

Faculty work: Tensions between educational and economic values

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Abstract

Faculty are the critical labor element in the pursuit of the economic goals of community colleges, yet they are not central to institutional decision-making. Their views and values are not consistent with the goals and actions of their colleges. Instead, these goals and actions are aligned with business and industry, directed by government and college administrators. Although there is a misalignment of faculty values and institutional actions, faculty do not comprise an oppositional culture within their colleges. This multi-site qualitative study addresses the presence of tensions between educational values of faculty and the economic values of faculty work.

Faculty work: Tensions between educational and economic values

Overview

The heightened sensitivity of recent research and scholarship to political-economic contexts for higher education in both the U.S. and internationally (Clark, 1998; Currie & Newson, 1998; Leslie & Slaughter, 1997; Levin, 2001; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Rhoades, 1998; Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000) alerts us to shifting behaviors and values in the academy. Even the academically distasteful concept of “profit” is endemic in public discussions about universities (Bok, 2003), as if profit-making is a major goal of the institution. Universities are not the sole higher education institution affected by economic pressures and practicing adaptive strategies such as “academic capitalism” and other entrepreneurial behaviors. Community colleges are participants as well, and faculty at these institutions are the core workforce in this political economy: they are not only the critical labor element in the pursuit of economic goals but also a potential source of opposition to institutional economic behaviors.

Unlike Seidman’s (1985) dark images of discontented faculty at community colleges in the late 1970s, or Grubb’s (1999) portrayal of faculty ineptitude in instruction at community colleges, I depict community college faculty as possessing attitudes and values that are shaped by their institutions, responsive to the conditions of the day, and contextualized within personal, group, and organizational experiences. I do not view faculty at community colleges as desirous of university teaching posts (Seidman, 1985) and thus malcontent with their present roles of nourishing an under-class (McGrath & Spear, 1991; Richardson, Fisk, & Okun, 1983). Nor do I view faculty as detached from the administrative life of the institution, nor administrators as detached

from faculty work (Grubb, 1999). Distinct from other scholarly views (Rhoads & Valadez, 1996; Seidman, 1985; Shaw, Rhoads, & Valadez, 1999), faculty are neither liberators nor self-consciously downtrodden workers. This discussion, then, is less of a polemic about institutional failure and more a description and explanation of faculty behaviors and values and their connections to institutional actions.

In examining faculty work, I set out to describe the tensions between the educational values and the economic values of faculty work. Allegiances to the institution, to students, to the curriculum, and to disciplinary discourse were examined and compared to the entrepreneurial and managerial characteristics of the institution. I expected to see that community college faculty work was increasingly managed according to a neo-liberal ideology oriented to and favoring economic globalization and managerialism (Apple, 2001; Kingfisher, 2002; Strickland, 2002; Stromquist, 2002). In the context of economic globalization and managerialism I also expected to find a counter-culture evident within the institution. Such a sub-culture would provide opposition to the mainstream thinking or corporate culture of the institution.

Community college culture

The question of oppositional cultures or cultural conflict has been part of the literature on community colleges since the 1960s (Clark, 1960; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Kempner, 1991; London, 1978; Weis, 1985). Kempner defines cultural conflict "as the opposition or antagonism among individuals over the beliefs and values they hold. When beliefs, values, and symbols of one group clash with what is significant for another group, we find cultural conflict" (p. 132). Community colleges are viewed as sites of cultural conflict between such forces as social mobility and social reproduction and social justice and capitalistic

production (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1994; Kempner, 1990; Shaw, Rhoads, & Valadez, 1999). These conflicts may take the form of tensions between students and faculty (Weis, 1985), between faculty and administration (Grubb, 1999), or between faculty groups (Kempner, 1991).

Seidman's (1985) argument is that faculty in community colleges in the 1980s are isolated, with diminished power in an ever increasing hierarchy. Thus, the antagonism is between faculty and administration. Grubb (1999) in a more recent examination of faculty reiterates the presence of a hierarchical organization in community colleges and he associates this with authoritarian decision-making. These conditions, he suggests, are responsible for deep divisions between faculty and administration. Community college faculty, Grubb (1999) notes, are isolated. Rhoades (1998) in discussing increasing managerial influence in higher education institutions, including community colleges, refers to institutional decision-making as "professional peripheralization," meaning that managers' actions have pushed academic professionals to the margins in central decision-making. While he does not argue that this results in antagonism between faculty and managers, his characterizations suggest faculty isolation from the mainstream of institutional management, where the administration is located.

In some distinction to the concept of faculty culture as an oppositional culture, McGrath and Spear (1991), who make a case for the deterioration of academic culture in community colleges, view faculty behaviors as grounded in institutional not disciplinary experience and values. Faculty in community colleges, they argue, pursue integration with colleagues by sharing common experiences and abstaining from the critique of colleagues' views as often practiced in universities. The behavior of communal identification is referred to as "practitioners' culture," a condition that suggests a muting of criticism and the

ignoring of academic practice, such as appeals to authority or argument based upon research and scholarship. Although McGrath and Spear (1991) do not address administrative behaviors, the implication is that as long as administrators honor the “practitioners’ culture” and behave in accord with its standards, as they are likely to do as former faculty, then faculty and administrators will not be at odds. Indeed, they may be an integrated unit in their opposition to university values, such as merit.

In spite of this body of literature on faculty culture, there is little attention to cultural conflict between faculty and individuals or groups external to the institution, such as government or those representing special interest groups including business and industry. The assumption within community college literature generally is that if there is antagonism, it occurs between faculty and management—in the form of administration and the governing board. But the role and import of public policy in the purposes and operations of community colleges (Levin, 2001; Townsend & Twombly, 2000) suggest that confining cultural conflict to internal antagonisms is too narrow.

In broadening the relationship between faculty and management to that between faculty and a neo-liberal ideology, I use several theoretical perspectives and analytical frameworks for the collection and analysis of data. Neo-liberal ideology is expressed through institutional actions as neo-liberalism is a political project that relies upon institutions for social and economic change (Campbell & Pedersen, 2001), and is thus aligned with organizational behaviors and values (Casey, 1995). Such a condition suggests an institutional approach (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983; Di Maggio & Powell, 1991) to the understanding of organizational dynamics.

Perspectives

In addressing the impact of neo-liberal values upon community colleges, I use globalization theory (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999; Teeple, 1995; Waters, 1995) and organizational theory, particularly institutional theory (Scott, 1995) and cultural theory (Martin & Meyerson, 1988), to examine faculty work. Globalization theory provides one framework for understanding the competitive behaviors manifest in community colleges (Levin, 2001), and to some extent, along with institutional theory, suggests explanations of institutional similarities and differences with other like institutions in adopting and implementing productivity and efficiency measures, among other behaviors. Organizational theory suggests how community colleges adapt to external forces and pressures (Cameron, 1984; Morgan, 1997) and how internal structures and behaviors are configured in order to propel and implement action in organizations (Mintzberg, 1989). Cultural theory sensitizes us to the variant interpretations of organizational behaviors including the presence of organizational cultures, or sub-cultures, as well as the phenomenon of an organization as a culture (Smircich, 1983). These perspectives are applied to faculty work and values within the community college; they frame those actions of the institution that are aligned with economic behaviors and values and their accompanying tensions.

Clearly, the impact of globalization, and specifically economic globalization, alters institutions (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999; Teeple, 1995; Waters, 1995), including higher education institutions (Currie & Newson, 1998; Leslie & Slaughter, 1997; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2002), and the subset community colleges (Levin, 2001; Levin, 2002; Twombly & Townsend, 2001). Globalization in its economic form is viewed by scholars as the instrument of neo-liberalism

(Chomsky, 1999; Teeple, 1995), an ideology or political project that alters institutions. According to Campbell and Pedersen (2001), the ideals of neo-liberalism include minimalist social services, taxation and business regulations, free market solutions to economic problems, as well as flexible labor markets and decentralized capital-labor relations, which require weak unions and limitations upon collective bargaining. Education is no doubt part of the neo-liberal project which includes “shift[s] in the direction of increasing marketization, a redrawing of the public/private distinction, valorization of possessive individualism, and shifts in state expenditure (often accompanied by increasing state interference) in social arenas.”(Kingfisher, 2002, p. 4).

Increasingly, professional work in higher education institutions has been described as controlled by managerialism or new managerialism (Deem, 1998; Hardy, 1996; Levin, 2001; Rhoades, 1998). Hardy (1996) defines managerialism as “ a concept that encompasses an increased emphasis on professional management, formal planning, systematic performance evaluation, centralized resource allocation, and directive leadership...This concept advocates greater accountability, centralized authority, and objective resource allocation to improve performance” (p. 3). And, similar to other scholars’ views on corporatism (Casey, 1995; Kenway, 1998; Saul, 1995), Hardy declares that managerialism “...is predicated on a unitary perspective in which all interested parties are assumed to be bound together by a common goal” (1996, p. 3). Deem (1998) uses the term “new managerialism” for higher education to refer to management practices and values commonly associated with the private sector. Casey (1995) indicates that the effects of managerialism and corporatism include the homogenization of views and values among workers and the alignment of these views and values with those promoted by the organization. In higher education institutions, these views and values are oriented toward the

marketplace (Leslie & Slaughter, 1997) and to entrepreneurial behaviors (Marginson & Considine, 2000; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000). Institutions are focused upon generating revenue and reducing labor costs. High productivity, global competition, and rapid change (Casey, 1995) are the new norms for higher education (Currie & Newson, 1998; Marginson & Considine, 2000). If higher education institutions are fast becoming neo-liberal institutions (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000), have community college faculty become “academic capitalists” (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) and “managed professionals” (Rhoades, 1998)?

Productivity and efficiency behaviors in the context of institutional orientation to the marketplace are likely to impact both faculty work and faculty values. One of the characteristics of professionals is their exercise of control over their conditions of work and indeed over definitions of work itself (Scott, 1995). That is, autonomy in how work is to be accomplished is a hallmark of professionals (Brint, 1994). The behaviors associated with managerialism and corporatism, including organizational emphasis upon productivity and efficiency, are bound to circumvent faculty autonomy. There is evidence that in universities faculty professional values are also circumvented by managerialism and corporatism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Marginson & Considine, 2000); yet, there is little evidence to corroborate this condition in community colleges. Although community college faculty may not be aligned with specific disciplinary values (Cohen & Brawer, 2003), traditionally they have been identified with values associated with teaching and with the promotion of student learning (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Grubb, 1999), suggesting an occupation if not a profession of teaching adults. Notwithstanding Cohen and Outcalt’s (2001) rejection of community college faculty as professionals, community

college faculty do share occupational traits with their university counterparts, especially in their teaching roles, including considerable autonomy.

The study

This study attempts to identify and explain faculty behaviors and values and the connection of these to institutional actions within the community college. The investigation addresses four research questions: (1) What are faculty perceptions of and responses to business-like and market-oriented behaviors of their institutions? (2) To what extent has managerialism occupied a central place in the community college? (3) Do faculty comprise an oppositional culture and, if so, what is the nature of their opposition? (4) Given the presence of an institutional orientation to the marketplace and the central role of managerialism, is there a new institutional context for the community college?

A major assumption of this investigation is that community colleges are increasingly globalized institutions: they are aligned with global economies, reliant upon communication technologies, impacted by the global flows of people, primarily through immigration, and subject to government policy that directs these institutions to serve the state through responding to economic demands such as the preparation of a competitive workforce and the operation of a public institution at the lowest costs possible. This assumption is derived from a body of literature on globalization and higher education (for example, Clark, 1998; Currie & Newson, 1998; Levin 2001; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

Methodology, methods and data sources

This investigation falls within the traditions of qualitative, field methods research, and relies upon data drawn from social behaviors and actors. The purpose is to provide explanations of institutional behaviors based upon case study research (Eisenhardt, 1989). Research methods adhere to mainstream qualitative field methods for collecting and analyzing data (Burgess, 1984; Mason, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994): to ensure that data are authentic, not manufactured; representative of a sample set, whether individuals or groups or sites, and meaningful; and that findings and conclusions are both credible and coherent. Data sources include samples of faculty—full-time and part-time—in a large number of program areas and disciplines, including academic, occupational, and vocational fields, and librarians and counselors, as well as faculty who occupy quasi-administrative roles such as department chairs, program heads, or union executives. Sources include librarians and counselors because they are classified as faculty in these institutions. They are also members of the faculty bargaining unit, who can and do serve in executive union positions and participate on college committees as faculty, such as the Faculty Senate or Academic Council. Indeed, counselors often teach (e.g., human development). Data for the investigation were selected from interviews with 171 faculty, which included as well sixteen focus group interviews, at seven community colleges in five legal jurisdictions from the period of 1996-2001. These jurisdictions included the states of California, Hawaii, and Washington, and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. The selection of these sites was theoretically based (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Mason, 1996), aligned with globalization theory. These were colleges in states and provinces in the West, occupying dynamic environments, oriented to international trade,

electronic technology, and immigration; they occupied jurisdictions where government was a key actor in postsecondary education (Levin, 2001). They were also unionized environments, a condition common for the majority of community colleges and faculty (Kater & Levin, forthcoming). The two Canadian jurisdictions—Alberta and British Columbia—were sites where community colleges were comparable to U.S community colleges, especially given that in these two sites the California community college was a model used in their development (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986). The use of both U.S. and Canadian colleges permitted national comparisons and might suggest behavioral and value differences that reflect institutional context.

All seven sites were observed during the period of 1996-1999, and data were collected through the tape recording and note-taking of interviews, which occurred from 1996 to 2001, and journaling of observations during the 1996-1999 period. In addition to on-site data collection, government and institutional documents covering the period of 1989-2001 were reviewed and analyzed to provide a context for interview data. These documents included collective bargaining agreements, budgets, program and course information, college policies and planning documents, and government strategic plans and reports. All seven institutions were given pseudonyms as part of the agreement of each institution to participate in the investigation. The California college was named Suburban Valley Community College (SV), the Hawaii college was named Pacific Suburban Community College (PS), the Washington state college was named City South Community College (CS), the Alberta college was named North Mountain College (NM), and the three British Columbia colleges were named City Center College (CC), East Shoreline College (ES), and Rural Valley College (RV), respectively. These abbreviations are used in Table 1 and in the use of quotations.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were the principal method of data collection, and data were gleaned from the focus of this investigation, faculty. In this sense, the majority of data could be called “emic” (Erickson, 1986). Data were collected by an interview team of university researchers and graduate students with the principal investigator conducting the majority of interviews. The use of a team approach increases validity (Eisenhardt, 1989) and offered the opportunity for preliminary data analysis in debriefing sessions following interviews. Sampling procedures included an invitation to all faculty within the seven institutions to participate as well as specific targeting of a stratified sample of faculty by disciplinary area and program (Academic, Occupational, Basic Education, Vocational, Continuing and community education and non-instructional faculty including counselors and librarians, who are classified as faculty within their colleges). In addition, a sample of department heads and coordinators were invited to participate as well as all union presidents and vice-presidents. The breakdown of those interviewed is displayed in Table 1.

This profile contains the number of faculty interviewed at each institution and the categories of faculty who were interviewed. The category of academic/university transfer includes the largest number of faculty and this is consistent with national data on community college faculty (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002). Nationally, 52.3% of community college faculty in 1999 were reported as affiliated with one of the areas of humanities, social sciences, education, natural sciences and engineering, areas customarily referred to as academic in community colleges. Additionally, the category of Health Sciences constitutes 13% of U.S. faculty in 1999. In this investigation, 10 occupational faculty are identified with Health Sciences, or 6% of all faculty interviewed. In total for this study, 18% of faculty was classified as Occupational

and 9% as Vocational. This is comparable to national figures for both occupational and vocational faculty, especially if librarians and counselors are excluded from the sample in this investigation. Finally, 12% of the faculty interviewed for this investigation was classified as part-time. While the national U.S. average of part-time faculty is over 60% (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002), and reportedly lower in Canada although Canada does not collect these data nationally, there are several sound rationales for interviewing a considerably smaller percentage of part-time faculty than full-time. First, part-time faculty may teach only one course a semester or term and actually constitute a small percentage of classroom teachers. Second, many part-time faculty are marginally affiliated with the institution; many are without offices; and many are not active in the committees or governance structure of the institution (Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 1995; Wagoner, 2003). Third, part-time faculty are likely not on-campus to be interviewed; and they are often not connected to communication networks that would inform them of the opportunity to be interviewed. The category “other” includes not only counselors and librarians but also faculty who are aligned with continuing education and distance education programs. This category does include faculty with an occupational or vocational orientation as well as those with general and basic education. For example, one of the faculty from East Shoreline College placed in the “Other” category is affiliated with co-operative education, an occupationally oriented program and two faculty at Suburban Valley College are distance education specialists.

[Table one about here]

Perceptions of organizational members—faculty—are gathered through questions that ask for a range of responses based upon experience, opinions and

values, and knowledge (Patton, 1990). Among the questions asked faculty were the following:

How would you characterize the student body? The faculty?

The administrators?

What are some interesting and outstanding characteristics of the campus/institution?

Do you perceive any major changes occurring in your institution?

In what areas?

Are there changes to institutional structures, and if so, what are some reasons for these changes?

How do institutional members feel about these changes and shifts in institutional mission?

What is the college's role in economic development?

Has electronic and information technology changed your work? In what ways do you use electronic technologies?

Has authority or responsibility for decision-making moved to higher levels of the organization or lower?

Has there been an increase or a decrease in the following areas? Or no change at all? (contract services; international projects; distance education; information technology; educational technology).

Additionally, questions were framed by dimensions of time: How do you describe your local community or communities? How has it/these changed in the past 5 years? (present and past). Has authority/responsibility for decision-making moved to higher levels of the organization or lower over the last 5 years? (past). How would you characterize the student body? (present). Over the past year, has the college become more entrepreneurial, less reliant on public

funding? (past and present). If there are some areas now lost in the mission of the college, what are the implications of this loss? (future). This approach to interview questions sensitizes researchers to the nuances of the site investigated and provides balance to interviews (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993).

Interview data were organized initially under four categories—“oppositional culture,” “values,” “economic behaviors,” and “labor behaviors.” Decision rules for the placement of data under one of the four categories were established in accord with organizational and higher education scholarship. Statements that were placed under the category of “oppositional culture” formed or suggested a critique of institutional practices, behaviors, influences, or suggested factions within the institution that are opposed to institutional patterns and behaviors. Data placed under the category of “economic behaviors” included statements that characterized institutional or individual behaviors associated with economic motives or goals. Statements from interviewees that either described or judged institutional or individual behaviors that pertained to the work of faculty were placed under the category of “labor behaviors.” Finally, data placed under the category of “values” reflected value statements relevant to both education and economic values, or to institutional behaviors.

Subsequent to this first grouping of data under the four categories, data within the categories were clustered (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the case of three categories—oppositional culture, economic behaviors, and labor behaviors—data were clustered conceptually, in response to the question, “What concepts reflect the behaviors and attitudes that faculty describe and express?” For oppositional culture, there were eight clusters or themes: (1) loss or erosion, (2) communication and decision-making, (3) trust, connectedness, and isolation, (4) understandings of college mission and purpose, (5) anti-government, (6) anti-administration, (7) anti-technology, and (8) factions. For example, under the cluster of loss or erosion, an English as a Second Language instructor at North Mountain College reflected upon the outcomes of profit seeking: “[The] education system in general has lost something by turning institutions into cost

recovery or profit. We have lost something—learning for learning’s sake.” A similar concern was raised by another English as a Second Language instructor at City College: “People here feel that they are on the edge of going down the tube...largely because of finances, including competition from the private sector.” The cluster for factions included a perception of a schism between the faculty union and the senate from the faculty senate president at Suburban Valley and a programmatic spilt at Rural Valley as expressed by a Nursing department head:

There is a split between the union and the senate...on program discontinuation. (Faculty Senate president and outdoor recreation faculty, SV)

There are tensions: focus upon university college or local needs?...There are subcultures [in the college]. People feel less of themselves because they are not in the university college. (Nursing head, RV)

For economic behaviors, there were five clusters: (1) resource allocations, cutbacks and re-organizations, (2) entrepreneurial and business associations, (3) forces and pressures, (4) market oriented, and (5) efficiency. For the category of labor behaviors, there were six clusters: (1) workload, (2) governance, (3) technology, (4) job security, (5) identity, and (6) role. In the case of the category of values, data were clustered reflecting a triad of con (opposing), pro (favorable), and ambiguous or ambivalent views. Expressed or implied values took the form of positives and negatives as well as ambiguity and ambivalence on the topics of economics and education. As well, data from faculty

interviews—constituting the perceptions of faculty—were compared with document data, including institutional document data and government document data. These documents included strategic plans, collective bargaining agreements, and reports. Furthermore, observational data based upon on-site visits to each campus and interview data from college administrators, staff, and students were used to provide context for faculty perceptions as well as to corroborate perceptions. For example, at Suburban Valley College in California, one of two colleges in a multi-community college district, administrators including those at the executive level acknowledged friction between faculty and the Suburban Valley campus and district office senior administrators. On-site observations of a district meeting by the researcher as well as interviews with the board chairperson and three district senior administrators verified the presence of this friction.

Findings and Discussion

Business-like and market-oriented behaviors

For the first research question (“What are faculty perceptions of and responses to business-like and market-oriented behaviors of their institutions?”), there are responses from faculty that suggested a pattern of promoted behaviors and then outcomes of behaviors at their colleges. The pattern of behaviors within the college is entrepreneurial and oriented to business and to the marketplace:

Faculty have been encouraged to seek partnerships and connections to local businesses. (Focus group, CC)

We are expected to solicit associations and increase enrollment in our programs...Faculty are getting involved in fund raising. They feel that if a program will continue to exist they need to get out in the community and raise money or solicit donations of equipment. (Focus group of full-time faculty, CS)

The needs of industry influence how we do everything: we revise programs to fit their needs. (Philosophy and composition and union co-president, CS)

In trying to deal with economic conditions, college has taken on an entrepreneurial role: competition adds to stressors within institution. (Nursing, ES)

Suburban Valley College offers courses to companies to bring in more money (Focus group of occupational and vocational faculty, SV)

[We] are going to begin to run education more as a business—being more accountable, more concerned with key performance indicators and outcomes. (Health Sciences, NM)

The training factor approach [leads us] to offer what is marketable. (Vice chair of Education Council and Counselor, ES)

The international student pays non-resident fees which has increased an emphasis on recruiting these students. (Focus group, PS)

There is pressure upon the institution to prepare people for jobs. (Social science head, RV)

We have revamped our timetable in ESL to be competitive... have increased our fees for international students. (English as a second language, department head, RV)

We will look more towards transfer [and] also focus on professional training for the local market rather than narrow skill development...[There is] a bit more of a focus and awareness of the market. I see a little more market influenced behavior. (Computer Science, NM)

Much of the economic behaviors seem directed by those other than faculty, in that the language suggests that the speaker and his or her peers are not

responsible. Some other party—notably the college’s administration—is propelling the college in a specific economic direction. This perceived movement is consistent with both institutional planning documents and government policy, such as the 1996 legislated change for community colleges in California for economic development (State of California, State Legislature, 1996).

The acknowledgement of these behaviors reflects the re-definition of mission and purposes of these colleges.

The mission claims we are student centered but we are not student centered...We sell the place—almost exploitative; the opposite of student centered... (Counselor, CC)

It is all expediency and a quick fix—to fit job requirements. (Environmental Science and English, CS)

We are redefining the educational population. We have become more entrepreneurial and moving closer to the market. We are more conscious of the market. (Social Science chair, PS)

The push is towards more [vocational training]...for the new economy: fuzzy skill sets...Numeracy, literacy, arts—they are paid lip-service...We are now becoming like an institution on a pogo stick. (Union president and Chemistry faculty, NM)

This is a free market organization: people are added or taken away. We are not preserving fields as we should...We have a market model—moving closer to a business. (Vice chair of Education Council and Counselor, ES)

The purposes of the institution, according to these and other faculty, have shifted from education to training and to those actions that match the needs of local economic markets. Outcomes of behavior viewed by faculty to be promulgated by college managers have decidedly business-like and economic characteristics.

Managerialism

The twin themes of productivity and efficiency and managerial control characterize managerialism at these seven community colleges, and indicate an answer to the second research question (“To what extent has managerialism occupied a central place in the community college?”). Again, institutional and government documents as well as interview data from administrators and observational data corroborate faculty perceptions. The governments of California, Washington, Alberta and British Columbia initiated productivity measures in their fiscal allocations to colleges. Indeed, in the province of Alberta, government required colleges to improve productivity by reducing government funding by 21% over a three year period in the mid-1990s and expected colleges to maintain their student enrollments at the same level of higher (Province of Alberta, 1994; Province of Alberta, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1996). College planning documents and reports in all jurisdictions noted institutional commitment to higher levels of productivity and improved efficiency. Within the colleges, organizational behaviors are perceived by faculty as oriented toward business and the economic marketplace as colleges seek to gain favor with business and pursue additional revenues. Actions aimed at increasing productivity and economic efficiency have educational outcomes.

We will come up with budget cuts...We are talking about blending credit and non-credit—good idea: faster development and delivery of programs. (Health Sciences chair, PS)

Cutbacks forced us to reconsider what we were doing...If status of departments is dependent upon revenue generation then our department is doomed. (Social services department chair, NM)

Our actions are restricted by the budget—all the frills are taken off such as release time. There are no institutional incentives. (English as a Second Language department head, CC)

The budget decreases every year: we have reduced labs to once every two weeks...Because of tighter budgets we are debating over...college mission: should we be more elitist? (Biology, ES)

The state budget threatens the college. We face 5-10% cuts. We must reorganize, merge non-credit and credit and cut out duplication. (Math and Sciences chair, PS)

We are efficient: large full time equivalency student production. (Union president and Adult Basic Education faculty, CC)

Faculty are having to do more work and spend less time with students. (Focus group of part-time faculty, CS)

Positions [in the college] were not refilled or...they are filled with part-time people, thus increasing the burden on the full-time employees. (Focus group, full-time faculty, SV)

Poorly enrolled courses get canceled. (Physics, RV)

Each [continuing education] director's area has to be cost recovery as opposed to the whole of continuing education. All general interest courses were axed because they weren't cost recovery. (Chemistry, RV)

Government [asks us to] do more with less. (Humanities chair, NM)

Highly dependent upon employers and government—employers for its products and government for its operating revenues—the community college is described less like an educational institution and more like a business. These behaviors do not demonstrably shore up institutional morale or faculty performance but lead

to educational erosion: reduction of laboratory time in science courses, less faculty interactions with students, and curricular contractions.

Institutional decision-making is viewed as the purview of managers, especially senior managers. This managerial control is judged as placing the faculty in a subordinate institutional role and the actions of the institution as antithetical to faculty values.

Faculty are less involved in decision making. Faculty are supposed to be involved in the College Council but some say they don't even know what it is. (Focus group, full-time faculty, CS)

Shared governance committees turned out not to be shared [a year later]. (Philosophy and Composition and Union co-president, CS)

Department heads have no authority and lots of responsibility. (English, RV)

There has been movement of the faculty with the attitude of ownership to one of an employee of the institution...[The college] is definitely more centralized and less collegial. (Business/Economics, NM)

The money is not going to faculty; it's going to more equipment. (Faculty Senate president and outdoor recreation faculty, SV)

Money goes to market related programs. (Humanities chair, NM)

Power is centralized at the top—the president and the VP are control freaks. [The] culture does not welcome change. I don't find that we are changing at all: talk of change, but [we] don't do it. (Business, NM)

Faculty don't know what the president and vice-president do. (Behavioral Science chair, NM)

Sometimes administration forgets what the college is all about...Finance people got caught because they said there was no

money and denied raises. Then they found money...The result has been a lack of confidence. (Focus group, full-time faculty, SV)

Faculty agency is diminutive—peripheral to decision-making—and for some this constitutes an erosion of past practices.

The considerable market-orientation of these colleges—noted as not only tailoring programming to business interests but also modeling business behaviors—has skewed faculty work. This work is described as aligned with the needs of business and industry, with teaching as synonymous with training.

We are expected to solicit associations and increase enrollment in our programs...Faculty are getting involved in fund raising. They feel that if a program will continue to exist they need to get out into the community and raise money or solicit donations of equipment. (Focus group of full-time faculty, CS)

The needs of industry influence how we do everything: we revise programs to fit their needs. (Philosophy and composition and union co-president, CS)

In trying to deal with economic conditions, the college has taken on an entrepreneurial role: competition adds to stressors within institution. (Nursing, ES)

We are losing the heart of the college by heading for business. (Interior design, NM)

[We] are going to begin to run education more as a business—being more accountable, more concerned with key performance indicators and outcomes. (Health sciences, NM)

Fundamentally, changes at the college are economically driven by technology. It is less political [here] but more business-oriented...[The city] and the college are players in the world economy and high technology. (Writing, NM)

The international student pays non-resident fees which has increased an emphasis on recruiting these students. (Focus group, PS)

There is pressure upon the institution to prepare people for jobs.
(Social science head, RV)

Managerialism here suggests a commandeering of the institution by both external forces—such as business and industry and government—as well as by a managerial class within the institution. The ‘master and commander’ syndrome is clearly evident in the interview data from the president of North Mountain College (NM) and from the Chancellor of the district for Suburban Valley College (SV), and the other five college chief executives articulate their institutions’ shifts to the economic marketplace. The president of North Mountain College, while identifying the sources of change, acknowledges the outcomes.

In this highly competitive environment, you feel enormous pressure to be adroit, nimble, flexible, and to respond to rapidly shifting corporate, government, student demands and needs...We just had to operate in a far more businesslike way.

The Chancellor for the district office overseeing Suburban Valley is blunter: “If we are going to stay in business, we are going to have to be prepared to meet the challenges of a newly emerging economy.”

Organizational actions are thus directed to purposes not necessarily aligned with the historical characteristics of the community college—providing access to education and training, focus upon student development, responsive to the community (that is, community in all its representations), and the provision of a comprehensive curriculum (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Dennison & Gallagher, 1986; Levin, 2001). In the seven colleges in two countries, what is evident is a

narrowing of both curriculum and mission. The decision to orient colleges to “economic conditions” and “the needs of industry,” “driven by technology” is not owned by faculty. The faculty role in institutional decision-making seems to be a minor one even though faculty participate on committees, have agreements with colleges that codify working conditions, and may even numerically dominate educational bodies that make decisions. Because they are on the periphery of those decisions that determine the intended purpose of the curriculum and the allocation and management of resources, faculty serve as instruments of a managerial enterprise.

Oppositional culture

There were numerous characterizations of faculty or a group of faculty as a collective that opposed another group, and led to an answer of the third research question (“Do faculty comprise an oppositional culture and, if so, what is their opposition?”). Opposition to government, administration, and faculty was noted. Antagonism against these groups was expressed on such matters as the mission and purpose of the college, technology, and governance. The faculty’s understanding of mission and institutional purpose is viewed as inconsistent with the actions of their institution. As one Biology instructor at East Shoreline College noted, “We are moving to training for slots rather than education.” This concern was repeated at the other institutions, as stated by an Interior Design instructor at North Mountain College: “We are losing the heart of the college by heading for business.” One contentious point is found in the use of technology, here in the form of distance education, which pits faculty against administration.

Distance education is a point of contention between administration and faculty: we are trying to prevent a takeover of our

responsibilities in curriculum and instruction...(Philosophy and Composition; Union co-president, CS)

Disagreement between faculty and administration on the decision-making process is evident as decisions ultimately shape college mission.

The issue is the content of decision-making, which is poor and there is less consultation...Centralization is the trend of the college. Decision-making is moving to higher levels. In the long run it will hurt the mission. (Business and Economics, NM)

These expressions are antagonistic, suggesting that what the institution is doing is wrong, against what the speaker values, and deleterious to their college.

Yet, in spite of the considerable number of expressions of antagonism among the faculty at the seven colleges, there is little evidence to indicate that the like-minded faculty formed into a coalition to resist forces of power and influence, whether these are the government, administration, or faculty. Only the faculty union serves as a resister to forces or pressures that would characterize this group as an oppositional culture to the administration, the governing board, or the government as noted by the data from union officials. These data reflect both union actions and the values of union executive members.

We maintain the status quo—there is nothing innovative. The penalties are great and the rewards small. The deficit mantra stifles change. It is like a treadmill...The government's framework for productivity increase is bullshit: it is just put in to satisfy the public. (Faculty union president, CC)

There is an increasing effort to dismantle shared governance...This is a state trend...I would not trust [the chancellor of the district]. (Union president, 1997, SV)

There is an incompetent administration [at] district office. They have a lack of experience with collective bargaining...New ways

have undone shared governance: [it is] now superficial...The quality of teaching is [being lost]. Teaching gets lip service from administrators. Money is going to technology not to faculty support. The computer is seen as a tutor...[The district is looking for] a magic pill: more technology, more distance education. It is training versus classical education. The pressures from business will define the goals. Money drives...They are showing how faculty are no longer necessary. (Union president, 1998, SV)

The Board of Regents [is] really out to lunch. They think we are teaching auto tech, or...we are a baking school. (Union Representative, PS)

The district coordinators make decisions about curriculum...The district is nothing but trouble... There is pressure to create competitive delivery modes...This is a movement toward the commercialization of education. (Philosophy and Composition; Union co-president, CS)

Faculty are currently in negotiations regarding distance learning. FT faculty members want distance learning to be treated as a regular class with the same contact hours. (VP union, CS)

The board is an ineffectual entity, captured by administration...There is more pressure to be entrepreneurial...[The] provinc[ial government] doesn't have a handle on education. (Union president, ES)

The college is not maintaining community college characteristics. Administration would like to concentrate on [being a] university...Faculty duties have increased. More counseling and more assessment of students' ability. There's also more administrative duties. (Union president, RV)

Faculty are working hard but not recognized...[There is a] huge volume of work, especially for administrators. [There is] stress and unthinking acts without considering others...The board [has] not read their responsibilities...They have abdicated their responsibility. They are not knowledgeable about education. (Union president, NM)

In all seven colleges, union executive members articulated a general faculty view that is critical of the administration, the governing board, or the responsible government—provincial or state. The union serves a traditional role as a formal body that expresses opposition to management. None of the union officials, however, expressed antagonism toward business and industry or toward corporations, including multi-nationals.

While community college faculty are unlikely to be identified with industrial unions and their behaviors of resistance to owners and managers, their solidarity either as union members or as occupational colleagues is not in evidence in this investigation. Faculty identify with their institution and its mission and actions, even if they are opposed to some institutional actions. Casey (1995) refers to these conditions as the corporatization of the self, whereby employees identify with the institution over and above occupational or association identity. Such a condition—where employees identify with their institution and internalize the characteristics, values, and practices of the “corporation”—leads to homogeneity of views.

Homogenization of values and standardization of knowledge systems are viewed by scholars as outcomes of market competition and globalization (Davies & Guppy, 1997; De Angelis, 1997). Global competition rationalizes productivity and efficiency measures as well as organization transformation led by a managerial class (Saul, 1995). Kenway (1998) in discussing education calls this a strategy of the state where stress and crisis are passed down the line in a form of centralization of authority and decentralization of responsibility, in the form of accountability measures. The policies, plans, and behaviors of the state are evident in the documents produced by the state—including strategic plans and funding allocations for higher education. During the 1990s these placed

responsibility upon community colleges for adhering to the requirements of the state.

The institutional context

The new context for community colleges is not only the local economy but also the global economy as understood by policy makers, especially governments, and leaders of business and industry. The answer to the fourth research question (“Is there a new institutional context for the community college?”) is in the affirmative. This new context exists in juxtaposition to the traditional context of institutional history, culture, and mission. Yet, while the traditional context is reflected in the perceptions and values of faculty, institutional actions ignore the traditional.

[We] are always moving, never reflecting on projects, always go, go, go... There are a lot of pluses and minuses to this kind of system—a lot of pressure... [W]ith more computers, the faculty workload went way up... [There is] a new push for bigger classes. (Faculty Senate president and outdoor recreation faculty, SV)

We are volume-oriented worker bees, [and] classified as government worker[s]... [This is the] crystallization of bureaucracy... The onus [here] is upon teachers to get [students] through... Marks have gone up... [This] escalation is based upon student threat[s]. (Business, NM)

[We] are shifting upward and away from the low end of the mission. I don't like seeing the college [move] away from reaching the under-prepared, remedial, and working class students. (Business & Economics, NM)

I still want the college to be seen as a place where adults can have a second chance at getting an education... I thought that a community college has a mandate to provide people ... particularly the economically disadvantaged with an opportunity. (Social Services department chair, NM)

We are redefining the educational population. We have become more entrepreneurial and moving closer to the market. We are more conscious of the market. (Social Science chair, PS)

This suggests that the community college is an instrument of business or government or both.

The needs of industry influence how we do everything: we revise programs to fit their needs. (Philosophy and composition and union co-president, CS)

The training factor approach [leads us] to offer what is marketable. (Vice chair of education council, ES)

Both presidents [of the two colleges are] political: they are socializing the high tech companies. Business wants training. [The college] uses technology for workforce for the local economy...Programs are setup for business interests. (Faculty union president, 1997, SV)

I believe that if government funding was tied to repainting walls that's what we'd be doing. (Theater arts, NM)

I approve of the globalization initiative and the technology push in general from administration...A major change at the college is the increased emphasis on the market. This is a good thing... We need to be right in the middle of economic development...The college should be run like a business so it can compete and adapt quickly. You have to look like a business to please business. (Writing, NM)

The college makes decisions based upon where [the] provincial government focuses resources. (Auto-mechanics, RV)

Politicians control the budget: they micro-manage the college. (Humanities chair, PS)

Governments, including political officials, along with business are viewed as steering if not directing the colleges, largely in line with economic interests that are aligned with global competitiveness.

Institutional context is also shaped by the structure of governance. In the three U.S. colleges, either a district office and its trustees—the case for Suburban Valley and City South—or a university and its board of regents—the case for Pacific Suburban—served as supreme institutional authorities. The district organization for community colleges is common in the U. S., particularly for urban and suburban colleges. In the four Canadian colleges, the structure of a single college, a governing board, and a provincial department responsible to an elected government minister was the formal structure. This pattern is a common one in Canada.

The identified party responsible for college actions in the U.S. colleges was often the district.

The district is nothing but trouble. (Philosophy and Composition faculty and union co-president, CS)

At City South, restructuring, the pressures to use distance education, as well as the managing of distance education, and fiscal decisions are all viewed as emanating from the district office. At Suburban Valley, the villainous acts of the institution are connected to the district office.

Last year was the worst in labor relations. There was a stalemate and arbitration. The district hired a union busting law firm; custodians were fired. (Faculty Senate president and outdoor recreation faculty, SV, 1998)

And, at Pacific Suburban, the college, the university, and the state government were viewed as synonymous, and the college was described as a “deep

bureaucracy” where “procedures stifle” because the university system is “another department of state government” (Associate Dean, PS). Individual college managements thus react to central power structures. At Pacific Suburban, reported by both faculty and administrators, the university president of the University-Community College system declared, unilaterally, that remedial course work would no longer be financed by state operating monies. Thus, Pacific Suburban removed its remedial program from credit offerings, and provided remedial course work through its non-credit operation, a cost-recovery venture and one that removed both curriculum and faculty from the collective bargaining agreement as well as from college curricular and instructional policies.

While the union tradition is more robust in Canada, at North Mountain College, a similar movement of remedial education from credit to non-credit occurred but with a different rationale. There was no central edict from a district office, but rather a strategy of management to generate revenue, according to both faculty and administrators. Moving remedial from credit to non-credit permitted the institution to charge higher tuition fees for instruction, and remedial education became a profit center, an action confirmed by both administrators and by college financial reports. This action also permitted management to circumvent collective agreements and curricular and instructional policies in that remedial education and English as a Second Language programming were removed from institutional policies and labor agreements that governed credit curriculum and instruction.

Conclusions: the tensions between the educational values and the economic values of faculty work

This new environment of high productivity, dynamic change and competition has become the norm for these seven colleges. Casey (1995) suggests that this condition is “an elaborate adaptive strategy for both the corporation and its employees in the condition of post-industrial production” (p. 153). To consider education at community colleges as post-industrial production is to join this branch of higher education with the new economy and economic globalization.

The predominant expression of faculty values is at odds with the economic behaviors of the institution. Although faculty are the agents of much of these behaviors—they develop and teach the curriculum that serves both government priorities and business interests, for example—they articulate their opposition to the serving of these interests by their college. As agents of the institution, faculty are compromised. Their work as educators—teaching, the development of curriculum, counseling and advising of students, and committee service—is configured or framed within an economic and competitive context, even though their values may be based upon other principles and other goals, such as personal and cognitive development of students or the social advancement of their society. Faculty frame this tension as a conflict between education and training, between traditional institutional goals, such as student-centered, and economic interests, such as business and industry centered, and between centralized, hierarchical decision-making and decentralized, democratic or shared decision-making. Yet, these tensions do not result in a condition of overt cultural conflict between faculty and faculty, faculty and administration, or faculty and external influencers including government and business. In this sense, faculty, with the exception of the faculty unions, could be considered to be

situated at the periphery of both institutional decision-making and institutional influence on matters of institutional action related to purpose, even though faculty work – curriculum and teaching – is the core of institutional action.

Although faculty claim that they are central to both institutional functioning and institutional purpose, and they certainly participate in the administration of work at the community college, their goals for the institution are unrealized because economic goals, including training for a competitive global economy, and policies as well as accountability measures from governments are pursued as priorities. The press for greater productivity and efficiency by governments and other external influencers, such as business and industry, coupled with a managerial model of institutional decision-making has called into question the professional identity of faculty and skewed their work as educators. Unless faculty can extricate themselves and their identity from the globalized community college or change institutional actions and the underlying corporate culture, this new environment of employee compliance with institutional purposes of a high productivity and market-oriented institution may constitute a more lasting norm for the community college.

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Table 1: Faculty interviews: Profile

Numbers interviewed by college:

CC=14

CS=28

ES=29

UV=16

SV=23

RV=34

MV=27

Status
Academic or University transfer
Occupational
Vocational
Basic/Adult Education, Remedial, English as a second language
Other—librarian, counselor, continuing and distance education
Totals
78 (45.5%)
31
(18%)
15
(9%)
18 (10.5%)
29
(17%)
171
Part-time

20

(12%)

Full-time

151

(88%)