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Assessment, Accountability, and Honors Education

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INTRODUCTION

Honors programs thrive in an environment of pedagogic freedom. This freedom extends to our honors students as they explore topics for projects and theses and engage in much more independent research than the average undergraduate. Honors programs should also be havens for faculty to experiment with new ideas for courses and co-curricular activities. Freed from large lecture halls and department politics, faculty who teach in an honors program often find themselves wandering over to the honors facilities to hang out with students or going off on honors-sponsored adventures. Thus academic freedom also often leads to a stronger sense of community. However, as the corporate, managerial model encroaches on the modern university, both academic freedom and the community of scholars are under threat, and honors administrators must find a way to preserve what makes their programs unique.

Universities used to generate new ideas and create models that were adopted by those outside the ivory tower, from art and entertainment to industry and politics. However, the modern university, perhaps lacking its old confidence, turns again and again to the corporate world for many of its practices, including so-called accountability. Politicians, claiming to speak for the "consumers" of higher education who spend ever-increasing sums for college tuition, have in many cases required colleges and universities that receive state and federal funding, which means just about every institution of higher learning, to show "transparency and accountability," and the schools, urged by accreditation agencies, have decided that "assessment of student learning" is the best response to critics and consumers alike. Through reaccreditation, budgeting decisions, curriculum approval and other means, university administrators have exerted pressure upon deans, department chairs, and individual faculty members to "embrace the culture of assessment." In our previous

article for *JNCHC*, we questioned the validity of assessment as an accurate measurement of student learning in honors. We will argue in this essay that the "culture" of assessment and accountability is not what honors faculty should choose to embrace.

ASSESSMENT IMPLIES A LACK OF TRUST

At the root of this accountability and assessment movement is a fundamental and pervasive lack of trust. Politicians no longer trust universities to spend their money wisely. Many parents of students may share this feeling. Increasingly, university administrators do not trust faculty to go about their business without a regular accounting of their productivity, both in research and in the classroom. As an administrator once told me, "Faculty now have to *earn* the trust." What exactly did we do to lose it?

JNCHC editor Ada Long introduced a recent issue of the journal with this observation:

> What seems to have gained momentum in recent years is distrust of higher education and, more specifically, of college and university teachers. The various commentators on higher education—from journalists to parents, legislators to college presidents—seem to agree that teachers need to prove that they are doing their jobs. . . . My question is, what is the basis for this distrust? (Long 11)

Of course, the majority of the professoriate *has* earned trust through the long and rigorous tenure and promotion process, but the distrust has now gone way beyond tenure and promotion reviews since assessment is blind to rank and tenure. *All* faculty should be involved in course-based assessment, say its proponents. Meanwhile most faculty, who feel that they have been doing assessment of student learning through quizzes, exams, and papers, see this new trend as a bother and an imposition. The truth is that it is even worse.

ASSESSMENT IS AN INFRINGEMENT ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Most of us see academic freedom as the right, earned through the long and rigorous tenure review process, of a professor to present potentially unpopular or controversial material and arguments in our classes and research without censure from university authorities. In the United States, academic freedom was first formally defined in 1915 by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in its *Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure.* The definition was revised and issued in

1940 by the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges as the *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*:

> Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.
>
> Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative with rights. . . .
>
> Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.
>
> College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations.

These definitions mainly concern First Amendment "free speech" protection, itself vulnerable after recent court decisions (AAUP, *Protecting*). However, many of us assume that these protections extend to content, method, and evaluation within our courses. Instructors define reading and writing assignments, evaluate student work in accord with fairness and the practices of our disciplines, and assign a final grade according to a scale established by our institutions. Under course-based assessment, however, instructors are advised by assessment officers or committees to employ certain types of assignments, to devise rubrics for evaluating these assignments, and then to use the data to measure student learning. As we argue below, rubrics and data-gathering are meaningless for most courses in the arts and humanities, and they ask faculty to do what the vast majority have not been educated—or rather trained—to do. Even if faculty members believe in the value of such assessment for their courses, they should be the ones to make this determination, not an administrator or faculty committee. Imposition of educational philosophy

from outside—whether from a politician, an administrator, or a faculty colleague—is an infringement of academic freedom. (For current debate on academic freedom, including the controversial "Academic Bill of Rights," see commentaries by Aby; Fish; Post and Finkin; and Horowitz.)

According to the 1915 *Declaration*, university faculties are "appointees" of the legal governing authority *"*but not in any proper sense*"* its "employees." "[O]nce appointed, the scholar has professional functions to perform in which the appointing authorities have neither competency nor moral right to intervene" (AAUP, *Protecting*, 69). These professional functions, it is reasonable to assume, include defining the parameters of individual courses, in both content and method of instruction. While content is usually (though not always) left in the hands of the faculty member or the department, however, pedagogic method and course assignments are now assumed to be part of the purview of provosts, deans, and non-teaching staff members. These individuals often intervene in the name of accountability to government and accrediting bodies. Such intervention reflects an expansion of executive power in the modern university at the expense of the faculty. Liberties once surrendered are difficult, if not impossible, to regain.

ASSESSMENT IS A WASTE OF TIME

For most of us who have had to do programmatic assessment reports, they have been a drudgery with the result that we are, in the end, simply checking off boxes. "I've finished my report so I can now check 'Done,' as can my supervisors and *their* supervisors, and then the university can inform the accreditation agency, which can in turn inform the Department of Education, which can then inform Congress." In the end, is anybody reading all of these assessment reports or are they a waste of time that betrays the original intent of the assessment and accountability movement?

Course-based assessment is even worse, keeping faculty from teaching and doing required research while those who demand it of us do little if any teaching or research. Ironically, assessment thus runs counter to the demands for productivity. If faculty are constantly engaged in assessment exercises (or even, as here, fighting against assessment), they are as a result spending less time preparing for class and doing research ("Assessment Projects from Hell"). If we are truthfully advertising our institutions to prospective students and their families, on our brochures and web sites we should list all the hours that faculty spend in committee meetings and replace the pictures of professors lecturing to their students with ones showing weary and disgruntled PhDs peering over stacks of forms. "I worry," writes Jeffrey Portnoy, "that the future of teaching is a race to retirement against the accelerating forces of

standardization and business practices" (47). Comments we hear from veteran colleagues suggest that the future is *now*.

WHO IS ASSESSING THE ASSESSORS?

When we are told that faculty members have to earn trust, prove that we are doing our jobs, or explain our relevance to various constituencies, we should ask our administrative colleagues to share the burden. They should be subject to equal scrutiny by faculty and required to provide summative evaluations of their performance, but such demands are viewed as ridiculous within the business model of today's universities. Employees have no right to scrutinize the activities of their managers, apart from water-cooler gossip. The transparency and accountability model does not work both ways. Long points out the growing number of assessment professionals in university administrations and the increasing influence they are having on the policies and procedures of undergraduate education across the country (11). "Who are they," she asks, "and why do they garner the trust that is with increasing meagerness afforded to college and university faculties?" While most are intelligent and well-intentioned professionals, they are nonetheless being used the way managerial consultants are used so often in the corporate world: to increase the productivity of the workers.

Philosophers from Aristotle to Avicenna to Aquinas have been intrigued by the Prime Mover theory. Simply stated, by tracing backwards the source that causes a body to go in motion and the source of *that* moving body and so on, one can find the ultimate source of all movement—the Prime Mover. In the case of assessment and accountability, the Prime Mover is hard to find, much less to assess. True transparency and accountability should be mutual and reciprocal, a sort of "checks and balances," but in higher education the process is one-way only and seems to be just new jargon masking old management tactics.

ASSESSMENT IS NOT STUDENT-CENTERED

Among all the new jargon that has entered the modern university is the seemingly innocuous phrase "student-centered learning." It is hard to imagine any learning that is *not* student-centered, but it should be obvious that assessment is not student-centered. Students are not being held accountable for their learning but rather faculty members for their teaching. Assessment provides convenient but simplistic institutional data meant to demonstrate average learning and to fuel improvements in future teaching; in this sense, the data are gathered to inform the instructor, department, or institution but not to provide feedback to the student. If we are trying to find out how well we are helping students learn, assessment is a pseudo-measurement of

accountability and productivity; our best and most reliable measure of learning remains the professional judgment of faculty members who spend countless hours grading papers, providing feedback, talking with individual students, and honing their original thinking. This traditional approach is much more student-centered than a regulated industry of education, churning out well-trained students with maximum efficiency.

ASSESSMENT BETRAYS THE ORIGINAL INTENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

The first universities in medieval Europe were founded as partnerships between faculty and students. Students submitted to the rules and evaluation of the faculty in order to apprentice their way into the membership in the guild of free and learned men. Popes and kings protected the freedoms of the universities because of their prestige and because they needed university-trained men to fill their staffs. At places like Oxford and Paris, faculty and students made significant sacrifices and even gave their lives on occasion to protect their liberties from outside interests (Baldwin). While the first American colleges and universities were founded by many different entities—including British monarchs, state governments, and various churches—nearly all were devoted to the liberal arts ideal of Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge. Free pursuit of truth was essential, it was thought, for producing skilled professionals and, more importantly, virtuous citizens.

These principles were tested in both medieval and American universities following the respective growth of their administrative "managers." When academic freedom was first defined for American institutions of higher learning in the early twentieth century, academic leaders attempted to break away from the master-servant model that had come to characterize the relationship between administrators and faculty. The concept of "shared governance" took shape gradually, and its fullest iteration can be found in the AAUP's 1994 statement *On the Relationship of Faculty Governance to Academic Freedom* (AAUP, *Policy*). This statement is endorsed by most professional bodies and institutions. However, shared-governance violations have now reached the level of national epidemic, according to the AAUP. The AAUP's Committee on College and University Governance, which issued its first report in 1920, investigates alleged violations of shared governance. Cary Nelson, president of the AAUP, discusses several recent violations in his new book on academic freedom—*No University is an Island: Saving Academic Freedom*—and distills sixteen types of threat to academic freedom. While autocratic administrators grab the headlines, the first threat on Nelson's list is *instrumentalization*, which "concentrates pedagogy and research alike on narrowly

defined goals and outcomes" and "fuel[s] the movement for more testing and accountability" (51ff).

ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARE PART OF A BUSINESS MODEL

Related to instrumentalization is the general growth of *managerial ideology* in the modern university. In Nelson's opinion, "the managerial model that now dominates the corporate university" is a threat to both academic freedom and shared governance (32). "The rise of a separate class of career administrators and the substantial increase in their sheer numbers has helped fuel the belief that faculty are not full partners in the educational enterprise but rather resources to be controlled and managed" (56). The strictly hierarchical "power pyramid" inherent in this model runs contrary, argues Nelson, to the AAUP's 1966 "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities." In addressing Stanley Fish's argument that faculty naively expect democracy to govern the modern university, Nelson offers a reasonable definition of shared governance:

> Shared governance cannot install full democracy in a university. It is a negotiated strategy for sharing and adjudicating power and its application and effects. Shared governance exists when boards of trustees agree to cede authority over areas—such as curriculum development and faculty hiring—where the faculty have greater expertise. It has nothing to do with democracy. Rather, it recognizes that governing boards do not have the requisite competence to make these decisions (37).

Most faculty members would agree that true democracy cannot govern every move of the institution, whether it be a small private college or a large land-grant university. Executive decisions must be made by our administrators, who work long and hard hours in part to free faculty to pursue teaching and research interests. But surely the best model is the collegial rather than the corporate, based on trust among members of a community. Administrators who view faculty members as their colleagues rather than their employees are less likely to violate the principles that make scholarly investigation and learning possible.

FACULTY SHARE THE BLAME

While the governing of our institutions slips from our hands and while administrators talk freely of changing curricula, course content, and pedagogy, we faculty remain in our silos, unwilling or unable to influence these

affairs. If our silos were the closed quarters of the classroom it would be one thing, but increasingly they are silos of overspecialization. Research interests dominate the minds of most faculty members and consume their time and talents—not just at so-called research institutions, and not just on the tenure track. Noble as is the pursuit of truth in our disciplines, while we travel ever more quickly toward the small end of the telescope we perhaps lose sight of the bigger picture. For some, research is a welcome escape from tedious and less interesting institutional duties; for others, books and conferences are perhaps consolation for the declining status of the professoriate at both the institutional and societal level. While we senior faculty may survive the storm, however, we are passing the problem on to our successors and thus do a disservice both to them and to their students.

Moreover, faculty who assume leadership positions, whether on committees or in the administration, need themselves to remember the principles of academic freedom and collegiality. Good intent and majority vote are not ever sufficient reasons to violate the rights and freedoms of the professoriate. Department chairs and senior faculty should, of course, offer advice and encouragement on content and pedagogy, but phrases such as "faculty development" and "improving student learning" should not be allowed to mask power plays. We are all invested in these processes, but only in an environment of freedom and trust can we grow as scholars and teachers.

ASSESSMENT IS ANTI-HUMANISTIC

Much of the complaint against assessment has come from the humanities, which is not surprising. Subjecting Shakespeare to a rubric seems an obvious blasphemy. The study of philosophy and theology at the highest levels is unlikely to generate "learning outcomes." Assessment does not inspire poetry, music, love, or appreciation of the past.

The discipline of history, for example, encompasses and ultimately judges all human institutions and ideologies. Its origins are as old as writing itself and render it inconsistent with subjection to educational theories and practices that have been around for less than a generation. Assessment was generated by the social sciences and is alien to those of us who teach in the humanities and who view the human as a unique, creative, and complex creature. Wrong we may be, but to force the creative arts, the humanities, and indeed the natural sciences into a social science paradigm is to privilege one view in the university and do disservice to the others. Those of us outside the social sciences are likely to be skeptical of what the ideally assessed and accountable university would look like, doubting that it would bring the happiness of which the ancient philosophers spoke. Some would say Kafka, Huxley, and Orwell gave us adequate warnings regarding such efficient

systems: "Art, science—you seem to have paid a high price for your happiness," said the Savage to the World Controller (Huxley 177). Brave new world indeed!

We believe that our faculty colleagues in psychology and education whose expertise is in undergraduate student learning can and should share their research with us, but they must recognize that individual faculty members should ultimately judge how or if this research can improve teaching and learning in their classrooms. Imposing a "one size fits all" pedagogy can undermine the intellectual diversity that distinguishes higher education from primary and secondary schooling and will certainly lead honors education to lose its distinctiveness in an increasingly homogenized undergraduate experience.

STANDARDIZATION

Many critics of assessment direct their antipathy toward the standardization that they see it bringing to American higher education. Standardized tests and Standards of Learning (SOLs) have come under attack by academics since the 1980s as an oversimplification of learning and a way of sneaking ideology into the curriculum in primary and secondary schooling, and much greater suspicion is justified about standardization of undergraduate curricula.

Such suspicion is especially appropriate with regard to honors education in America, which in its seventy-five year history has never been static or uniform. Honors programs have long served as "laboratories" to test new education theories and pedagogy or to resurrect old ones. This aspect of honors education is certainly threatened by the assessment and accountability movement. "There is considerable disagreement, as there should be, about more general issues of assessment and evaluation," Long writes about the nine essays in a *JNCHC* Forum on "Outcomes Assessment and Accountability in Honors," "but there is unanimous agreement that requiring standardized measurement of student learning outcomes is inimical to the very nature of honors education" (12). Furthermore, many would argue that teaching is more art than science. Our best teachers are not defined by—nor identified by—any rubric.

ASSESSMENT MODELS ARE SIMPLISTIC AND NON-SCIENTIFIC

While assessment ultimately derives from the social sciences, it is seldom practiced with scientific rigor or proper method. As we previously argued in our article on assessment in honors, most measures of learning outcomes are at best redundant and at worst tend simply to gauge remedial forms

of learning, failing to completely reflect the full spectrum of creative thinking aspired to in an honors education (Carnicom and Snyder). When viewed in this light, such simplistic assessment provides not only very limited data concerning actual student learning but also insidiously lowers standards over time. Outcomes assessment becomes a flawed yardstick, merely measuring a department's or professor's ability to motivate students to memorize the "important" facts.

Additionally, when measurements are designed by the assessor who also evaluates the results, unfavorable measurements may be ignored in favor of more favorable results. After all, tenure, promotion, and budgets now hang in the balance. Indeed, the very survival of honors programs can become dependent on showing tangible results to those outside—often far outside—honors education. For instance, one important study that showed honors participation to have "a significant, if modest, net influence on cognitive measures of student learning" included the assertion that "the assessment and accountability movements" should force "institutional actors" to prove continually that honors is "a sound investment" (Seiffert et al., 70). However, if we care about student learning, we shouldn't prematurely adopt flawed or untested measures that belittle learning to nothing more than rote repetition of trivia. Additionally, the pro-assessment camp inappropriately and perhaps even unethically asks non-social scientists not only to use specific pedagogical approaches but also to convert their classrooms into laboratories collecting flawed learning data. Anyone who has experienced the joy of an IRB review understands the hoops one must jump through to collect even the most innocuous, harmless data, yet we are asking non-social scientists to do just that. Additionally, we are not only asking all disciplines to engage in pedagogical research but all professors to change their teaching approaches to satisfy external demands for data that are not necessarily valid or helpful.

ASSESSMENT IS DRIVEN BY POLITICIANS

Most of us are aware that higher education in America is coming under increasing pressure from federal and state governing bodies and accreditation associations. With the creation of the U.S. Department of Education, congressional reauthorizations of the Higher Education Act, increasingly powerful regional accreditation associations, intrusive state legislatures, state higher education commissions—truly a dizzying array of governors besets the modern university. Mariz has shown that state legislatures' calls for assessment of higher education often arise from re-election campaigns and "hero bills," i.e. legislation resulting from campaign promises (43–45). While state schools may be the most susceptible to politicians' rods, private institutions are hardly safe. The creation of new schools and programs, as well as

accreditation and reaccreditation of schools (normally on a five- or ten-year cycle), is controlled by external governing bodies. As long as a school receives federal or state funds (including tuition scholarships and faculty grants), it is subject to these governors.

Under the pretext of guarding American higher education from spurious or fraudulent online universities as well as explaining soaring tuitions to tax-payers, state commissions and regional accreditors have gained greater authority over America's colleges and universities. They have adopted the corporate accountability model and have been advised by higher education experts to push assessment as the proper tool for measuring the success of individual schools.

The most recent example at the federal level is the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and its implementation by the U.S. Department of Education and the recognized accreditation agencies. The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), last reauthorized in 1998, was extended for several years and reemerged as H.R. 4137, the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), sponsored by Rep. George Miller (D-Cal.) with twenty-six Democrat co-sponsors. HEOA was passed by the House on Feb. 7, 2008, and by the Senate on July 29 and was signed by President Obama on August 14. This 1158-page bill, while showing evidence of congressional concern over the rising costs of tuition and textbooks, does not include an overall assessment and accountability mandate for institutions of higher learning. In the past two years, however, the Department of Education has entered into the Federal Register broader implementation procedures that show the influence of the assessment lobby. See, for example, an entry for October 27, 2009: "Direct assessment program means an instructional program that, in lieu of credit hours or clock hours as a measure of student learning, utilizes direct assessment of student learning, or recognizes the direct assessment of student learning by others . . . " (Federal Register).

While the HEOA was a Democrat-led initiative, the U.S. Department of Education under the George W. Bush administration also took steps toward insuring accountability in higher education. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings created the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education in September of 2005. The final report of the Spellings Commission is titled *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*. The Commission proposed mandatory measurement of student learning and that made the results of such measurements readily available to prospective students and their parents. "The report's recurrent theme was *accountability*," write Hacker and Dreifus, adding their hope that "the measurement would be less mechanistic than the mindless testing that characterized Ms. Spellings' 'No Child Left Behind' initiative" (207).

The AAUP has expressed its concerns about the Spellings Commission Report, stating: "[T]he final report neglected the role of the faculty, had a narrow economic focus, and viewed higher education as a single system rather than appreciating its institutional diversity. The report formulated a sense of crisis in almost purely financial and economic terms" (AAUP, *Response*). However, apart from the soaring costs of higher education—a very real issue but little related to what actually goes on between professor and student—there is no evidence that American higher education *is* in crisis. On the contrary, our universities continue to be leaders in global education and the destination for foreign students in ever-increasing numbers.

ASSESSMENT ASSUMES THAT SOMETHING IS "BROKEN" IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Even the critical Spellings Commission Report admits that "most Americans don't see colleges and universities as a trouble spot in our educational system. After all, American higher education has been the envy of the world for years" (vi). The Report cites, as evidence of success, the number and variety of U.S. institutions of higher learning, the increasingly open access to their campuses, their role in advancing the frontiers of knowledge through research discoveries, the new forms of teaching and learning that emerge from them, and the number of Nobel Prizes and Rhodes Scholarships won by Americans.

What exactly is it that is so "broken" about American higher education and in need of an accountability fix? Here there is no consensus, but there is growing complaint coming from many quarters. The culture wars of the late 1980s and 90s gave rise to criticism—mostly from conservatives—about the lack of rigor and coherence in the college curriculum, the dominance of political correctness and political ideology on college campuses, and the need for SOLs (Standards of Learning). The left responded with charges of continuing elitism in American higher education, especially in college admissions. Now debate has given way to alarm. The last two years alone, for example, saw the publication of more than a dozen serious books alleging that we are in the middle of a crisis in higher education (e.g. Fritschler, Smith, and Mayer; Hacker and Dreifus; Menand; and Taylor). While such argument is stimulating and healthy, we find no agreement among this latest cadre of critics about what exactly the problem is with our universities or how we can fix it.

Faculty can easily retort that politicians are the real problem, but, while politicians may be partly to blame for assaults on academic freedom, the blame cannot be pinned on one side of the aisle. Both the political right and the political left have extended or abused their political authority when it comes to education, and at both the state and the federal levels.

Accountability and assessment have been embraced by both conservatives, who feel that grades are inflated and that our students are not really learning anything, and by liberals, who believe that overspending is resulting in rising tuitions that exclude students from lower-income families. But the accountability and assessment measures employed by many universities are about maintaining the status quo and funding, not about change. More government and more regulation result, however, in *more* spending—on new administrators, on consultants, and on lengthy reaccreditation efforts—while failing to preserve what is and always has been the best outcome of higher education: the liberty that comes from learning.

ASSESSMENT IS DRIVEN BY JARGON AND EUPHEMISMS

The assessment movement is characterized by a distinctive jargon and rhetoric. The terms and phrases used in assessment workshops and conferences come from a specific area of modern educational theory. Phrases like *student-centered learning*, *learning outcomes*, and *value-added education* were generated to reform primary and secondary education and have been employed in our public schools (with little success) for decades.

The advantage that this jargon has for leaders in higher education is that the phrases *sound* beneficial. While most educators want to improve teaching and learning, the danger is that fine-sounding terms can become euphemisms that mask not so harmless managerial practices. For example while *faculty engagement* may sound valuable in an unproblematic way, some read it as *how I can get my faculty to do what I want them to do*. Often-heard phrases like *creating a culture of assessment* and *improving the student learning experience* sound like advertising and campaign slogans; they come from a rhetoric that purposely hides the power dynamic. What is most frightening, however, is that such slogans are rarely topics open for discussion and debate; they simply become policy.

WHO WILL TEACH OUR COURSES?

Honors programs, for the most part, rely on faculty volunteers who are looking to try something new, creative, and challenging with undergraduate students. Nothing can dampen the enthusiasm of such faculty quicker than to explain that their courses must go through additional committee review and include an assessment plan. "If faculty members lose their autonomy," asks Long, "what will become of the good will that is essential to honors education?" (12). Most faculty see inconveniences and punishments in the accountability and assessment movement but few rewards. Extra work to prove that you are competent in your job is hardly satisfying motivation.

Even its proponents would probably not argue that assessment promotes spontaneity and creativity, yet most of us have found our greatest classroom successes arising from unplanned inspiration, often in reaction to something a student has said or written. True student-centered learning has nothing to do with templates and rubrics and measurement of outcomes: it comes from our students, who surprise us in often wondrous ways and who make connections with the material that are unpredictable and often unrepeatable. In such situations, our best response is to give thanks, compliment the student, and not take the credit.

SOLUTIONS

Some within the academy argue that, since assessment is here to stay, the best thing we can do as faculty is to make sure that we control it: a "manage the damage" approach. Perhaps some will be able to waylay the Leviathan; perhaps some will even succeed in educating the beast to see how complex the process of undergraduate education really is; nevertheless, acquiescing is an admission by faculty that they ultimately lack authority even in their own classrooms. Replacing one governor with another does not alter the distrust from above, and it does not help faculty express their role in American higher education to the so-called "stakeholders." If the battle is lost, it is cold comfort to help shape the terms of surrender.

Others, however, cling to the concept of academic freedom and spend their remaining energies defending it. One traditional way for faculty to guard academic freedom is to form unions or to use existing unions to address the administration as an adversary. While this strategy may be the only effective solution for some egregious cases, the union model does not fit well with all colleges and universities, and particularly when the labor-management dichotomy is not clear. Honors often falls into this latter category because, while most of us hold faculty rank and teach honors courses, many are also directors or deans with significant administrative duties. Honors directors are advocates for students and thus need to work in a non-adversarial way with the upper administration to increase resources and opportunities for students. This role may diminish our ability to be advocates for faculty and to safeguard their academic liberties.

Nevertheless, we believe that honors must be vigilant regarding faculty freedoms because they affect us and our students. The battles for such freedoms can and perhaps should be fought by the disciplines. National conferences of the disciplinary bodies should and often do regularly devote sessions to the protection of faculty in the climate of accountability and assessment. The AAUP can provide guidance here, but the professional associations should also be rallied to issue statements questioning or resisting the

accountability movement and mandatory assessment as detrimental to our quest for knowledge in the disciplines and to our mentoring of students. At the very least, departments should insist on their prerogative and expertise in evaluating their faculty and students rather than ceding their authority to external reviewers.

Rather than defending the managerial practices of the corporate university, we honors administrators can also try a different tactic: fellowship and trust. The western university began as a community of scholars in the Middle Ages, literally a *collegium*. We can return to that model. Nearly all presidents, provosts, and deans were once members of such a community, in graduate school and perhaps early in their professional careers. If teaching and research are the primary functions of the university, all administrators should occasionally engage in these activities. If they did so, not only would they understand students better, but they would also relate better to their faculty *colleagues*. While true democracy cannot exist in higher education, collegiality can and must.

As for faculty, we must occasionally leave our research silos and engage in the responsibilities of the college or university as a whole; this means not only departmental committees, on which all tenure-track faculty members must participate, but also search committees for deans, provosts, and presidents; faculty councils and senates; and student affairs committees. Members of the upper administration are entrusted with a stewardship, and it behooves faculty to get to know them and understand what their duties and pressures are. We faculty should also endeavor to explain the principles of academic freedom and collegiality to students, parents, and board members. If we continue to allow the university to mimic the for-profit corporation without open dissent, we should not be surprised when students, administrators, and others see us as simply low-paid workers with outdated views.

In conclusion, let us return to an earlier theme, the assumption that there is something in the university that is broken and in need of being fixed by assessment. If there is any truth in the alarms about "the university in crisis," it is that soaring tuitions have increased scrutiny from outside the academy and that the "solution"—accountability and assessment—has been defined by outsiders (corporations and public school administrators) and is being imposed by outsiders (accreditation agencies and assessment officers). We in the honors community can embrace this "solution" and put it before our mission to provide creative and rigorous courses for our most gifted students, or we can do what we ask our students to do: challenge assumptions and be willing to subject all theory to discussion and debate. We propose that liberally educated students are not produced by standardized tests and rubrics, nor are they educated and mentored by professors who are themselves either

apathetic or acquiescent. We like to think that honors educators will be in the front ranks in defense of intellectual diversity and academic freedom.

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