changes. At least as many of these gaps, however, result from a misunderstanding of higher education’s purposes and priorities, the work of faculty and staff, and the multiplicity of important goals served by the academy.

Regardless of whether the gap points to a need for institutional change, improved understanding, or altered expectations, the process of reconciliation must begin with a more passionate commitment to communication on the part of administrators, faculty, and staff from throughout the academy. Every discussion, every encounter with a student, parent, alum, or member of the general public is what Noel Tichy (1997) calls a teachable moment—an opportunity to reframe and refine how the academy and its work are understood and valued, and to inform the decisions stakeholders make that have a significant and lasting impact on higher education. Even if engaged dialogue does nothing more than clarify the significant gaps in expectations relative to perceived priorities, the process of genuine engagement can only serve to increase mutual respect, understanding, and support for the challenges and complexities we face.

Narratives

Broadening Public Appreciation for the Work of the Academy: Committing Ourselves to Dialogue

Enhanced understanding results from dialogue and engagement. It comes about when there are genuine efforts to better grasp the perspectives of those who benefit from the programs and services we provide. Also important is the sharing of carefully crafted messages that articulate plans and aspirations in terms that make sense and seem responsive to the purposes of the academy on the one hand, and to the needs of stakeholders and a complex, competitive, and rapidly changing environment on the other.

What better way to enhance perspective taking than for a president of a land-grant university to serve as the personal tour guide for a journey around the state for new faculty? For faculty whose primary institutional loyalty is to their own discipline or prior employer, the tour is a dramatic introduction to their new institution and the state, while fostering opportunities for interaction with the senior administrator and colleagues from other disciplines. This novel approach is used by Graham Spanier at Penn State and Richard McCormick at Rutgers (and previously at the University of Washington). In the first narrative in this section, Spanier, president of Penn State University, describes his Road’s Scholar Program, and the goals it is designed to achieve.

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needs and expectations—those of faculty and staff, as well as students and taxpayers—were blended with innovative plans for the future of the institution.

Additional narratives in the book speak to issues of dialogue and engagement, perspective taking and perspective sharing in the context of other activities. Following Chapter Three, Ruth Ash and Jean Ann Box describe a teacher preparation program that involves close collaboration with the educational community, and John Dew describes how the University of Alabama formalized its involvement with corporate leaders in the state. The narratives by Mary Sue Coleman and Susan Williams following Chapter Four describe how the perspectives of students, alumni, and other stakeholders were included in the University of Iowa and Belmont University’s system for assessing outcomes. In their Chapter Six narrative, Francis Lawrence and Christine Haska Germak describe a strategic planning effort at Rutgers that had as one goal broadening public knowledge and support of the institution and its academic strengths. Finally, the narratives following Chapter Seven, by James Tucker and Marie Sutthoff at the University of Cincinnati and by Michael Shafer and Barbara Bender of Rutgers University, offer further examples of other approaches to dialogue and engagement. The University of Cincinnati vignette describes an innovative system for soliciting student and visitor questions and concerns, and the Rutgers teaching assistant program narrative is an overview of an initiative to enhance graduate student instructional knowledge and skills. The service learning program at Rutgers is a most interesting model of civic and community service that promotes engagement of the institution with its constituencies, while advancing the education needs of students.

Professional organizations and foundations such as the AAHE, the ACE, the NACUBO, the Pew Charitable Trust, and the Kellogg Foundation also play an important role in telling higher education’s story and in fostering increased dialogue and engagement. In the narrative following Chapter Eight, President James Morley describes the role the NACUBO plays in this area. In the narratives following Chapter Nine, Kellogg Commission Executive Director John Byrne presents an excellent description of the commission’s role in addressing these communication needs.

The Road Scholars Program

Graham B. Spanier
President, Pennsylvania State University

Penn State makes a difference in the lives of people throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and beyond. However, some of our teachers and researchers, especially those newly hired, have not had an opportunity to witness firsthand the depth and breadth of our university’s impact. Knowing how your work benefits the community is particularly important at a land-grant institution, with its emphasis on service to society.

Background

When I was provost at Oregon State University, and later chancellor of the University of Nebraska (both land-grant schools), we developed programs in which new faculty took statewide bus tours to see how their institutions affected the everyday lives of the citizenry. When I became president of Penn State in 1995, I knew a similar program would be worthwhile because Penn State is truly a geographically dispersed university. In addition to the administrative and research hub at the University Park campus, we have twenty-three other locations, ranging from small campuses that offer the first two years of baccalaureate-degree studies along with a limited number of four-year degrees, to highly specialized locations such as Penn State’s Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, the Pennsylvania College of Technology, the Great Valley Graduate Center near Philadelphia, and the Dickinson School of Law.
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So with the help of many units throughout the university, we devised the first Road Scholars tour, scheduling it for mid-May 1996, just after the close of the spring semester. I invited all newly hired faculty from all of our campuses to join me on a three-day bus tour of southeastern Pennsylvania, with the university covering all the costs of the trip. The itinerary included a bit of history, some current economics and government, exposure to Pennsylvania geography, traditional Pennsylvania culture, and visits to some of our campuses. I wanted to focus on areas related to Penn State’s outreach initiatives, especially the Cooperative Extension Service, and to its research and technology transfer strengths.

I recall quite clearly our first early morning departure, in two bus loads, from University Park: seventy-some academics, most of them unsure that this was the best way they could spend the next three days, some surely having second thoughts about the prospect of spending a couple of nights in campus dorms, and a few undoubtedly present mainly because their deans thought it would be a good way to keep the new president happy. A diverse lot, I realized, but at the same time I hoped that our adventure would change forever their perceptions about Penn State and put into broader perspective their own work as teachers and researchers.

Our Itinerary

Our first stop was at the state capitol building in Harrisburg, where we witnessed the legislature in action and met with the university’s governmental affairs representative. We heard how well respected the university was in the legislature but also were warned that “not all legislators love Penn State.” One of the reasons for our tour was to change perceptions and to help faculty understand the challenges confronting a comprehensive public research university. Then it was on to the Penn State’s medical center in Hershey for a look at the latest advances in health care and the products of Penn State medical research.

Over the course of the next two days, we toured an Amish farm in Lancaster County, which presented us with an excellent opportunity to discuss Penn State’s contributions to agriculture, along with our environmental initiatives, which were helping Amish farmers avoid polluting local water supplies. Then we visited the Berks campus, to see firsthand how a Penn State campus served one of the many diverse areas of the state. We saw manufacturing in action at Carpenter Technology in Reading, a company that employs scores of Penn State alumni and has active ties to our engineering research. We were then hosted by that city’s Police Athletic League, a venue for Penn State educational outreach programming among teen-aged youth. Our final stop before returning to University Park was at the Pennsylvania College of Technology, a Penn State affiliate in Williamsport, which has a stellar reputation for hands-on education and meeting employers’ needs for graduates with a high degree of technical skills. As one faculty member on the tour observed, “We gobbled up miles of territory and scads of information and ideas faster than the Pentium chip of a desktop computer moves bits and bytes!”

The Road Scholars has become an annual event. Beginning with the spring 2000 tour, all faculty—not just new hires—have been eligible to participate, and we’ve invited some staff as well. I serve as a host for one of the buses and ask senior administrators or faculty to host the other bus. I move back and forth from one bus to the other, and between stops I give talks about the origins and concept of land-grant universities, discuss issues in higher education, explain Penn State’s unusual multicampus university and its governance system, and talk about our budget and state politics. In the course of each annual tour, I answer dozens of questions about these and other matters in a free-flowing Q&A format on the buses.

Other places the Road Scholars have visited include historic sites such the Eckley Coal Miners’ Village, where faculty can gain a deeper appreciation for the people and accomplishments of Pennsylvania’s past; manufacturing plants such as the Harley-Davidson motorcycle factory in York, which has cooperative education programs with the Penn State York campus, and Hershey Foods’ chocolate factory (Penn State has the nation’s largest cocoa research program); and high-tech facilities such as Lockheed Martin Management and Data Systems in King of Prussia, a world leader in systems engineering and software development and a wonderful tie-in with our newly established School of Information Sciences and Technology. We have also visited many places that are just plain fun, such as Philadelphia’s famed multiethnic Reading
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Terminal market, mushroom farms, the Gettysburg battlefield, state parks, museums, Longwood Gardens, and the H. J. Heinz food plant in Pittsburgh.

A Program with Many Benefits

Invariably I receive positive and thoughtful feedback from the faculty who participate in these Road Scholars events. “It’s difficult to venture to any part of the state or in any discipline that has not been touched by Penn State,” one observed. Another remarked, “Being new to Penn State and new to Pennsylvania, I was struck by the admiration the university has in the eyes of the business and community leaders, citizens, and congressmen that we met.” Still another noted, “I get so involved in the day-to-day routine, it’s really nice to be able to step back and see the big picture.” One participant summed up his experience this way: “One of the things I took away from the tour was an appreciation for the diversity of the state. Penn State can provide outreach across a vast range from rural to urban, industrial to agricultural, but it can also draw on the vast and diverse resources of Pennsylvania.” Such comments convince me that these faculty will be more effective and more knowledgeable teachers and researchers when they return to their classrooms and labs.

The flip side of the Road Scholars program is that it gives Pennsylvanians a chance to learn more about our university, to see the myriad ways in which Penn State, the Commonwealth’s flagship public university, influences their daily lives. It is vital to the university that our constituents know who we are and what we are all about, if we are to retain their confidence and support. The Road Scholars tour is an effective tool in that context.

To promote the visibility of the scholars, we work with our Department of Public Information to invite local news reporters (electronic and print) and photographers to meet us at many of our stops. We also encourage the student newspaper, the Daily Collegian, to send a representative. On the 2002 tour, we had the good fortune to be accompanied for the full three-day itinerary by a reporter and photographer from the Associated Press. The stories that result usually further the grass roots’ understanding of the university’s mission and the specific academic achievements and interests of many of our Road Scholars. For example, when we visited Gettysburg we made sure to include faculty experts from our newly established Civil War Era Center, both to serve as guides and to make them available for press contacts. The resulting newspaper coverage raised public awareness of this significant addition to our liberal arts curricula. Even when coverage by the news media is not immediate, contact between the faculty expert and the news reporter can pay off in the form of later stories related to that faculty member’s area of expertise.

Another positive offshoot of the Road Scholars program is that it gives our new faculty a splendid opportunity to bond with one another. Participants no sooner board the buses on the first day than they’re eagerly getting to know their colleagues’ academic and personal interests. Two faculty members who were on a recent tour have announced their engagement. That news caused me to reflect a bit: over the first seven years, we’ve had three marriages and a baby come out of the tours. As I tell our participants at the Road Scholars orientation, “Feel free to get acquainted to whatever degree you wish to get acquainted.”

Admittedly, three days is not nearly enough time to get acquainted with all the ways Penn State affects Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, the sampling that our Road Scholars do receive broadens their perspective on the university’s mission and accomplishments, and I am confident it makes them better teachers and researchers. It also reminds the Commonwealth’s citizens that Penn State, some 150 years after its founding, is still committed to making their lives better.
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A Campus Plan Driven by Constituents’ Concerns

One of the underlying principles of UW-Madison’s strategic plan was to develop a clear link between the strategic priorities and internal and external concerns and anxieties about higher education. Diminished state resources had discouraged efforts to reform and innovate, but the 1989 self-study created a sense of urgency about the need both to address the quality of undergraduate education and to improve public recognition of the value of research. Public criticism of higher education stressed the neglect of undergraduate education, while the business community expressed reservations about the contributions of higher education to the competitive challenges of economic development in an increasingly global and high-tech world. Clearly, the university needed to find a way to become more connected to our external constituencies. We had to understand their concerns and needs, and they had to know that our decisions and actions were aligned with those needs.

The university initiated a number of venues for better listening and connecting. Campus and community constituents were invited to open forums for a variety of specific issues, from agriculture to binge drinking to parking ramps. As part of the 1989 and 1999 self-studies, open forums invited discussion on any topics of concern to constituents. We added staff for external liaison functions, increasing our involvement with local, state and federal constituencies. The Wisconsin Alumni Association established a formal network of alumni who became voices for the campus. External advisory councils in schools and colleges were expanded and used more effectively. A speaker’s bureau was established, greatly expanding the number of faculty and staff who were better connected with the people of the state.

The long-held “Wisconsin idea” tradition of service to the state meant that we already had extensive connections with Wisconsin citizens. We came to see that it would be important to connect with them in a new way. It was easy to simply “dispense” knowledge to citizens of the state. It was a shift to convert those contacts into a time for listening, engaging, and partnering. As we did, however, we began to learn more about how we needed to revise our priorities.

Since 1990, under the leadership of three chancellors, the University of Wisconsin-Madison has pursued a few key objectives that have given consistency and momentum to an evolving strategic plan.

By way of background, the University of Wisconsin-Madison is the flagship university of the State of Wisconsin’s twenty-six-campus public university system. UW-Madison enrolls more than forty thousand students in a range of academic studies, including 138 undergraduate majors, 158 master’s degree programs, and 115 doctoral programs. Recognized as one of the nation’s leading research universities, UW-Madison annually ranks among the leaders in research spending, the number of doctorate degrees conferred, and the volume of gift and grant money received.

This campus strategic plan is rooted in the self-study prepared as part of the accreditation process in 1989. The plan has been updated periodically on the basis of progress checks and feedback from constituents, with a major update as part of the accreditation self-study in 1999.
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A message we took from these constituent interactions was that the state did not want to invest new resources in activities that were an expected part of our mission. For instance, we were already expected to deliver quality undergraduate education, and there was little interest in providing additional funding for this activity.

It also became clear that the faculty and staff were skeptical of any planned efforts to respond to external criticism. If we were going to make progress on addressing the needs and concerns of external constituencies, such initiatives would have to resonate with faculty and staff as well. The faculty-led accreditation self-study identified external concerns and thus lent a kind of legitimacy to efforts addressing them. The key was to root strategic changes in that self-study and to identify as pilot ventures programs designed either to improve undergraduate education or to amplify economic impacts of research. Ultimately, initiating these programs on the basis of the self-study results and our mission helped better connect the university with the external constituencies we serve. Other more innovative reforms that would require new funds or reallocations of existing funds were expressed as a part of our vision, which was described as areas where we wanted to do things differently and to do different things.

Success in implementing our mission—improving what we were already doing—would constitute a ramp to more visionary efforts. Keeping our mission in the forefront and linking our strategic goals to that mission greatly facilitated communication with outside constituencies. Our first priority was to tap existing efforts to improve undergraduate education. On the basis of surveys, town meetings, and focus groups, we decided to address the first-year student experience. Most responses stressed the need to offer greater rewards for teaching, but our surveys indicated that the much-publicized indifference of faculty to undergraduate teaching was exaggerated. Student surveys revealed a high opinion of teaching and the curricula but a low opinion of advising and frustration with class access. Our response was to accelerate and to expand existing proposals to improve communication with high schools, to create an orientation for newly admitted students, and to reserve or create a class schedule that would guarantee the availability of appropriate first-year classes. To recognize faculty and staff contributions to teaching and learning and to encourage them to discuss their achievements, we created a Teaching Academy. The discussion and subsequent approval of the Teaching Academy by the Faculty Senate reflected skepticism about deliberative reform and apprehension about extradepartmental entities, but also the commitment of a respected segment of the faculty to innovation in undergraduate education.

**Moving Beyond Wants and Demands to Addressing Needs Innovatively**

Once we had addressed some of the most pressing constituent concerns, our efforts matured into a series of increasingly innovative programs. These programs moved beyond responding to problems by creating programs that enhanced and expanded our offerings and, in some cases, attracted new resources.

One such example was the development of several thematic residential learning communities. The inclusion of the residence halls in the academic planning of the university was a reversal of almost three decades of indifference to out-of-classroom student life. Community members, faculty, and staff were engaged in various aspects of these residential learning community efforts, including advisory committees, visiting speakers, and participating in programs.

Another related program funded by alumni support was a center and information system designed to match student interests and skills with the service needs of the community and nation and to review service-learning opportunities in the curriculum. Again, constituents were engaged in the design and development of these efforts and are partners in or recipients of dozens of service-learning projects that are resulting from the program.

A program to support faculty-supervised undergraduate research projects during the summer between the third and fourth year was supported with endowment funds and proved to be so successful that the state appropriated additional funding. This program also broke down the stereotypical association of research exclusively with graduate education and gained external recognition of the value of research at the undergraduate level.

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while much of the funding came from special appropriations or alumni gifts. The implementation of the plan clearly restored communication with our external constituencies, and they responded by investing in new programs.

Our second commitment was to improve knowledge transfer. The "Wisconsin idea" had for almost a century captured the role of the university in serving the social and economic needs of the state. In part because of the separation of Extension from UW-Madison at the time of the creation of the UW system, the contributions of the campus to the state were less obvious. The symbol of the renewed partnership was the University Research Park. After a slow start, the park became the local focus of several high-tech and biotech companies based on innovations developed at UW-Madison. Collaboration among the parties devoted to seeding research, communicating research, patenting research, and facilitating corporate organization was rewarded by a state investment in a Biotechnology Center. Similar collaborations occurred in engineering, business, and education, and eventually new curricula and new delivery mechanisms were developed to respond to local needs. The establishment of the Research Park and its ensuing success involved extensive partnerships with an expanded constituency. The results are visible and tangible to the economic well-being of the state and thus have created a growing, committed constituency among the business community, as well as government.

International programs, previously segmented by area and topic, were constituted as an International Institute, which facilitated the integrated study of the local and the global, and also gave greater emphasis and visibility to the area. The Institute’s Center for World Affairs and the Global Economy brought faculty expertise to business and government leaders seeking to participate in global economic markets. The Asian Partnership Initiative reconnected the campus with UW alumni overseas and opened doors to Asian markets and educational institutions.

Perhaps the most innovative development was the cluster-hiring program. This project created faculty positions in clusters drawn from several programs that were connected by common research or curricular interests. This idea was based on the belief that new knowledge lies in the space between our traditional departmentally organized disciplines. Many social problems and opportunities for economic development can best be addressed by collaborative efforts across disciplines. For example, new approaches for minimally invasive medical procedures are being developed through collaborative efforts among faculty from engineering, biological sciences, and medicine. Our initial program involved twenty positions in five clusters of four. Almost one hundred proposals were received. Instead of tiresome negotiations about fractional positions, each department received a position in return for a collaborative proposal with related programs. Proposals included genetics, international studies, religious studies, nanotechnology, and many others. The highly specialized intellectual division of labor that has dominated twentieth-century academic life was decisively enriched by efforts to cross-wire disciplines and to integrate knowledge. Many of the cluster appointments created interesting stories that were actively communicated to the public. Reallocated funds were used to support the initial round of cluster hire appointments, but these initial ventures were used as leverage for a successful proposal for state funding that resulted in the creation of approximately one hundred additional positions. As with so many specific objectives of the planning process, small and innovative pilot efforts embedded in the vision attracted both private and public support.

**Communicating Our Strategic Plan**

With the multiplicity of stakeholders, each with their own needs and expectations, it was critical to find a way to explain our vision and to connect it with their varied perspectives. In addition to a concise and unpretentious strategic planning document, we developed a one-page diagram that concisely captured the main elements of our plan. Each presentation of the plan was tailored to highlight elements, initiatives, examples, and data that were of most interest to that particular audience. But the fundamentals were consistent across all constituents (see Figure 2.3).
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Figure 2.3. Communicating the Strategic Plan.

**Mission:**
To create, integrate, transfer, and apply knowledge

**Vision Themes**
- Learning Experience
- Learning Community
- Learning Environment

**Priorities**
- Maintaining our research preeminence
- Reconceptualizing undergraduate education
- Updating the Wisconsin idea
- Joining the global community

**Priority Systems**
- Maximizing our human resources: employees
- Maximizing our human resources: students
- Rethinking our organization and encouraging collaboration
- Using technology wisely
- Renewing our physical environment

The plan as well as outcomes and results were communicated extensively through the media, advisory bodies, speaking engagements, campus reports and publications, and events on campus. The many new partnerships and activities to engage constituents provided natural venues for communicating our strategic priorities and results. We took every opportunity to communicate and to tell stories about efforts and advancements in the issues we knew the public cared about. The strategic priorities were the framework for speeches, campus events such as the sesquicentennial celebration, annual reports and other campus publications, news releases, and so on. Indeed, if these were our priorities, then they should be the subject of our communications. Our communication and education efforts were not separate activities but rather infused into our everyday opportunities to connect.

**Outcomes and Benefits**

As a result of addressing the expressed concerns of our constituents, increasing trust began to develop among the stakeholders. This trust was first displayed by the growing involvement in and support of a series of small-but-bold pilot projects. That trust expanded into broad public support of innovative programs with state appropriations for new faculty positions, salary increases, and student program initiatives. Private giving also rose dramatically in response to plans and innovations. External research awards increased, raising the campus to number two in the nation for research expenditures/volume. Over $800 million has been allocated to a rebuilding of the campus infrastructure. Virtually every aspect of our budget improved. Specific outcomes related to our mission included:

- Over 150 new faculty lines were awarded to jump-start more than fifty new areas of knowledge through the cluster hiring program.
- As of 2001, 218 firms were identified as start-ups or spin-offs with close ties to UW-Madison, accounting for $1 billion in gross annual revenues and employing sixty-seven hundred people, mostly in high-wage professional jobs.
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• Students are actively engaged in living communities, service learning in the community, undergraduate research projects, and enhanced first-year programs, all of which enhance their learning through an extension beyond traditional classroom teaching.
• Students participate in international learning opportunities, and many new international partnerships have been established to enhance learning and research.
• The number of student applicants has risen steadily, as has their level of qualifications.

Many of these outcomes can be traced at least in part to the level of stakeholder and constituent trust and engagement that was built over time by means of a widely publicized, clear set of priorities and a commitment to implement them.

Grounding the plan in constituent needs and engaging them in our efforts has helped the campus stay focused on strategic priorities and initiatives in spite of changes in leadership. The strategic priorities have become a part of the institution and have been successfully transitioned through three chancellors without losing momentum. They are part of the institution.

Lessons Learned

These outcomes would not have been possible with an “ivory tower” approach. Public trust had to be built over time, with listening and action. Being explicit about our priorities, communicating them broadly through multiple venues, and then acting on them built trust and credibility. The public began to believe we would do what we said we would do, and funding followed. Building internal legitimacy had to come first, which was accomplished by using the self-study as the framework for action. The approach was aligned with academic culture and constituted a “pull” rather than a “push” to action.

We had to first ensure our mission was being carried out effectively by making improvements in undergraduate education. After that, we were able to move to innovative programs, including technology transfer and cluster hiring. In essence, we had to address the wants first, and then move to opportunities for innovations that went beyond what anyone expected.

The current declining economy is presenting the ultimate test of this approach. As our constituents face difficult economic choices, it is critical they understand the long-term benefits the university can bring to the economic well-being of the state. They also need to trust that we will deliver. Engaging our constituents, communicating with them, and building trust have become essential to carrying out our mission.
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