

Forum

Leadership in Continuing Studies: The Reflections of a Dean

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ABSTRACT

University continuing studies has entered an extended period of change and transformation. In such challenging times, the essential ingredients for survival are a clear vision, strategic goals, and proactive leadership. These issues are explored in this paper through the example of one institution. Characteristics of transformational leadership and a model of continuing studies in a university context are described. The opportunity exists for continuing studies to be a key player in the transformation of university outreach and thereby become integrated into the mainstream of the university.

RÉSUMÉ

Les études permanentes universitaires entrent dans une période prolongée de changement et de transformation. Dans de tels moments faisant appel à l'esprit d'initiative, les ingrédients essentiels de survie sont un bon discernement, des objectifs précis à atteindre et une direction progressiste. Cet article explore ces par l'intermédiaire d'une institution. Les caractéristiques d'une direction transformationnelle ainsi que d'un modèle d'études permanentes dans un contexte universitaire y sont décrits. Les études permanentes pourraient devenir un joueur-clé dans la transformation de l'extension des services universitaires et, par la suite faire partie intégrante de la voie principale de l'université.

INTRODUCTION

University continuing studies¹ units are facing challenges not experienced in nearly a century. The reality is that “universities of the world have entered a time of disquieting turmoil that has no end in sight” (Clark, 1998, p. xiii). Although no one can predict with assurance what the future will bring, the transformation of higher education is inevitable (Dolence & Norris, 1995), and it is already affecting universities. One result of the current rethinking of the role of universities is that outreach is now seen as an imperative, rather than a not-very-important minor function of a public university. Thus, continuing studies (CS) units find themselves in the spotlight—or perhaps one should say the cross-hairs.

Serious questions are being asked about the core mandate and vision of CS units (Thompson & Lamble, 2000). These questions include: Are university CS units serving the needs of the community? Are their activities congruent with the strategic goals of their institution? Are they profit centres? Are they integral to fund development efforts? Should they be decentralized? Are they simply service units for inter-session studies? Although these basic questions will not be addressed directly here, the fact that they are being raised reveals the need for responsible and innovative leadership. At no time in the history of CS has the importance of leadership been greater than it is in this era.

The challenges facing CS are but a symptom of much larger changes in universities and society. Research-intensive universities are not immune to the changes occurring around them. Indeed, they are being directly affected by factors such as global competition, changing societal expectations, political influence, reduced funding and staffing, accountability measures, new communication and learning technologies, and questions concerning the teaching and learning process. In this context, it is crucial that CS units create a vision consistent with the goals of their institution in order to maintain credibility within the institution and to help position the university for change. CS has what is perhaps an unprecedented opportunity to be a leader and model for the rest of the university in addressing changing demographics, market needs, learning technologies, and outreach.

If they are to survive, CS units must attend to institutional goals, serve community needs, and at the same time be entrepreneurial and adopt sound business principles. With its history as an incubator of innovation (Archer, Garrison, & Anderson, 1999), CS is ideally situated to recognize

and meet these changes. The added challenge in the present era is that CS units must be much more entrepreneurial to survive over the long term, and this requires bold leadership—not so different from the early days of extension and continuing education (Archer & Wright, 1999).

The purpose of this paper is to reflect upon the kind of leadership, management practices, and vision that is needed by university CS to increase its credibility, relevance, and viability in a knowledge society. The characteristics of transformational leadership described here are largely derived from the author's experience as Dean of the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta.

THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY AND CONTINUING STUDIES

Nearly a decade ago, David Kirby (1992) wrote that university continuing education was in a state of flux, with overtones of a crisis. At the time, given the developments in continuing education, Kirby was pessimistic as to whether this situation would improve in the near future. Certainly, fundamental forces have been at work in the last decade—most notably, advances in communications technologies and the advent of the knowledge society. Society is being transformed at an unprecedented pace and how university continuing education responds “will determine whether we as continuing educational professionals become *leaders or followers* [emphasis added] in the largest paradigm shift to occur in education since the mid-1400s” (Simerly, 1999, p. 46). If anything, the situation has become more critical since Kirby's assessment of the transformation of university CS a decade ago.

Reduced funding to higher education has led to many assessments of the productivity of the university. However, the university cannot be reduced to, and measured simply from, an efficiency perspective. To make profit the primary goal of any unit, including CS, betrays the essence and mandate of a research university and seriously risks its essence and, ultimately, the quality of its educational outcomes. Certain apparent, but not real, inefficiencies (i.e., small communities of learners, time for reflection) must be understood and accepted if creative and unintended learning is to occur. On the other hand, good financial management is a necessity that cannot be ignored, and generating revenue is neither new nor inherently destructive of the values and goals of CS and the university.

The CS unit within a research university faces a key challenge that is not always obvious: to be seen as having values and larger goals similar to

those of the whole institution. This means that the CS unit must have, and be seen to have, a knowledge base and expertise capable of providing vision and strategic direction for the unit. Its expertise will be of an applied, multidisciplinary nature that is central to the activities of the CS unit; its scholarship must inform and guide the programming and teaching activities of the unit. Thus, the realization of a CS unit that wishes to be integrated into the institution as a whole, respected and influential, argues strongly for faculty status. This is the core of the perspective offered here.

EXTENSION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

At this point, to better understand the place of CS units in research universities, it may be helpful to examine how one research university extension unit has attempted to become an integral part of the university. The Department of Extension at the University of Alberta has been a respected and dynamic part of the institution since its inception in 1912, with a mandate to serve the larger community by extending the resources of the University. This department demonstrated consistent transformational leadership as evidenced by innovations such as the early travelling "magic lantern" lectures, CKUA Radio, support for the National Farm Radio Forum, the Extension Library, and a summer arts program that would eventually evolve into the current Banff Centre.

Innovative programming and the adoption of new technologies are also functions of the current Faculty of Extension. In the former Department of Extension, this innovative work was built upon applied or action research that was not recognized as "research" because it was not published in scholarly journals (Archer & Wright, 1999). This changed in the latter part of the century, particularly after Extension achieved Faculty status in 1975.

Clearly, the achievement of faculty status is linked to both the evolution of adult and continuing education as a field of study and the offering of credential-bearing programs through CS units. Although this has added to the necessity to be more innovative and entrepreneurial, it has also offered the possibility of the Extension or CS unit becoming an integral part of the University, essentially like other faculties. Faculty members are expected to engage in research and publish in peer-reviewed journals. Moreover, the emerging field of adult education is a convenient area for identification.

Achieving faculty status was an example of transformational leadership exhibited by individuals within University of Alberta Extension. This tradition of leadership continues, with the recent change in Extension's

mandate permitting this Faculty to offer graduate degree programs in collaboration with another Faculty.

Certainly, the Department of Extension's vision evolved within changing circumstances. Today, the challenge facing CS units is not only to conceptualize and communicate a vision and policy but also to strategically outline how it is an essential element of the transformation of a modern research university. CS units must define themselves in the context of serving the core goals of the research university if they are to be an integral part of the institution. Faculty status by itself will not provide credibility and influence (Kirby, 1992). Leadership and relevant research in emerging areas of continuous learning are key to a scholarly and viable CS unit. This means reaching beyond the study of adult education and approaching research from a broad educational and multidisciplinary perspective.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

There are basic, foundational values associated with effective leadership, for example, integrity, openness, and accountability. The focus here is on the manifestation of these values in terms of the practices that are required for transformational leadership. These practices are maintaining a commitment to change, achieving clarity of vision, showing a willingness to listen, demonstrating decisiveness, having an ability to recognize talent, and making an effort to distribute credit for achievements.

A Commitment to Change

To say that the first principle of transformational leadership is a commitment to change is tautological. However, one must be prepared to argue unequivocally that change is needed, as well as believe that one can make a difference in this regard. In the context of the long tradition and dedication of CS to community service, coupled with a shift to higher levels of learning in organizational contexts, this commitment is even more important. For many who have been in the CS field for some time, the needed program and financial accountability changes may be disturbing and, perhaps, resisted. However, CS demands a renewed commitment to change if it is to remain relevant and vital. In this sense, it is back to the future, as a commitment to change is what characterized university extension in the early part of the 20th century (Archer & Wright, 1999).

It is crucial that change and innovation occur without placing the organization at risk. This means that universities and CS must support

sustaining technologies and activities that serve current clients and provide revenue flow, while incubating disruptive technologies and serving new clients (Archer, Garrison & Anderson, 1999). The process of incubating new technologies and programs and of manifesting transformational leadership will ensure the relevance and viability of CS in the future, but doing so does not mean abandoning core values and sustaining activities. Rather, it involves strategically identifying new needs and markets relevant to the community as a whole.

It is interesting to note that a study of the deans of continuing education in Canada described resistance to change as one of the most serious threats to continuing education—even to its survival (Pearce, 1993). This same study found that almost all the deans expressed concerns about internal resistance to change, “particularly in regard to faculty and staff who had been with the organization a long time and had been unable, or unwilling, to adapt to changing circumstances” (Pearce, 1993, pp. 14–15). This resistance was not just a problem of faculty and staff. Deans also found the concept of change unsettling, and several “were unable to articulate any vision at all for their continuing education units” (Pearce, 1993, p. 20). This latter finding is troublesome, considering the importance of vision for and commitment to change.

Clarity of Vision

The first step in addressing the inevitable resistance to change is to understand the relationship of vision to transformational leadership. The challenge for leaders of CS units is to first recognize the complex contextual contingencies and the capabilities of their units and then translate this complexity into a clear and communicable vision that includes achievable goals. Not only is this vision a statement of where their unit is heading, but it is also a commitment to action. Without the specifics associated with achievable goals, the vision is simply a public relations statement of little consequence to the activities and future viability of the unit.

An actual example of a vision statement may help to clarify this process. The vision statement that follows was part of a strategic plan and goals presented to the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta in the fall of 1996. It called for the promotion and facilitation of “high-quality, high-level, and accessible, continuous learning through conventional and technologically mediated programs, products and services.” The statement reflected the key elements of the vision at the time, which were elaborated as follows:

- will become deeply integrated into the mainstream academic operation of the university community;
- programs and services will be distinguished by quality, level, relevance, and innovation;
- boundaries between degree and non-degree, full and part-time, and technologically-mediated modalities will be transcended;
- scholarship will inform its practice while contributing to knowledge associated with the design and delivery of lifelong learning.

This was further explicated by four strategic goals: program innovation and renewal; support for distributed learning; recognition of scholarship; and optimization of Faculty administration.

Each of these areas demanded considerable attention and effort by all concerned. Within the program renewal category, specific initiatives such as the creation of a Master of Arts in Communication and Technology, an Institute for Professional Development, a Gaming Research Institute, and new diploma (i.e., post-degree) programs were identified. With regard to distributed learning initiatives, the Faculty made a commitment to develop a policy and incentives for the creation and migration of certificates and diplomas to on-line delivery, to provide WWW support and technical assistance, and, through Academic Technologies for Learning (ATL), to provide leadership and support to the University in the effective use of learning technologies. Parenthetically, ATL raised Extension's profile on campus, as this expertise was becoming of greater interest to the rest of the campus. Scholarship was encouraged and recognized through the Faculty Evaluation Committee and the creation of the Research and Development Report. This report significantly raised the Faculty's profile and credibility in terms of scholarship across campus. Finally, much of the Dean's time in the first year was focused on administrative issues, in particular, balancing the budget and improving financial processes and accountability, along with increasing motivation and incentives to achieve strategic goals.

This plan was updated in 1998 with the addition of specific program initiatives, such as the establishment of a high-level Information Technology Program area and a New Media Diploma in visual design, the creation of a virtual community for the municipal sector (\$1.5M grant), and the promotion of an outreach vision for the University. Not only were all of these innovations consistent with the vision but they were also realistic and

achievable in a reasonable period of time. This attachment to reality was crucial in initiating the ideas expeditiously and in having early successes to celebrate in order to sustain motivation under difficult circumstances.

Willingness to Listen

While transformational leadership is proactive and visionary, it is also to a degree fortuitous. That is, one must be open and ready to seize opportunities as they emerge. Part of this is having a good “b.s.” detector to separate the transformational opportunities from the flavor-of-the-day promotions. This is based largely on good listening skills, broad consultation, and an open but critically inquiring mind to assess feasibility. Although a collaborative and open climate helps to identify and refine ideas, open communication and listening are not equivalent to collaboration that is defined as leadership by consensus. Collaborative approaches are not always the most creative or productive ways to get things done. There must be time for individual reflection and action. Ultimately, program units (i.e., teams) must take responsibility and act, but it must be based upon individual responsibility and action. Leadership is about being out in front, not leading from the rear by waiting for consensus to materialize. By the time this happens, it may well be too late for effective action.

To be a good listener, one must possess genuine interest. That is, a leader must be authentic when interacting with others if they are to be encouraged to share relevant ideas and concerns. Authenticity, a synonym for any number of terms such as openness, honesty, and sincerity, is essential for soliciting the truth. This can only happen if leaders are truly open and willing to listen to contrary thoughts and perspectives; staff will see through a lack of sincerity or an unwillingness to consider their ideas. A leader does not have to accept or even accommodate all perspectives—just seriously and honestly hear and consider them.

In the CS model explored here, the distinction between the academic and business side of the house must be kept in mind. Consensus is an essential and reasonable approach when it comes to the governance of a university, which is necessarily subject to the inherent unpredictability of constructing and preserving knowledge in all forms. Collegiality in universities is based upon an ideal of “unselfish collaboration” and “shared decision making.” This is not, however, the best approach when operating in a competitive and entrepreneurial environment where quick reaction time and financial accountability are ever-present necessities. In this environment, responsive

and relevant CS operations clearly do not have the luxury of time to fully test the ideas or solutions that are needed to achieve the measure of consensus usually demanded in academia.

The difficulty of operating an innovative and entrepreneurial CS unit in a collegial (i.e., collaborative) academic context is noted in the following quote from a well-respected academic with experience in administration.

Academics tend towards criticism, scepticism, and sometimes destructive negativism. Collegiality allows these attitudes and behaviours free rein. . . . The disadvantages are that decisions are often only arrived at after a long and painful interval . . . and in the process, several people may be subject to savage maulings in front of their peers. (Ramsden, 1998, pp. 23–24)

Although people often need to be challenged with new visions and encouraged to act through teamwork and partnerships, catatonic states based upon a demand for collegiality and collaboration must be prevented. This is why the emphasis here is on active listening, but not necessarily consensus building. The paradox is that as a leader one has to create a collaborative, open environment but at the same time be separate from it. A leader must first have independence and be respected.

It is not necessary for transformational leaders to produce all the ideas, but they must know when they do not have the answers and be able to recognize good ideas when they encounter them. It is really a matter of acquiring good ideas by being open to them. Another aspect of this is recognizing barriers—and whether they are real or self-serving. When real barriers in the form of philosophy or vision are present, solutions must be explored collaboratively. However, good ideas and decisiveness must not be abandoned based simply upon self-interest and a lack of consensus. The commitment to an open and full examination of new ideas reveals excuses to act and unfounded resistance to change.

Transformational leaders must also have a select and accessible group of advisers to help them see things from the broader perspective, as well as explore ideas in depth. Of course, a key element is to have the right people giving advice—trustworthy people who bring skills and perspectives that will complement those of the leader. In the end, though, it is often only the leader who can fully appreciate the complex internal and external factors, including the political climate, that is so essential to the success of innovative initiatives that will move the CS unit and University forward. Based upon broad input, it is the leader who must make the hard decisions in a timely manner.

Decisiveness

In many ways decisiveness is a corollary of change. Change requires action. The mediating variable is the ability and willingness to make timely decisions, often without all the desired information. Decisiveness is not imposing one's will. Instead, it is based upon understanding the opportunity or challenge and its congruence to the vision and goals, assessing risks and benefits, communicating the opportunity, and then committing resources to ensure the greatest chance of success. Nothing is certain, but to realize their vision, leaders must have the courage to take that first step. From commitment, adjustments can be made, with results often exceeding expectations.

Part of being decisive is a timing issue, that is, being prepared to move when opportunities arise. A good example at the University of Alberta was the decision to close the Ceramics Studio in Extension. This decision was a political minefield, but it was essential if we were to find the resources (financial and space) to bring Extension into the digital age. It allowed our Applied Arts area to move ahead with a New Media Diploma in Visual Design, and also gave Extension the ability to mount an information technology program. As Dean, I believed it was the right decision given the overwhelming mass of data showing that the ceramics program was serving only a very small group of clients, occupying a very large amount of space, and losing money. At the same time, Extension faculty and staff were split on the issue and it became a very emotional time that took its toll on all concerned.

With initiatives that affect the entire university directly, decisiveness takes another form. Much of transformational leadership in large bureaucratic institutions consists of preparing the ground for an innovative idea and waiting for circumstances favourable to moving the idea forward. Decisiveness under such conditions is recognizing the idea and actively championing it, while not wilting in the face of opposition or long odds. In short, it means taking a position and being persistent but patient. It also means developing long-term relationships across the university and being sincere and authentic in dealing with senior administration—especially other deans. This was the tactical approach that I followed in gaining approval for our Master of Arts in Communications and Technology.

Transformational leaders do not need to be liked. Paraphrasing Colin Powell's lessons on leadership, Harari (1996) states:

... some people will get angry at your actions and decisions. It's inevitable if you're honorable. Trying to get everyone to like you is a sign of mediocrity: You'll avoid the tough decisions, you'll avoid confronting the people who need to be confronted . . . (p. 1)

Avoiding the tough decisions and controversy is a sure way to isolate the most valuable and forward-thinking individuals—the very ones needed to realize a vision.

It is ironic that in an institution built upon a collegial and consensual approach to governance, the last thing CS units need is consensual leadership. Sound business principles and practices must guide CS units. A responsive and innovative practice cannot be run handcuffed by the consensual model of university governance. Not only does a course of action shaped by consensus take too long to arrive at, but it is very likely to be a compromise that is all too similar to the way things have always been done. Decisiveness requires conviction, courage, and action, often in the face of controversy and resistance.

Recognizing Talent

Another key aspect of leadership is recognizing and coping with the talents of staff. Invariably in a public institution such as a university, few options exist for replacing individuals whose talents no longer fit the challenge at hand. For this reason, leaders must be particularly adept at recognizing talent (or lack thereof) and placing that talent where it can do the most good (or least harm). This ability is often overlooked, but, in fact, it may well be one of a leader's most important skills when resources are limited and hiring and firing to fit emerging needs and opportunities is not an option.

This same skill of recognition is also important in assessing where new talent is required and ensuring that the right person is selected for the position. When recruiting, a leader looks for bright, energetic individuals before considering experience or even academic qualifications. Bright, creative persons can learn what they have to quickly, and bring a fresh perspective to the job and organization.

The persistent search for fresh talent is essential in CS units, which often have little opportunity to hire new staff and faculty. Part of this process is succession planning. A good leader looks for those who have leadership abilities and places them in roles where their potential can be developed and recognized.

Staffing is a serious challenge in CS units. One approach necessitated by contextual contingencies is to hire on a term-certain contract basis, with a short-term notice of termination. In this manner, the quality and fit of individuals can be assessed at low risk to the organization. However, termination clauses often are subject to negotiated staffing agreements that can be as high as a year's notice or pay-out. One must add to this difficulty the inability of CS units, in many cases, to provide competitive remuneration. Thus, the most reasonable approach is to nurture existing staff by giving them responsibilities that match their abilities and interests.

Recognition of Achievements

A leader must be prepared to recognize and give credit for successes to those who are most directly involved, rather than be perceived as actively taking credit for their accomplishments. Redirecting recognition and praise appropriately is a challenge when leaders must play the role of public advocate and be front and centre when lauding the achievements of the CS unit. From a leader's perspective, this is also difficult when the leader must step forward to take the heat for stumbles, or even failures, that are inevitable when being innovative and moving into new territory. Natural opportunities to recognize achievements for those closest to the initiative are often limited, however, and leaders should seize every chance to draw attention to and thank those responsible. Recognition for the leader will come with the growing reputation of the CS unit as a whole. It is much less so for those closest to the action.

The flip side of recognition, that is, assessing progress and recognizing potential failures, is also very important. This is where intervention is crucial, and providing constructive but critical input essential. Along with recognition must come accountability, for lack of accountability only diminishes the currency of recognition. Simply ignoring failures and incompetence damages morale and the value of a job well done. In short, recognition must be balanced with accountability if a leader is to be seen as authentic.

Unfortunately, many leaders ignore accountability issues and become a ceremonial figurehead—a cheerleader not grounded in the needs of the organization—which can be disastrous in periods of rapid change. In fact, the job inevitably attracts individuals who relish the spotlight, and selection committees often demonstrate a bias for such individuals. Given the need for universities to be more public relations conscious and media wise, this is a real dilemma. Attracting public and private funding is more and more a

political and public relations challenge, but a transformational leader must continue to look at the long term and be sure the reality is congruent with the rhetoric. In other words, a leader must ensure that legitimate and worthwhile goals are being actively pursued and realized. However, what are the issues of interest to a university CS unit that are consistent with the mission of a research university?

ISSUES IN CONTINUING STUDIES

At the core of a vision for CS in a research university must be scholarship. This scholarship will be largely multidisciplinary and applied. The first issue is whether CS naturally fits within a particular field of study—multidisciplinary or otherwise. Since at least the 1970s, CS has identified with adult education, and many practitioners were hired based upon academic qualifications in this field. However, times have changed, and the question is whether there still exists a fit between continuing and adult education.

Notwithstanding that continuing and adult education have much in common and might learn from each other, they have evolved different goals and values. Thus, it would be a mistake for CS to rely exclusively on adult education as its academic cornerstone. Their differing goals and values, unfortunately, are associated with adult education's insular and increasingly marginal status as a field of study (Percival & Kopps, 2000). Currently, little research in adult education is directed to CS. Indeed, there is "[an] apparent disinterest or even disdain felt by many professors (and even graduate students) of adult education toward work-related, economics-driven, cost-recovery types of adult education" associated with CS (Archer & Wright, 2000, p. 4).

The reality is that CS has moved much more to the professional and applied side of scholarship that is associated with continuous learning. For example, Selman (1999) argued that a robust research program focused

on the way learning occurs in organizational contexts is an emerging area of opportunity and need. This would, in turn, have the potential to create a renewed sense of purpose for CE [continuing education] and strengthen universities' efforts to contribute to economic and community development. (p. 85)

This interest in learning for economic development has shifted to broader communications and technology areas such as workplace learning, distance education, and knowledge management. As such, it would seem to

be imperative that CS expand its purview and develop expertise in these emerging areas of study. To be recognized as having the credibility and competence of true leaders, CS must learn from its own innovative practices and publicly share that knowledge.

Another reason for the increased focus on applied research is that new opportunities and demands differ from traditional CS programming. Real opportunities for growth and revenue generation are in *non*-traditional programming areas, areas that require investigation prior to delivering quality programming customized for particular client groups. For the research-based CS unit, opportunities in the area of applied research, funded privately or through public grants, have the potential to inform future program directions, as well as to increase the credibility of CS within the university and with external clients. An excellent example of such an area of research is knowledge management within organizations.

The approach described here verges on an ideal situation that includes dedicated faculty members, but for many CS units, it is not a reality. Yet, academic input and leadership can exist within different models. For instance, CS units that do not have academic appointments can align themselves with institutes or establish academic steering committees. The key point is that academic credibility is essential to be a player and to thrive in a modern research university, and it is the core of the approach presented here.

Core Areas of Interest

The next step in describing a vision for CS that is appropriate for research universities is to address core programming areas. Does such a vision and model simply address professional programming? What about traditional public service programming? What are the legitimate areas of programming for a research-based CS unit?

The answer to these questions is that such an approach does not preclude any general area of programming. A model of the three core areas of interest of CS—professional development, personal learning, and public interest—is represented in Figure 1 (see following page). The emphasis and balance amongst these will depend upon a variety of factors such as institutional goals, financial constraints, community needs, and competition. However, the specific program initiatives to be pursued, and how programming in these areas is approached, will challenge the past practice of investing in programming on speculation. In a research-based approach, insight based upon systematic investigation directs and shapes the selection, design, delivery, and evaluation of CS programming activities.

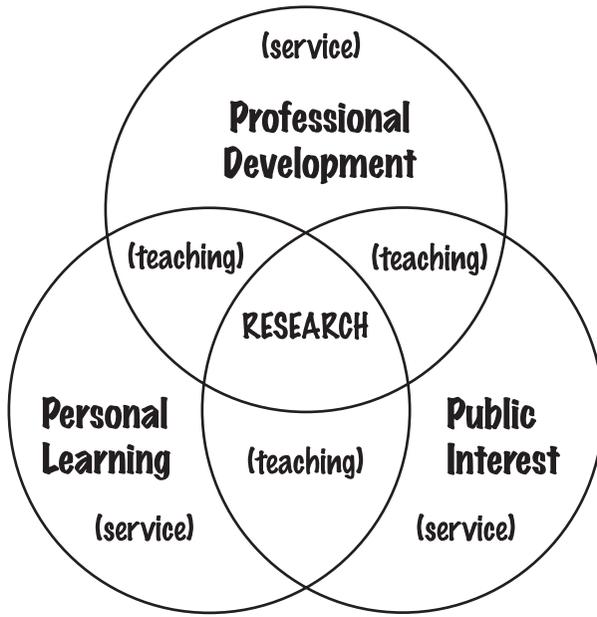


Figure 1: University Continuing Studies Areas of Interest.

Moreover, the program planning process does not start with the production of courses and programs, which, in the previous model, was usually based upon the programmer's intuition or fortuitous contact, followed by extensive customer marketing. The value chain has been shifted to customer first. This means working with representatives of prospective client groups to identify perceived needs and understand the extent and importance of a market before development is initiated. As a result, many ideas will be rejected. In this process, academic expertise is juxtaposed with practical concerns to collaboratively explore and understand real needs and market demands. This is relationship marketing, and it is an important element in how a research university approaches CS programming. Relationship marketing is crucial to addressing the practical concerns of working professionals, both from a content and an accessibility perspective. In other words, the programs of the CS unit must be relevant and conveniently accessible to working individuals. The research ethos is also reflected in the delivery of courses by establishing a community of

inquiry (academic steering committee) that includes learners; this will facilitate both the redevelopment of courses and programs and the construction of new programming knowledge that can be generalized to other CS operations. All of this speaks to issues of innovation and quality—the defining characteristics of university and research-based CS programming.

Programming from this perspective is not business as usual. The focus must be on high-level and high-quality programming. A research-based approach to CS must differ noticeably from that of colleges and other CS providers. But, while university CS, with its scholarly core, must rationalize its program offerings in terms of level and quality, it must be careful not to retreat too far “up-market.” It should also be seen as an incubator of innovation for the university (Archer, Garrison, & Anderson, 1999), which will require a review of existing programming and a serious commitment to revitalize program offerings through renewal and innovation. Inevitably, limited resources will result in some popular but “tired” programs being dropped to make room for new, innovative programming. In many cases, it is not a matter of existing programs not being of some value; rather, it is a matter of seizing opportunities to create more forward-looking programs.

Resources

What then is the cost of research-driven programming activities? Is the allocation of resources a zero-sum game with an internal competition for finite resources between the academic and programming sides of the house? The answer is that research is an investment, which will guarantee a much higher return in terms of reputation, relevance, and revenues. It also reflects a rationalization of academic and programming roles and responsibilities and the need for effective research.

Certainly, there must be a commitment to and investment in academic resources, most likely tenure-track positions. The key is to ensure that programmers do what they do best; this then frees academics to do what they were hired to do, that is, research, teaching, and service to the community. Teaching development is a crucial function in CS, and should be the responsibility of academics with a sound foundation in teaching and learning. Community service is clearly part of the job description of academics, and this might be where the service component of a CS unit’s mandate is best focused. In too many cases, research-intensive universities hire academics and then hand them full-time administrative program

positions. This is not only an example of hiring the wrong skill set, it is also a poor use of resources.

An entrepreneurial CS unit needs to be run on a day-to-day basis by full-time business managers with the supervisory and budgeting skills to run an efficient and effective operation. Academic faculty members should provide strategic direction to the program units, explore new ideas, attract research and start-up funding, liaise with faculties, chair steering committees, lead teacher development programs, and provide public service in areas congruent with the unit's mandate and vision. Such a rationalization of roles and responsibilities would produce greater efficiencies and more vital and relevant programs, including increased contracts with organizations for customized programming, as well as attract various grants that are becoming increasingly available as governments target areas for funding. It is more than realistic to imagine academics covering their direct operational overheads through the awarding of grants and winning contracts.

Organizationally, academic input should not be from line positions. In turn, tenure-track academics should not be managing the day-to-day operations of a programming unit. This is a full-time job requiring a very different set of skills and interests. Structurally, academic input might come in through academic steering committees or research institutes directly associated with specific programming areas. The gains are both practical (i.e., programming opportunities) and political (i.e., increased credibility and reduced marginality) in a research university. These steering committees or institutes may also be constituted with external members, which may be necessary for CS units without faculty status.

Investment in research is not only a sound financial investment, it is also imperative for a CS unit within a research university if the unit is to be a leader in today's knowledge society. In this respect, a research university must have an outreach vision that includes CS as a part of a larger strategic plan for the university to remain relevant and responsive to its alumni, community, and political supporters. This approach represents a framework for constructing a new vision that will allow CS to exhibit transformational leadership and realize its true academic potential.

CONCLUSION

CS is in a privileged position. The acceptance of the necessity of continuous learning in society, in conjunction with the knowledge and experience of CS units, has provided CS with an unprecedented opportunity to become integrated into the mainstream of the university. As Kirby (1992) stated with regard to university continuing education, its “positioning inside the institution becomes a central concern in the political sense and, clearly, the closer it is to the central core of the institution, the stronger its position” (p. 56).

Some have declared that continuing study has become the third mission of the university. Indeed, outreach, with CS at its core, has been recognized by many major North American research universities as a key mandate. Some of these have appointed vice-presidents of outreach to reflect the importance of this function to their institution. This new mandate for outreach is represented in Figure 2. Outreach joins research and teaching in a synergistic relationship that best ensures relevance, innovation, and excellence. At the core of this dynamic relationship are opportunities for worthwhile lifelong learning.

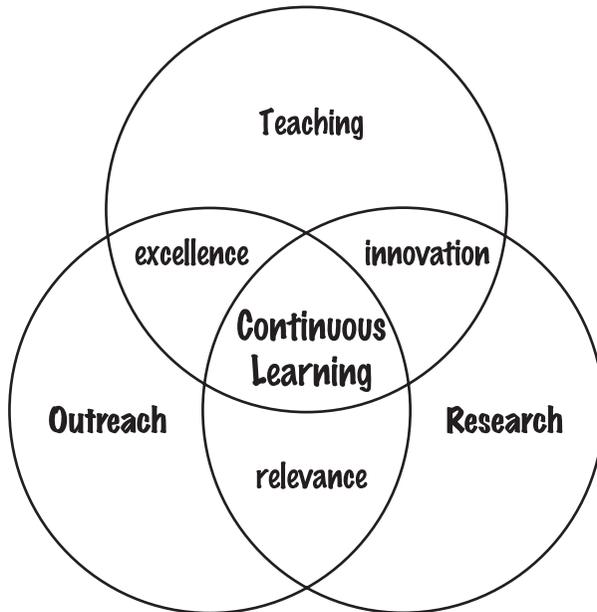


Figure 2: Tripartite mandate for Research Universities

Outreach is an imperative for universities if they are to be seen as relevant and responsive to an increasingly demanding and questioning society. As Legg (1994) states, “. . . over the past 30 years our universities have evolved from highly respected, isolated ivory towers, to highly visible and vulnerable institutions” (p. 95). For research universities to embrace the concept and realization of lifelong learning, they must bring together, in an apparently seamless manner, the three core elements of a modern university: teaching, research, and outreach. Community partnerships (national and international) and interdisciplinary collaboration can only enhance traditional research and teaching. However, much work still needs to be done to transcend the boundaries and align the resources of the university to fulfill its outreach mandate. CS leaders must be at the forefront—conceptualizing, convincing, and strategizing—if the potential for CS and outreach is to be realized.

Outreach includes professional development, personal learning, and public interest programming. The balance of each will depend upon the goals of the institution, the needs of the community, and the resources afforded the CS unit. Professional programming has always had a legitimate place in CS; the challenge for CS leaders is to avoid being seen as nothing but a source of revenue—a profit centre. This will serve neither the goals of CS nor those of the university and will ultimately lead to the demise of CS as a leader and advocate for outreach. Instead, excess revenues from legitimate programs and services can be used to initiate innovative programming and support public interest programming. Public interest programming, however, must be fully debated and openly defended by the CS unit as being consistent with the institutional mandate and goals, truly representative of the publicly accepted needs of the community, and within the resource capability of the CS unit.

A relevant, innovative, and viable vision for CS and outreach must be a *sine qua non* of leadership in CS. However, in today’s entrepreneurial climate, this vision cannot be one of opposition to generating revenues. Instead, it must be an affirmation of how CS can serve the goals of a research university and the community. Laudable service ideals must be defined in terms of the mandated goals of the institution and be consistent with its distinctive set of abilities and resources.

Finally, having gone on at length about transformational leadership, the uncertainty of transformational leadership—particularly in a university context—must be acknowledged. To an extent, this uncertainty arises from the nature of a public institution, and is made worse by the marginal status

of CS units. To attempt to describe the essential nature of such a complex role is at best reductionistic. It is hoped that this account will cause some to reflect, and encourage those who have a clear vision, a strong conviction and courage, and a desire to serve to consider the opportunities and challenge of CS leadership.

END NOTES

1. Here taken to include units referred to by such names as Extension, Continuing Education, Lifelong Learning, etc.

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BIOGRAPHY

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