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Lessons From 10 Exemplary Faculty

Imagine interviewing 10 of the best: faculty acknowledged by peers, students, professional associations, and their institutions as exemplary. Imagine speaking with them for up to two hours, exploring the question: What individual characteristics, sociological forces, values, and strategies do you feel have allowed you to balance and sustain your enthusiasm for research and teaching?

That's what researcher Patricia Kalivoda of the Instructional Development Office at the University of Georgia did. And from transcriptions of the recorded interviews, she identified "ten guiding principles [that] shaped the world view and influenced the behavior" of these faculty (p. 100). We highlight those principles here:

1. A Life Centered on Concerns

The academic life should focus not just on ideas (described by one faculty participant as "too thin") but also on "value-enriched ideas" or "concerns" (p. 100). Yes, these faculty see their work with students and in research as important, but it is more than that. It matters as part of a larger framework.

In the words of another participant, "You sort of have this feeling that you're working on something bigger than yourself. I think it's important to view it that way, as something that might have some significance to your field and to humanity" (p. 102).

2. A Commitment to Teaching

Despite a high level of scholarly productivity characteristic of all these faculty, "respondents reported a love of teaching, an acute sense of responsibility toward students, and an obligation to disseminate new knowledge generated from research" (p. 102).

3. A Sense That Teaching and Research Are Interdependent

Here respondents recounted examples of the reciprocal relationship between teaching and research. The teaching often helped with the expression of recent findings. And the research added a freshness to the teaching as new material and ideas were integrated. To some degree, the extent of the relationship was a function of specialization. Those in highly specialized fields

reported difficulty incorporating research findings into introductory courses.

4. Self-Improvement as a Way of Life

Most in this cohort were "advocates for life-long learning and practiced it regularly" (p. 105). Their learning activities ran the gamut from off-campus interests to on-campus activities. Many were avid readers. Several reported having read books on teaching.

5. The Seizing of Opportunities

Some of the opportunities presented themselves as "luck" — the old "being in the right place at the right time." But other times these faculty were instrumental in creating opportunities, sometimes through developing a new program, course, or project. In both instances, participants didn't miss the opportunities, but worked hard to make the most of them.

6. A Long-Term View and Persistence

Some respondents noted that they did not perceive themselves as being as talented as some of their colleagues, but they reported a willingness to work harder and longer. They set goals and were not seriously set back by the rejection of an article or grant proposal.

7. The Avoidance of Politics and Gossip

Quite simply, the respondents avoided them because they felt they were detrimental to their personal well-being and to their effectiveness as faculty members.

8. Generosity of Ideas

One faculty member ably summed up the principle: Some of the really well known people in science, when I've gotten to know them, they've turned out to be such wonderful people, so generous with their time and opinions ... even ideas, sharing ideas — ... not caring who gets the credit as long as something interesting gets done (pp. 109-110).

9. Respect, Sincerity, and Caring Toward Others

The respect, sincerity, and care these faculty spoke of they worked to extend to colleagues and to students, graduate and undergraduate.

10. A View of the Vocation as an Avocation

Here the view is of a co-mingling of the professional and the personal, a sense that the two are inextricably linked, inseparable, joined parts in one person.

The investigator believes that many faculty members can benefit from examining their own

guiding principles — attitudes, beliefs, and values about their roles and responsibilities as faculty members — and from giving conscious attention to developing their own strategies for balancing faculty roles and for sustaining enthusiasm for their academic careers. (p. 115)

Reference: Patricia Kalivoda, "Exemplary Senior Faculty at Research Universities: Their Guiding Principles for Balancing Teaching and Research." *Innovative Higher Education*, 20:2 (Winter 1995), 95-116. *T_P*

Cheating: An Analysis of Relevant Circumstances

Academic dishonesty continues to be a larger and more intractable problem than most of us like to admit. Or we may admit to it in a general sense, but we don't face up to the problem in our own classes.

Part of the solution involves understanding as much about the problem as possible. For example, if you had to guess, what circumstances would you say contribute most to the decision to cheat?

If you said low instructor vigilance, unfair exams, an instructor who does not care about cheating, and dependence of financial support and long-term goals on good grades, you identified the set of circumstances cited in a survey of 365 college students.

And the circumstances found most influential in decreasing cheating? High instructor vigilance, fair exams, high punishment for getting caught (expulsion, in this case), essay exams, widely spaced exam sitting, and valuable course material (as opposed to the boring stuff in those required courses).

The researchers see some good news in the results: This particular pattern of results is encouraging with respect to controlling cheating. The two consistently high ranked circumstances are ones over which instructors do have considerable control. The implication is that instructors who invest time and effort into being highly vigilant and constructing fair exams will reap benefits in terms of overall prevention and reduction of cheating in their classes. (p. 698)

In addition to identifying some of the factors related to the decision to cheat, researchers also gathered information on a number of other important issues. For example, they identified 12 different cheating behaviors and asked students to indicate whether or not they had engaged in the activity:

- 58% said that they had told another student a question on an exam the second student had to take.
- 49% said that they had gotten exam questions from students who had already taken the exam.

If there is encouraging news, could it be that only 2% reported buying a paper and handing it in as their

own. On the other hand, 10% reported they had turned in a friend's assignment as their own.

Who was most likely to cheat, according to this data? Male students with high GPA goals who think that a large percentage of college students regularly cheat on exams.

As for the extent of cheating documented by this survey: brace yourself — 83% (that is, 85% of the males and 79% of the females) reported that they had engaged in at least one of the 12 cheating behaviors identified. More than 25% of the students reported having engaged in five of the 12 behaviors — the first two listed above, plus listing false references in a paper, allowing a student to copy answers during an exam, and plagiarizing part of a term paper.

The percentage who reported that they *regularly* cheated was significantly lower, if that is any consolation: 27% said they regularly cheated on exams and 36% said they regularly cheated on assignments.

The numbers are depressing, but this research does identify some places in which we can begin to explore solutions.

Reference: R.L. Genereux and B.A. McLeod, "Circumstances Surrounding Cheating: A Questionnaire Study of College Students." *Research in Higher Education*, 36:6 (1995), 687-704. (This article is particularly well-referenced, if you are interested in collecting current material relevant to the topic.) *T_P*



Editor: Maryellen Weimer, Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University - Berks Campus, P.O. Box 7009, Reading, PA 19610-7009; Ph: 610/320-5337; Email: grg@psuvm.psu.edu

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Associate Editor: Robert Magnan

Ph: 608/246-3590 x 107; Email: robert.magnan@magnapubs.com

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