elements of the status quo while preserving our freethinking, collegial culture.

Berkeley's long-term change effort is gaining momentum. UC Berkeley faces a period of economic constraint and particularly tough choices. As we face this and other institutional challenges, we are committed to building upon our tradition of excellence to make UC Berkeley an even more effective and distinguished institution in the years ahead.

From: PURSUITING EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION
EIGHT FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGES
Brent D. Ruben, Ph.D.
Chapter 10, pp. 381-388

Chapter Ten

Excellence in Practice
Asking More of Ourselves and Our Institutions

This book examines eight challenges facing colleges and universities, each of which is a core issue with broad significance within the higher education community from philosophical and practical perspectives. Even though each challenge represents a problem, each is also an opportunity to reexamine and clarify our sense of purpose, reaffirm our guiding principles, and reconcile differences between traditional academic values and the demands of an increasingly competitive marketplace for educational services. This final chapter is a brief review of these challenges, with closing observations on their implications.

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

Higher education needs broadened understanding, appreciation, and support for its work among many constituencies and publics. Achieving this purpose requires more genuine commitment to dialogue—more dedicated listening and more clearly articulated and persuasive explanations of our purposes and aspirations, presented in ways that are more sensitive to the perspective, experience, and education of those with whom we are speaking.

The reasons for lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of the academy are many and can often be traced to the sheer complexity of our institutions, their missions, and the number of constituencies we serve. The range of services and potential points
of intersection between the academy and its constituencies presents a challenge, but it can also be an opportunity if we approach it as such. Doing so requires the concerted effort of all of us—administrators, faculty, and staff (and students)—not simply of those professionals within the institution whose job description calls for attention to these matters.

Creating shared perspectives should be an implicit goal of every encounter with constituents—beginning with the first exposure that potential students, family members, and visitors have to an institution, and permeating each subsequent interaction between the individual and institution over the course of his or her lifetime—as a student, alumni, employer, visitor, participant in university events, potential donor, and lifelong member of the college or university community.

Better Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Workplaces: Bridging the Gap Between the World of the Academy and the World of Work

The academic community can benefit greatly from increasing dialogue about the workplace, and the knowledge and competencies needed for entry, advancement, and leadership within all sectors. Some perceive a substantial difference between the education provided by most institutions and the needs of the workplace, but this perception may be exaggerated. A closer look at the clusters of competencies that are viewed as necessary to workplace success reveals many similarities to those traditionally valued within the academy. That many perceive otherwise speaks to the need for increased interaction and engagement between the world of higher education and the world of work.

The increased dialogue should be targeted to broadening shared understanding of the knowledge and competencies that are important to success in the workplace; the most effective approaches for teaching and learning these competencies; the respective roles best played by the academy and the workplaces in providing this education; and possibilities for working more collaboratively in research, instruction, and outreach efforts relative to this issue.

Becoming More Effective Learning Organizations: Clarifying Goals and Evaluating Outcomes

Given the mission of the academy, few challenges seem more basic than becoming model learning organizations. Clarifying goals, developing methods for evaluating and monitoring our achievements relative to these goals, and creating a climate that is open to learning from any and all pertinent sources are among the activities that are characteristic of such organizations. An important element of this process is the translation of institutional missions, aspirations, and goals into indicators of organizational achievement so that successes—as well as failures—can be highlighted and used as sources of learning and improvement. Identifying and using a cluster of organizational indices, an organizational dashboard, can help to sharpen focus, foster a shared sense of possibilities and priorities, and allow each faculty and staff member in the institution to see the connection between his or her work and the purposes and future directions of the institution.

Given the benefits, the importance of being proactive in defining and using excellence measures cannot be overemphasized. The alternative is to wait until accountability or performance measures are defined and imposed by others, more often than not by groups that have a considerably more restricted view of what constitutes excellence than do administrators, faculty, and staff within the program, department, or institution. The selected indicators must emphasize academic dimensions of excellence, but it must also take account of factors that are judged to be important to those for whom our programs and services are created—and to faculty and staff—as well those that are critical to operational and financial effectiveness.

Integrating Organizational Assessment, Planning, and Improvement: Making Organizational Self-Study and Change Everyday Activities

There is a pressing need to implement integrated approaches to assessment, planning, and improvement in academic and administrative departments, and indeed entire institutions. Such
of intersection between the academy and its constituencies presents a challenge, but it can also be an opportunity if we approach it as such. Doing so requires the concerted effort of all of us—administrators, faculty, and staff (and students)—not simply of those professionals within the institution whose job description calls for attention to these matters.

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**Integrating Organizational Assessment, Planning, and Improvement: Making Organizational Self-Study and Change Everyday Activities**

There is a pressing need to implement integrated approaches to assessment, planning, and improvement in academic and administrative departments, and indeed entire institutions. Such
approaches should acknowledge the uniqueness of each department, but they can also encourage the identification and sharing of effective practices across departments and institutions.

Baldrige-based frameworks adapted to the special languages and culture of higher education offer programs, departments, and institutions a model for addressing these formidable challenges. Excellence in Higher Education is one such program, and the North Central Accrediting Association's Academic Quality Improvement Program is another. Programs based on the Baldrige model help to identify strengths and areas for improvement that translate into strategic and action plans, clarify mission and aspirations, create common language for organizational analysis and improvement, and encourage a focus on the perspectives of stakeholders. Moreover, they pose a standard of comparison using an accepted assessment framework, and they guide the establishment of benchmark comparisons and learning across departments and institutions. These programs also help departments and institutions prepare for external review and accreditation, increase the shared commitment to institutional change and advancement, and foster a culture of ongoing self-assessment and continuous improvement.

Enhancing Collaboration and Community: Aligning the Rhetoric and Reality of Campus Culture

Respect for individual differences and collegiality are core values within the academy, and nearly every institution visibly endorses the principles of mutual respect, cooperation, collaboration, and community. Despite our ongoing articulation of these values, significant gaps between the rhetoric and reality continue to challenge our good intentions. Some of the problem areas are already a focus of attention; others, as in cultural gaps based on differences in occupational roles, disciplines, or technical specialties, have received less attention but are of no less concern.

Occupational and role-based cultures—such as those that may develop among faculty, administrative, and staff groups within particular academic or administrative departments—serve necessary and important functions within colleges and universities, as they do in organizations in other sectors. However, they may also interfere with organizational excellence, undermine our shared sense of institutional purpose and vision, detract from campus cohesion and institutional pride, and most important undermine our ability to create the kind of exemplary teaching and learning environment to which the academy is dedicated. There is a need to promote and cultivate collaborative values and competencies among faculty, administrators, and staff. We also need to identify and experiment with boundary-spanning organizational models, and to introduce incentive and recognition systems to reward collaborative efforts, along with individual accomplishment.

Recognizing That Everyone in the Institution Is a Teacher: Focusing on the Student Experience

Members of the faculty and all members of the administrative, professional, and support groups teach through each and every one of the tens of thousands of interpersonal encounters with students, guests, and one another that transpire daily on every campus. Together, we are the face of the institution. Important lessons are being taught in classrooms and laboratories through lectures and other planned activities, but also through any number of unplanned events—through the kind of organizations we design, through how we do our work, and through the way we relate to students, other stakeholders, and one another. Together, we are presenting a complex and diverse array of lessons—for the next generation of doctors, teachers, engineers, artists, corporate managers, health care providers, lawyers, and civic leaders.

It is essential that the lessons we are teaching be created by design, rather than by default. To achieve this goal, we must be clear as to what kinds of organizations, relationships, and environments we offer as models. Excellence in education is not, then, solely a faculty matter. We are all instructors and stewards of the student learning experience. We share responsibility for shaping the learning environment and for shaping the perception—and the reality—of teaching excellence.

Devoting More Attention and Resources to Leadership: Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Outstanding Leaders

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capable of engaging and mobilizing colleagues toward a shared vision of excellence, and appropriately recognized and rewarded for their contributions. Exceptional leaders are needed in all areas and at all levels within colleges and universities.

The time-honored approaches used by the academy to identify, recruit, prepare, and retain leaders are increasingly inadequate today. A new leadership development paradigm is needed, one that uses the academy's core educational values and competencies and allows those of us within the academy to benefit from the kinds of developmental experiences we have long advocated and provided for others. In support of this approach, we need to encourage further study of leadership in higher education, offer meaningful incentives and rewards, create more meaningful leadership development opportunities, and implement systematic leadership-effectiveness review processes.

More Broadly Framing Our Vision: Pursuing Excellence in All That We Do

Undoubtedly, the most fundamental need is for a new, more inclusive vision of excellence to which we can aspire. Our mission statements and much of the work of the academy are dedicated to the pursuit of academic excellence. Yet excellence in academics is very much dependent upon establishing and sustaining excellent relationships with our beneficiaries, and upon developing effective and efficient organizations. In the day-to-day experiences of students, faculty, and staff, the lines between academic, service, and operational aspects of a university often become blurred. The result is impressions and images of an institution that are influenced not only by efforts at academic and scholarly excellence but also by the way individuals are treated by faculty and staff, the responsiveness and user-friendliness of systems and procedures, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the infrastructure. These combined perceptions, recollections, and accounts from others translate into important decisions that affect institutional reputation; student recruitment; alumni support; faculty and staff morale; and the flow of resources to support learning, discovery, and engagement.

The interdependency of academic, service, and operational excellence is fundamental; unfortunately, the consequences of deficiencies in service and operational areas are often more obvious than the contributions made by academics. Today, more dramatically than in previous times, excellence in higher education requires a commitment to high standards in all three domains.

Concluding Comments

As I wrote in the opening chapter of this book, the term *ivory tower* was first used to refer to a kind of sanctuary, a retreat from the realities of the day (Sainte-Beuve, 1869). The ivory tower image of the academy, however—a place that is different and disconnected from the "real" world—is a myth. There are those who would argue that this was never an appropriate characterization of higher education, but few would suggest that this portrayal is appropriate today. For better or worse, higher education is confronted by all the operational, financial, and cultural challenges that face other organizations.

Those who care deeply about higher education abhor the thought of operating colleges and universities as "consumer-driven" organizations guided solely by economic and marketplace considerations. Yet the image of the ivory tower—where purpose and direction are set without regard to the perspectives of the many groups and organizations upon whose support our institutions depend—is equally untenable.

The Kellogg Commission (2001b) described it this way: "Our key challenge is two-fold. We must maintain our legacy of world-class teaching, research, and public service. At the same time, in a rapidly changing world, we must build on our legacy of responsiveness and relevance" (p. 1).

An institution's vision and its core ideology set the context that motivates and guides the practices through which the organization is defined and redefined. What is called for now is a new, broader, and more inclusive view of organizational excellence. This new vision should underscore the importance, interdependence, and creative tensions of the goals of academic, service, and operational excellence. It should identify the academy as a place that advances knowledge, and one that applies, tests, and uses that knowledge to improve its own functioning—one that clarifies and studies best practices in health care, education, business, humanities, and the arts, and employs those best practices that are relevant to our work.

Translating this vision into reality requires that we ask more of ourselves and our institutions as we work together to create
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Translating this vision into reality requires that we ask more of ourselves and our institutions as we work together to create
contemporary centers of learning that are the embodiment of the best organizational principles and practices possible. In addition to giving consideration to the kinds of institutional improvements suggested in the preceding chapters and narratives, there are also more personal challenges confronting those of us who are fortunate enough to work in a university environment.

Perhaps the most important task facing all of us—faculty, administrators, and staff—is to continually remind ourselves of the vital role we play as full-time ambassadors for our institutions in each and every interaction with students, parents, alumni, and the public. Every conversation we have presents an opportunity for us to play a significant personal role in helping to enrich the understanding and support for the purposes and aspirations of our college or university, and higher education in general.

The primary additional challenge for those of us who serve in administrative or other staff roles is to recognize that as we carry out the duties of our respective positions, we are also teachers. In every decision or action that we take, whether at our desks or elsewhere on campus, we are teaching others about organizational life, interpersonal relations, conflict resolution, the importance of pride in one's work, and myriad other critically important lessons. In each instance we are conveying not only our personal values but the values of our institution—regardless of our job descriptions. We are all personally and directly involved in creating learning experiences that help to shape the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of tomorrow's citizens, parents, and leaders.

For those of us who are faculty members, pursuing this more inclusive vision of excellence calls upon us to become as dedicated to the advancement of our departments and institutions as we are to our own scholarship and disciplines, as concerned with the quality of the lived experience of our students within our institutions as we are with the quality of the content and delivery of our courses over which we have more direct control, and as committed to dialogue and collaboration with administrators and staff as we are with our academic colleagues. Put simply, for us, excellence in practice means reinventing the significance of the phrase "the faculty are the university."

References

"Academic Chairpersons' Conference." Kansas State University, 2001. (www.dce.ksu.edu/dce/cl/academicchairpersons/)