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AUTHOR Parson, Michael H.
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ABSTRACT

This report presents a case study of how Hagerstown Junior College (HJC) has adjusted its curriculum to meet the challenges presented by the "new" student, the needs of the community, and the need for institutional self renewal. HJC has adopted a modularized, audio-tutorial, contractual (MATIC) system of instruction. This system uses diagnostic pretesting, a variety of learning experiences and instructional media, and a formal system for setting behavioral objectives. Preliminary examinations of student achievement on the basis of contract completion rates, grade distribution patterns, attrition, and student satisfaction indicate that the MATIC system is an effective strategy for meeting the diversity of the "new" student population. In order to meet the needs of the community, HJC has instituted a program for prison inmates, has cooperated to provide general education courses for students of a local proprietary business college, has provided programs for the military personnel stationed at nearby Fort Ritchie, and has granted credits to students enrolled in courses offered through the Maryland College of the Air television network. Aspects of HJC's staff development program include a series of annual workshops, an instructional clinic, and a system of college funded instructional research and development. (NHH)

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MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

A Paper Presented at the
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Michael H. Parsons, Ed.D.
Associate Dean, Transfer Programs
Hagerstown Junior College
Hagerstown, Maryland

760 231

Introduction

"Man's yesterday may never be like his tomorrow;
Nothing may endure but change."

One hundred and fifty years ago, the poet Shelley penned lines which capture the cliché of the '70's - change. The pool of knowledge available to society doubles every ten years. Ninety percent of all scientists who have ever lived are now living.¹ Political scientist Reo M. Christenson comments that "man's current capacity either to destroy himself or to ravage his environment beyond repair is unmatched in previous history."²

Clearly, some social institution must attempt to manage unsettling - if not runaway - change. For people who will spend half of their lives in the twenty-first century, tradition-bound curricula and teaching techniques are not what is needed to cope with the demands of the new century.

The two-year college has a unique, and potentially creative, role to play in preparing people to cope with change. 2.5 million individuals attend nearly eight hundred such institutions.³ These colleges are becoming America's source of universal access to post-secondary education. Also, during the past decade the nation has turned to the two-year college as a source of the technical expertise needed by a service-oriented society. Finally, as the need for skill up-grading and re-training has become paramount, the phenomenon of the two-year college as a center for life-long learning has emerged. These diverse functions comprise the dynamics of today's two-year college. How have the dynamics effected

instruction?

Current literature highlights three challenges facing the two-year college. They are: the new student, response to community need, and institutional self-renewal. What follows is a case study of how one college is meeting the challenge of change.

Challenge I: The New Student

The term "new student" is fast becoming a cliché. During the 70's, two-year colleges have been concerned about clients who come to them as a result of open admissions policies. These individuals differ from the traditional college student: they are older, less academically sophisticated, and more pragmatic in their reasons for attending. College curricula must be modified to respond to their changing needs.

Hagerstown Junior College has adopted a system of instruction designed to serve the diversity of the New Student. The strategy is modularized, audio-tutorial, contractual instruction. Modularized instruction focuses on the cognitive style of the learner. By using diagnostic pretesting, learning prescriptions can be prepared for each individual. One learner may require visual stimulation, while another peer interaction. Multiple learning paths encourage divergent programming. The learning manager monitors each student's progress. An eclectic design allows the student to move in a linear or branching mode. Previous mastery of some competencies allows concentration on those yet to be achieved. Time is the independent variable in the learning module equation.

Basically, the audio-tutorial structure is an approach to individualizing instruction which uses a variety of learning experiences and instructional media. These components are integrated into a procedure including (1) large gatherings designed to outline general principles, (2) seminars where material is analyzed and synthesized, and (3) carrelized study sessions in which the student engages in those individual learning activities which comprise his learning prescription. Competence is evaluated in terms of the learning steps which structure the general, seminar, and individual sessions.

Contractual learning is based on the principle of agreement between equal parties. The members of the instructional team bring to the relationship expertise in subject matter and learning theory. The student provides awareness of his goals and an assessment of the resources he can expend in the transaction. An arrangement is made between the student and the learning team. The student agrees to complete certain tasks within a specified time while the team guarantees certification of competence, and a specific grade, upon completion of the sequence.

Does the strategy work? At HJC, instructors using the MATC model have gathered data on its effect. The major empirical indicators examined were: contract completion, grade distribution patterns, attrition, and student satisfaction. Some interesting trends emerge.

Over a period of 36 months, contract completion at the grade level initially indicated averaged 60 percent. Two percent of

the students increased their achievement. The 38 percent who reverted to a lower achievement level usually dropped only a single grade.

Also, grade distributions are quite revealing. Prior to the implementation of the instructional system, Ds and Fs in Biology 101, for example, ran as high as 40 percent. After the system's inception, these two grades virtually disappeared in areas using MATC instruction; only three percent of the students fell into these categories. "A"s did not increase appreciably, as approximately 20 percent of the students received that grade both before and after contracting. Bs averaged 25 percent.

Attrition is the most critical indicator. The two-year college can do little for the new student if he stays but a single semester. Withdrawal patterns under the MATC system changed dramatically. Rather than the usual "fall fadeaway" of nearly 20 percent, the withdrawal rate between semesters has leveled off at below 10 percent.

Another useful cross reference in measuring the impact of the instructional system is student opinion. Each of the disciplines using MATC regularly surveys learner reaction. The students react favorably to the system. The most repeated comment concerns security - "knowing where we are and where we are going." Individualization is the second most repeated comment; students consider themselves participants in the process. Finally, students perceive the contract as a challenge - something to work for. When asked if they would take another MATC course, 75 percent said yes.

The MATC instructional system is not a panacea. It is, however, an effective strategy for meeting the challenge of the New Student. Overall, the system is achieving its objective

Challenge II: Community Need

The New Student is a visible entity on campus; his needs are related to the traditional mission of the college. But a more diffuse challenge is delivering educational services to those populations who are separated from the mainstream of campus life. Yet, as part of the college community, their needs are equally valid.

Cohen indicates that non-traditional programs have two things to recommend them. First, their clients "are proper targets for the college that would serve everyone." Second, programs that serve these individuals "help maintain growth in an era when the college age population is leveling."⁶

Application of the community as campus concept is shaped by the host community. The models presented here emerge from "what exists" in HJC's service area - Washington County, Maryland.

The county is the site of two State prisons. They are charged with custody and rehabilitation of nearly 2,000 inmates. They may conduct secondary education programs but not post-secondary ones. For the past seven years, the college has been participating in the rehabilitation process.

The goal of the college's inmate program is to screen, counsel, and instruct selected inmates so that upon parole they may re-enter society either with a marketable skill or as viable

transfer students. Instructional strategies validated on campus have been applied in the correctional milieu. Programs are selected on the basis of available job placement or ease of transfer. To date, approximately 300 inmates have progressed through the program.

Evaluation of the inmate program produces guarded optimism. Dismissal rates have been low. The program grade point average is higher than the campus average. The impact of the program on recidivism has been noticeable. State Department of Corrections statistics indicate that in three cases out of four the paroled felon will return to prison. But, in the case of the college inmate program, the return ratio is one case in two. Efforts continue to reduce recidivism and to increase inmate achievement.

Washington County hosts two institutions providing post-secondary education. The proprietary Hagerstown Business College specializes in training personnel for para-professional careers in business and industry. When, in 1974, the institution was examined for State accreditation, questions arose regarding the viability of the general education component of the school's programs. The Business College then proceeded to negotiate a contract with Hagerstown Junior College for the delivery of instructional services in the areas of arts, sciences, and social sciences. HJC redesigned course materials to meet the objectives established by the Business College. Further, students from the Business College were given access to the learning centers and library at HJC.

Although superficial examination might raise questions regarding the appropriateness of cooperative programming, further analysis reveals its essential logic. For Hagerstown Junior College, the cost involved in tooling up competitive programs is prohibitive. Furthermore, the success of such programs would be questionable given the quality of instruction provided by the Business College. Therefore, service to the community dictates cooperation rather than counter-productive competition.

Fort Ritchie is a comprehensive military installation located within the service area of the college. Military personnel are welcome to make the thirty-five mile round trip to the college campus for classes. Distance, the energy crisis, and work schedules, however, militate against ease of access.

For the last six years, Ft. Ritchie has been a satellite center. Students may receive an associate degree from HJC without ever visiting the parent campus. Through the assistance of army educational personnel, the satellite center functions smoothly despite the geographic separation.

During the Spring 1976 semester, the Ft. Ritchie Center has 154 enrollments in eight courses. Interviews with the students reveal that less than twenty percent would be enrolled were the courses not held on post. In these days of limited growth, no college can afford to disregard so large a market; nor can it afford to alienate so obvious a constituency.

Finally, not all of the potential clients in Washington

County desire to follow a traditional learning pattern of classroom or laboratory based instruction. Some seek a vehicle which will integrate their needs with college resources.

For the past two years, Hagerstown Junior College has been a member of the Maryland College of the Air network. The Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting transmits the courses; the college implements them and grants credit. Currently, HJC has 147 enrollments in five courses.

Student convenience is paramount. Telephone and mail registration are available. Students must be on campus only twice per semester for examinations. College coordinators are available via telephone at specified times to answer procedural or content questions. Course credits apply to associate degree completion.

Knoell and McIntyre distinguish between a comprehensive community college and a comprehensive community college education. The emphasis belongs on student need - not college convenience. "The traditional Campus should become just one part of (the) system, complemented by other means ... neighborhood satellites, storefront operations, mobile units, limited purpose centers ... and other community facilities in whatever combination provides access in the most efficient manner." Their paradigm describes Hagerstown Junior College.

Challenge III: Institutional Self Renewal

The preceding challenges emanate from the clientele of the two-year college. In meeting these challenges, colleges cannot disregard internal change. Changing demands upon faculty

can result in job dissatisfaction and rejection of the goals of the two-year college. In 1964 Hagerstown Junior College initiated a staff development program designed to help faculty respond to change without losing their sense of personal worth and responsibility to the students and the institution. The program has three parts.

The first component is a series of annual workshops. They are held in the fall, in January, and in the spring. They are not simply information-dissemination sessions. Faculty are polled regarding what instructionally related topics are of current concern. Then, a series of learning modules are designed. Often, college faculty help prepare the modules. When the final list for a workshop is available, faculty select those in which they wish to participate.

Some of the more successful modules have been recruitment strategies, preparing instructional objectives, the operation of A-V equipment, and instructional uses of the video cassette. Modules remain available for faculty use during the year.

These workshops perform two functions. First, they upgrade the professional competence of the faculty. Second, they reinforce a sense of group cohesiveness and commitment to mission vital to the process of managing change.

The second component of staff development is an instructional clinic. Not all instructional problems can be delayed until it is convenient to deal with them in a workshop. Therefore, HJC devotes time twice per month to discussing instructional problems.

Any faculty member or administrator may bring a problem before the group. Discussion is held regarding potential solutions. Often, a topic extends over several meetings. No individual is bound to use the advice provided in the clinic as participation and application are voluntary.

Has the clinic been productive? Yes; some of the results have been a computer program for determining test reliability, a readability index for text material, a model for the use of video tape in student evaluation, and a procedure for evaluating student internships or field placements.

An old adage is germane here: learn from the problems of others. It is possible that the problems discussed in the clinic might have been solved by the individual. However, it is doubtful that the solutions would then have been disseminated to other faculty.

The final component of staff development is a system of college funded instructional research and development. In general, faculty are concerned about the quality of their teaching. They are willing to evaluate its impact and design ways to improve it. Time is a problem. Therefore, HJC has established a fund which pays faculty for instructionally related research and development.

Faculty are encouraged to prepare research proposals related to instructional development. An aspect of the proposal is the amount of time required to achieve the objectives. These proposals are evaluated by the College's Office of Instructional Affairs. A faculty member may receive funding for up to five weeks of develop-

ment during the summer.

Have the proposals proven productive? Yes; much of the material critical to the College's MATC instructional system has been developed under summer contract. More importantly, the faculty view the process as tangible commitment by the college to instructional excellence. They consider themselves part of a team that is cooperating to fulfill the mission of the college.

Staff development is important in meeting the challenge of change. At HJC, staff development has sought to achieve both self-actualization for the instructor and institutional renewal for the college. As Cohen points out, a faculty committed to improving learning can foster self-actualization and assist with institutional renewal.⁹ Institutional renewal contributes to managing change toward positive, productive ends.

Conclusion

Martorana and Kuhns advance an interactive forces theory of change management. They conclude that social forces exist which can assist colleges in coping with change. The challenges and forces must interact if change is to be directed toward productive outcomes.¹⁰

At Hagerstown Junior College, social forces within the service area have assisted the college in managing the challenges of new students, community needs, and institutional renewal. This case study should prove illustrative to those seeking to design a model whereby challenges produce decisions effecting change management.

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