ED 329 152   HE 023 468
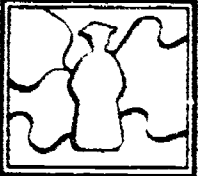
AUTHOR   Genthon, Michele; Joscelyn, Mary K., Ed.
TITLE   Administrative Barriers to Improving Undergraduate
                Education. Accent on Improving College Teaching and
                Learning, 6.
INSTITUTION   Michigan Univ., Ann Arbor.; National Center for
                Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and
                Learning, Ann Arbor, MI.
SPONS AGENCY   Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED),
                Washington, DC.
PUB DATE   89
CONTRACT   G008690100
NOTE   7p.
AVAILABLE FROM National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary
                Teaching and Learning, 2400 SEB, University of
                Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259 (free with
                self-addressed, stamped envelope).
PUB TYPE   Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports -
                Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   *Academic Deans; *Administrative Change;
                Administrative Organization; *Administrator Role;
                *Change Strategies; College Administration; College
                Curriculum; Educational Finance; *Educational
                Improvement; Higher Education; National Surveys;
                Problem Solving; Teacher Improvement

ABSTRACT
            Chief academic officers at 1,053 institutions of
higher education across the United States were surveyed about the
barriers to improving teaching and learning. Using factor analysis,
responses were reduced to nine general problem areas. In order of
importance from most important to least important, the problems
identified were: financial support, faculty support systems, student
limitations, student academic support programs, academic
administration, limitations of faculty, academic constraints,
academic support systems, and enrollment demographics. Rankings are
contrasted among comprehensive, four-year, and two-year institutions,
and between public and private institutions. The identified problems
had common features in that they concerned resource issues, external
constraints, and administrative or governance structures. Academic
administrators can address these barriers by such actions as working
with other administrators to develop budgets and set institutional
priorities, developing cooperative programs to improve the
preparation of students before they reach college, and reorganizing
ineffective administrative systems. Two references are included.
(JDD)

IMPROVING COLLEGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Administrative Barriers to Improving Undergraduate Education

Changes in student demographics, critical national reports, charges from external agencies, and a general level of frustration among faculty and administrators with student learning have all focused attention on evaluating and revising the undergraduate curriculum. Research completed at NCRIPTAL, however, leads us to question whether we are attacking the right problems.

The responsibility for improving the quality of undergraduate education cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of faculty. The institution as a whole must be committed to excellence and open to change. The administration must support faculty and student activities. Most important, academic management policies and practices must be available and structured to encourage and support teaching, learning, and program improvement.

To learn how academic administrative practices affect undergraduate programs, a team of researchers at NCRIPTAL surveyed chief academic officers at 1,053 institutions across the United States. They asked these administrators about two things: What are the barriers to improving teaching and learning, and what practices improve teaching and learning? We focus here on the barriers; the practices are addressed in a forthcoming **Accent**.

Barriers

Using factor analysis of thirty potential barriers identified by a pilot study of 300 administrators, responses by the 1,053 surveyed academic leaders were reduced to nine general problem areas. In order of importance from most important to least important, the problems identified were:

1. **Financial Support**

   Inadequate capital funds

   Inadequate operating funds for educational improvement

2. **Faculty Support Systems**

   Inadequate incentives and rewards for teaching and improvement

   Inadequate faculty development programs

   Inadequate faculty and administrator recruitment

3. **Student Limitations**

   Inadequate student preparation

   Poor student attitudes about learning

   Student-faculty value gap

4. Student Academic Support Programs

Inadequate student academic support programs

5. Academic Administration

Inadequate evaluation of and rewards
for teaching

Inadequate student assessment

Ineffective planning or resource allocation

Inadequate academic leadership

Curriculum problems

Ineffective academic governance process

6. Limitations of Faculty

Narrow faculty specialization

Faculty or departmental resistance to change

Tenured or aging faculty

Poor quality teaching

Low faculty commitment to teaching

Low faculty morale

7. Academic Constraints

Collective bargaining and unionization

State-level constraints

Heavy teaching loads

8. Academic Support Systems

Inadequate study space

Dependence on part-time faculty or TA's

Restrictive accreditation requirements

Inadequate library and acquisitions

9. Enrollment Demographics

Declining enrollments

Changing student demographics

Institutional Differences

Concerns about financial support ranked higher
than all other concerns for comprehensive, four-
year, and two-year institutions, and academic
administrators at all three types of institutions
appeared to be equally concerned about this issue.
In seven of the remaining eight problem areas
(excepting academic support systems), adminis-
trators at community colleges expressed more
concern about these issues than did administrators
at comprehensive and four-year institutions.

Four-year institutions gave the lowest ranking of
the three groups to most of the problem areas.
Comprehensive institutions were the most con-
cerned about academic support systems and the
least concerned about enrollment demographics.

When comparing public and private institutions,
the highest-ranked problem is still financial
support. The level of concern about enrollment
demographics, surprisingly, is outweighed by most
of the other problem areas identified and is similar
at public and private institutions. In all other
problem areas, public institutions gave higher
rankings to the problem areas than did private
institutions.

Common Themes

In general, the identified problems, which were
shared by all institutions, had some common
features: Many were related to resource issues,
some addressed external constraints, and others
referred to administrative or governance structures
— many overlap.

The most common concern, resource issues,
includes budget, facilities, materials, and person-
nel. The two problems cited most often as barriers
to improving academic programs were the lack of
discretionary funds for programmatic change
(Factor 1: Financial Support) and inadequacy of
programs supporting faculty (Factor 2: Faculty
Support Systems). Inadequate study space,
dependence on part-time faculty or teaching assis-
tants, and inadequate library and acquisitions
(Factor 8: Academic Support Systems) are also the
results of resource limitations, as are inadequate
student academic support programs (Factor 4).

External constraints are evident in enrollment
demographics (Factor 9) and student limitations
(Factor 3) as well as in restrictive accreditation
requirements (Factor 8: Academic Support
Systems). Other external constraints are caused by
the institution itself. Heavy teaching loads are
seen as constraints imposed by the administration
on faculty, and collective bargaining and unioniza-
tion are seen as constraints on the administration,
while state-level constraints affect both faculty
and the administration (Factor 7: Academic
Constraints).

Administrative or governance structures manifest
themselves as problems in the areas of planning,

curricular inflexibility, evaluation, assessment, and resource allocation (Factor 5: Academic Administration) as well as in faculty specialization, resistance to change, and tenure (Factor 6: Limitations of Faculty). The inadequacy of programs supporting faculty (Factor 3: Faculty Support Systems) may also be a structural issue related to institutional priorities. What is not known is whether these structures are preferred or whether they are caused, or at least exacerbated, by the lack of adequate resources to address these issues differently.

Turning Problems Into Solutions

The problems listed as a result of this study are drawn from the observations of academic administrators. They represent only one perspective and do not include that of the governing board, the president, other administrators, or, most significantly, the faculty. They are, however, the views of those most immediately responsible for overseeing academic programs, and they seem to provide a guide for how academic administrators can address curricular problems.

To overcome these barriers, resource issues need to be addressed. Academic administrators need to be involved in obtaining additional resources for academic programs. They also need to be active partners with other administrators in developing budgets and setting institutional priorities.

Attempts to manage external constraints also need to be made. Poor preparation of students does not have to be accepted as inevitable. Academic leaders in higher education are in a position to develop cooperative programs to improve the preparation of students before they reach college. They are also in a position to develop programs that address new markets in lieu of the declining number of high school students.

Barriers related to administrative structures must also be addressed. Time needs to be spent reorganizing ineffective administrative systems—a project that is extremely time-consuming and requires finely honed consensus-building skills. Efforts must also be made to change faculty so that their limitations will not inhibit the academic program. Although difficult, there are many aspects of this issue that can be addressed. It may also be that addressing the resource, structure, and external constraint issues may have the effect

of changing faculty morale and commitment—important components of changing faculty behavior, as we are finding in a related study.

Further research on these issues is currently being undertaken by NCRIPTAL. Case studies of specific institutions clarify how the institution can support academic change. We need not wait for these results, however, before taking action. Using what has already been learned, it seems clear that we must accurately identify the barriers within the institution that stand in the way of more effective teaching and learning. Then, we must address the problems themselves. If we are revising the curriculum when the real problems are finances, external forces, and unwieldy administrative systems, the possibility of improving teaching and learning may be minimal at best. If, however, we attack the barriers themselves, we could improve the possibility of improving student outcomes.

— Michele Genthon

REFERENCES

Peterson, Marvin W.; Cameron, Kim; Alexander, Joanne; Jones, Philip; and Mets, Lisa. (1987). "Report of pre-survey of key problems which inhibit and academic management practices which improve teaching and learning." Working paper, National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning, Ann Arbor, MI.

Peterson, Marvin W.; Cameron, Kim; and Alfred, Richard L. (1987). Academic Management Practices Survey. Ann Arbor, MI: National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning.

REQUEST FORM

Please send me the following reports for which is enclosed payment to The University of Michigan to cover the costs of production and handling. Materials requested are not returnable.

SELECTED NCRIPTAL PUBLICATIONS

Title	Price	Qty	Total
Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for Faculty *K. Patricia Cross and Thomas A. Angelo* 88-A-004	$15.00		
Success for the Underprepared: Linking Student Characteristics and Academic Programs *Patricia J. Green, Gerald M. Gurin, and Kathleen M. Shaw* 89-A-005	forth-coming		
Approaches to Research on the Improvement of Postsecondary Teaching and Learning: A Working Paper *Patricia J. Green and Joan S. Stark* 86-A-001	$ 5.00		
Focusing on Student Academic Outcomes A Working Paper *Joanne M. Alexander and Joan S. Stark* 86-A-002.0	$ 5.00		
Postsecondary Teaching and Learning Issues in Search of Researchers: A Working Paper *Carol D. Vogel and Joan S. Stark* 86-A-003	$ 5.00		
Teaching and Learning in the College Classroom: A Review of the Research Literature, 2nd Edition *Wilbert J. McKeachie, Paul R. Pintrich, Yi-Guang Lin, David A.F. Smith, and Rajeev Sharma* 90-B-001	$10.00		
Psychological Models of the Impact of College on Students *Harold A. Korn* 86-B-002	$ 5.00		
Planning Introductory College Courses: Influences on Faculty *Joan S. Stark, Malcolm A. Lowther, Richard J. Bentley, Michael P. Ryan, Michele Genthon, Gretchen G. Martens, and Patricia A. Wren* 89-C-003	$15.00		
Reflections on Course Planning: Faculty and Students Consider Influences and Goals *Joan S. Stark, Malcolm A. Lowther, Michael P. Ryan, Sally Smith Bomotti, Michele Genthon, and C. Lynne Haven* 88-C-002	$15.00		
Designing the Learning Plan: A Review of Research and Theory Related to College Curricula *Joan S.Stark and Malcolm A. Lowther, with assistance from Sally Smith* 86-C-001	$10.00		
Performance Appraisal for Faculty: Implications for Higher Education *Robert T. Blackburn and Judith A. Pitney* 88-D-002	$10.00		
Faculty as a Key Resource: A Review of the Research Literature *Robert T. Blackburn, Janet H. Lawrence, Steven Ross, Virginia Polk Okoloko, Jeffery P. Bieber, Rosalie Meiland, and Terry Street* 86-D-001	$10.00		
The Organizational Context for Teaching and Learning: A Review of the Research Literature *Marvin W. Peterson, Kim S. Cameron, Lisa A. Mets, Philip Jones, and Deborah Ettington* 86-E-001	$10.00		
Design in Context: A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Computer Software in Higher Education *R zma and Robert Bangert-Drowns* 87-F-002	$10.00		

Title		Price	Qty	Total
Electronic Information: Literacy Skills for a Computer Age *Jerome Johnston* 86-F-001		$5.00		
The Electronic Classroom... videotape series *Jerome Johnston and Susan Gardner*				
...In Higher Education (55 min.) 88-F-009	VHS 3/4"	$45.00 $60.00		
...At the University of Michigan (57 min.) 88-F-006	VHS 3/4"	$35.00 $50.00		
...In the Regional Teaching University (32 min.) 88-F-007	VHS 3/4"	$35.00 $50.00		
...In the Community College (33 min.) 88-F-008	VHS 3/4"	$35.00 $50.00		
The Electronic Classroom in Higher Education: **A Case for Change** *Jerome Johnston and Susan Gardner* 88-F-016		$7.50		
Directory of Software Submitted for **the 1989 EDUCOM/NCRIPTAL** **Higher Education Software Awards** 89-F-014	Mac disk IBM disk	$10.00 $10.00		
The Best of '89 videotape *Jerome Johnston and Susan Gardner* 89-F-015	VHS 3/4"	$25.00 $40.00		
Other titles available in the **Accent** series: (No charge for single issues, inquire for bulk order prices)				
Helping Teaching and Learning Centers **Improve Teaching**				
Faculty Performance Appraisal: **A Recommendation for Growth and Change**				
Why Does It Take "Forever" to **Revise the Curriculum?**				
Assessing Growth in Thinking in College **Courses: A Caveat**				
The Computer Revolution in Teaching				

(For videotapes or non-Book Rate handling, add $5.00)	Subtotal	
	Special Shipping	
	TOTAL	

NAME _____

TITLE _____

DEPARTMENT _____

INSTITUTION _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____

☐ Please add my name to your mailing list.

☐ Please send me further information about NCRIPTAL.

☐ Please send me a complete list of NCRIPTAL publications.

Make checks and purchase orders payable to **The University of Michigan.**

Mail request form and payment to: NCRIPTAL
2400 School of Education Building
The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259

6

NCRIPTAL

2400 School of Education Building
The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259