



State Higher Education Executive Officers

**Accountability,
Quality,
Quality Assurance
And Rewards
For Institutional Faculty**

By Fred F. Harcleroad

Copyright © 2006, SHEEO

About the Author

Dr. Fred Harclerod has been a leader and an astute observer of higher education in the United States for fifty years. He was founding President of California State University – Hayward (now California State University – East Bay) from 1959 to 1967 and President of the American College Testing Program (ACT) from 1967 to 1974. From 1974 to 1983 he led the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Arizona. Since 1983 he has remained active as a consultant and participant in education policy dialogues.

“Today’s higher education leaders speak with pride about the distinctive missions of their campuses. But such talk masks a pattern of conformity. Too many campuses are inclined to seek status by imitating what they perceive to be more prestigious institutions. . . every college must clarify its own goals and seek to relate its own purposes more directly to the reward systems for professors.”

Ernest Boyer, 1990.¹

Prologue

Accountability of collegiate institutions has been constant since the founding of Harvard in 1638. The first “Master,” Nathaniel Eaton, was terminated after one year for “being cruel” to students and for probable embezzling of some of John Harvard’s bequest to the College. Quality assurance began on September 23, 1642. The College had been closed for a year in 1639, re-opened in 1640, and the students had prepared for their final degree examinations by 1642. The 12 Overseers, including the Governor, Deputy-Governor and Treasurer of the Massachusetts Bay Company, presided over the examinations of the nine senior sophisters. Proficiency in the use of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew had to be proved. Also, the individual students had to demonstrate through disputations, their knowledge of (1) philological theses propounded in Logic, Rhetoric, and Grammar, and (2) philosophical theses in Ethics, Physics, and Metaphysics. The Overseers then conferred the first Harvard degrees on those students who “received the approbation of the Overseers” due to “their proficiency in the tongues and the arts.”²

This process provided for public review of the academic program and of each individual student by external evaluators, with government officials participating. Thus accountability and quality assurance started with the establishment of the first college in the United States, and, although modified in various forms, has existed for almost four centuries. Positive social and economic results from all of our various types of higher education institutions are so important and use so much of our country’s resources that constant recurring analysis of performance and educational results are to be expected. Current national efforts to improve accountability systems are an indication of the criticality of higher education as the globalization of communication, economic competition, and social values takes place in the twenty-first century.

Entering the twenty-first century, higher education is in the midst of another major period of change. In 2004 the Business-Higher Education Forum invited thirty experts from a number of areas related to important aspects of higher education to a meeting to discuss “public accountability for student learning in higher education.” Several recently published pertinent national reports served as background for their discussion and detailed some key problems. In 2005 the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education, established by the State Higher Education Executive Officers with support from the Ford Foundation, reported their findings. Their report, Accountability for Better Results – A National Imperative for Higher Education, is an excellent, thorough and literally remarkable document. Its database and coverage is extensive. Its statements about instruction and learning are outstanding. For example, it notes that “World class standards are needed for both research and instruction: but it is unrealistic to expect, and wasteful to require, that every faculty member demonstrate excellence in both dimensions.” Also, it insists that “. . . institutional reward systems must provide more incentives and recognition for faculty contributions that increase student learning, retention and success.” Its Appendix A emphasizes and describes succinctly the wide variety of diverse institutions with different missions that educate “learners with different backgrounds and educational objectives.”

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the changes in higher education and the nation it serves have led to this current demand for greater productivity in higher education. Massive changes since World War II, in particular, the effects of globalization of economic and social conditions, require that the U.S. higher

education institutions respond quickly. The SHEEO report dramatically reports that “the foundations of our system of higher education are too weak to sustain our economy and quality of life.”³

The major theses of this essay are designed to amplify these findings and add some specific areas for thoughtful consideration and improved action. They center on one key fact. Learning by our future students is more affected by teaching faculty than any other factor, and institutional quality in most of U.S. colleges and universities is the result of faculty/student interaction. The theses are as follows:

1. The quality of each type of collegiate institution should be based on the excellence with which it achieves its special mission;
2. In most of the U.S institutions the publish-or-perish research model is a major error when used as a measure of the quality of work of the instructional faculty.
3. In this “age of accountability,” the chief means of quality assurance is our unique, voluntary, non-governmental system of accreditation. Its current efforts to evaluate learning outcomes can include criteria for institutional reward systems based on student success as a result of high-quality faculty teaching and excellence in achieving their established, often diverse, educational missions.

To further analyze and support these theses, it is necessary to consider a brief, simplified survey of some of the significant changes in higher education from 1815 to the present.

The current emphasis on research and publication has been developed over almost two centuries. Classical subjects, including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, religion, and moral and natural philosophy prevailed from 1638 until the late decades of the nineteenth century. My own college prep program in the 1930s still included three years of Latin. These subjects were defined as “the discipline and furniture of the mind” in the dominant Yale Report of 1828 which was the main course of study leading to the B.A. degree for the next 50 years.

In 1815, George Ticknor and Edward Everett started the wave of graduate study in Germany, and returned to Harvard to start the elective push, departmentalization, and attention to scientific study and modern languages. Union College, Brown, Trinity, and Columbia College tried to start degree programs in “scientific and literary studies,” but they died away after their initiators gave them up under pressure. The new degree program at Columbia was dropped immediately since no students registered for it, in 1843. During this pre-Civil War period new technically-oriented institutions arose, such as the Military Academy at West Point (preparing engineers) and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Most men trained in business, law, and similar occupations by the apprentice system. The twelve classical colleges in New England lost enrollment, dropping from 2,084 to 1,884 between 1840 and 1850. And the stage was set for the beginnings of the move to scientific studies and graduate study and research.

In 1847, Harvard opened its Lawrence Scientific School, followed by Yale in 1854 with Sheffield Scientific School. They were separate entities, and required to offer a new B.S. degree rather than the B.A. degree. Shortly thereafter in 1861, Yale conferred the first Doctor of Philosophy and the move to establish universities had begun. Cornell University, a first, was founded in 1869 with both undergraduate and graduate programs, offering nine different degrees. Harvard established its graduate department in 1872, with two degrees, the Doctors of Science for students in the sciences and the Doctor of Philosophy for students in the humanities and social sciences. So, both Cornell and Harvard established the principle of multiple doctoral degrees. Then in 1876, Johns Hopkins University was founded as a graduate, doctoral, research-oriented institution, another first, although it soon had to add the undergraduate program because of finance problems. In the coming decades most of the early group of colleges changed their name to “University,” although to this day Dartmouth College and the College of William and Mary have not. In 1869 Charles W. Eliot became president of Harvard for the next forty years. By the end of the century, his elective plan was in effect and the only required course for the baccalaureate degree was Freshman English – and a majority of other colleges and universities had adopted it. This provided for the major changes in acceptance of modern languages, social sciences such as sociology and psychology, and the natural sciences as totally equal to old subjects of the fixed curriculum. The barriers to new knowledge toppled and a wave of specialization developed in the colleges and the universities. In the

universities, graduate scholarship standards increased and, of particular importance to current academic affairs, research became the yardstick of a faculty person's scholarly success.

During these same decades, students chose their own subjects of study; even more important to them, they established their extra-curricular activities such as athletics, fraternities, and other secret societies. By the end of the century, Henry Seidel Canby of Yale (aka Mr. Chips) described his own institution as "the campus where two philosophies of life saluted in passing and sometimes a chat."⁴ A century later Murray Sperber notes the same faculty/student situation in his chapter in Hersh and Merrow's volume, Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk, describing what he calls "a nonaggression pact."⁵

"This faculty situation – and it applies to tenured faculty most of whom want the promotions and salary increases that come only from research success – is the main cause of rampant grade inflation that has afflicted the academy since the research imperative took hold. A nonaggression pact exists between many faculty members and students: Because the former think they must spend most of their time doing research, and the latter often prefer to pass their time having fun, a nonaggression pact occurs with each side agreeing not to impinge on the other."

In the half-century from 1900 to the end of World War II, a number of additional related changes took place, many affecting quality assurance especially through institutional accreditation. First in 1900, twelve of the recently-named or newly established universities founded the Association of American Universities with membership only by invitation. They were: Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Princeton, California (Berkeley), Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Yale, plus two new ones – Chicago and Stanford. Clark, one of the originals, dropped out. In 1914, the AAU published a list of institutions grouped by their educational quality in three categories according to their students' success in graduate school. The list was published because the German universities requested such a classified list to assist them in admitting students from the United States. However, this specialized listing became the "gold standard" list of institutional educational quality for the next four decades until the AAU decided to stop publishing it in 1948.

The first accrediting body, still listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a "nationally recognized agency or association," is the University of the State of New York (Board of Regents). It was reorganized in 1787 and required, by law, a yearly visit to review the work of every college in the state (including Kings College, now Columbia), register (after approval) every curriculum, and report to the legislature. Four of the current regional accrediting associations were established a century or more later and functioned in around 3/4 of the country. In the 1930s, the North Central Association, after an intensive study, adopted a new set of principles and standards based on the institutional mission and purposes. This new approach to standard-setting made it possible for accrediting bodies to adapt to the ever widening spectrum of higher education and provide quality assurance for specialized colleges such as the normal schools/teachers' colleges and the widely expanding two-year junior colleges and technical institutes. The other three associations (Southern, New England and North-West) adopted this same basic principle and, thus, established it for the following half-century. Institutional excellence in achieving its mission and purposes thus became the basis for determining quality, and voluntary, non-governmental accrediting bodies became the source of quality assurance.

In the six decades following World War II, the pace of change increased significantly in our entire society and particularly in higher education. The GI Bill opened education beyond the high school to millions of new students. Increased enrollments led to major changes in the structure of higher education. In 1951 public and private institutions each enrolled one-half of the students. Now, in 2005, 80 percent are in public colleges and universities. The junior colleges became community colleges and in 2000 enrolled 76.2 percent of all lower division students, with broad coverage of general education, liberal arts transfer programs, pre-professional, and vocational educational programs.

By 1960, another even greater change took place in the development of a new classification of colleges and universities called "Comprehensive" colleges and universities. Most of them were public institutions, with a distinctive and essential mission. They provided a combination of general/liberal education with a wide variety of professional programs primarily with baccalaureate and masters degrees. They included

270 varied specialized institutions such as teachers' colleges, YMCA institutions, and industrial/technological institutes established between 1793 and 1950, plus around 140 new ones established as comprehensive colleges and universities between 1950 and 1986. Most of these colleges and universities were primarily teaching-centered with a relatively small number offering doctoral degrees. Although they varied somewhat in professional programs because of regional economic interests and the variety of historical backgrounds, they were remarkably similar in structure and emphasis. By 1961, the distinctive nature of this new form of higher education institution was so clear that a new association was developed, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. It was listed immediately as one of the constituent members of the National Commission on Accrediting along with the Association of American Universities, the Association of American Colleges, and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. By 2000, it had a membership of 400 institutions and enrolled almost three and one half million students, close to one quarter of the total higher education in the United States.⁶

Along with the expansion of the existing and newly established institutions and massive increases in student enrollments, the funding of research centered in American universities grew exponentially. During World War II, under the leadership of Vannevar Bush of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the National Defense Research Committee was established. Soon it became the Federal Office of Scientific Research and Development. This joint university/government model (far different from the European model, or the pre-war pattern in the United States) led to significant expansion in defense-related and basic research grants by academics. Van Bush's 1945 presidential report, Science: The Endless Frontier, led to the establishment of the National Science Foundation, established in 1950 with an appropriation of a few million dollars. In 2005, its budget was listed as "around 5.5 billion" dollars and was a major source of research funding, along with several other federal agencies such as the Department of Defense, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Energy, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The original NSF mission was to support fundamental science and engineering. With demands for expansion, it added the history of science, and currently supports even more fields, including "psychological science," "national science and technology strategy for the environment," "behavioral and social science priorities," and "pristine, inland, mountain wilderness environments." With these significant additions to its original mandate, NSF funding affects a large portion of a research-oriented university's disciplines and their resultant emphases. In addition, funding for research and resulting publication has become the most critical indicator of both institutional and professorial "quality." A common representative statement to this effect from The Center for Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Florida (which publishes key data on research in American universities) is as follows:

"...for universities, being first is not as important as being among the best. ...most observers know that research matters more than anything else in defining the best institutions."

And for a university's funding level to reach the top 50 or 100 on the National Science Foundation's yearly list of amounts of institutional funds for research and development is the "...key measure of academic quality."⁷

In 2002, external funding for research and development in the U.S. reached \$36.3 billion. Truly, the decades from 1965 to 2005 have been the making of the modern research university. However, higher education is provided by some 3600 institutions. Research funding goes to a very limited number of them. Only 20 universities account for 31 percent of the total. Only 100 of them account for 80 percent of all R & D expenditures from all sources of research funding. By this definition, most of the higher education institutions of the United States, at least 3400 of them, cannot be "quality" institutions. In addition, this same group of 100 universities provides most of the doctoral education in the United States. As the other 3400 institutions grow and expand with a desire to appoint doctorates to faculty positions, their source has to be these same 100 universities. Educated in a system that equates published research as the only source of quality faculty, these other teaching-oriented institutions often have morale problems and move to change the mission and reward standards. The opposite problem occurred in the few highly-funded research universities, and teaching undergraduates successfully was dropped from their appointment criteria or reward system for tenure or salary increases. In 1970, for example, Clark Kerr announced a major breakthrough – the University of California budget committee which screened all appointments and rewards had agreed to consider "teaching" as a third level criterion for consideration.

The rapidly developing new form of higher education, the comprehensive colleges, has been most affected by this dilemma. The first post-war classification system prepared by Millett and Ostheimer for the Truman Commission in 1948-49 had no such grouping listed. By 1971, this group was large enough to be included as a new classification by the Carnegie Commission, and has been so designated by all of the resulting varied Federal or Carnegie listings. After AASCU was founded in 1961, several states, starting with New York, Wisconsin, Tennessee, and Michigan, changed the name from college to university. By 1986, most of the older colleges were designated as universities and all of the newly-established ones had such a designation. However, only a few of them offered the doctorate and only in limited fields. For example, the University of Akron offered one in polymer chemistry due to the needs in the tire industry. Almost all of them met three criteria used by the Truman Commission: an undergraduate liberal arts curriculum, graduate study, and some accredited professional programs. By 1971 the Carnegie Classification systems had four types listed: Research I and II and Doctoral I and II, based primarily on research funding and the number of doctorates completed each year. Unfortunately, the designation, "university," has come to be almost meaningless as far as the public is concerned. Small private colleges such as Beaver College – now Arcadia University – use the name. Apollo group of profit-seeking institutions includes Western International University and the University of Phoenix. McDonalds fast-food enterprises has Hamburger University with short courses to train its workers, and on-and-on.

The California Master Plan of 1960-1961, adopted in the Donohoe Act by the state government, divided responsibilities of community colleges, state colleges then (now called state universities), and the University of California. Originally, the state university was to be open to students from the top 10 percent of all students, with state colleges admitting from the top 25 percent and community colleges having open admission basically from the remaining 75 percent. This caused problems for university athletics so a 2 percent adjustment was approved. The current, widely stated numbers are one eighth and one third. The teaching load planned in the financial study justifying the plan was 15 units for community college instructors, 12 units for state college professors and 8-9 units for University of California professors. The first two loads are still expected. However, the university load dropped significantly to around 4 units per term as a result of the very competitive period for faculty in the next decade. The master plan established a two-year degree limit for the community colleges, and the Masters degree for the state colleges and the research function was reserved for the university. In selected, limited fields, the state colleges were authorized to be part of joint doctoral programs offered by other doctoral universities. Very few joint doctoral programs actually materialized. An example was a joint doctoral program in audio-visual education between San Jose State and the University of Southern California. But that was one of very few. Thirty five years later, this plan, without the joint doctorate, is almost nationwide, with 76 percent of the lower division students in community colleges, almost 25 percent of all higher education students in comprehensive institutions, and the remainder in smaller liberal arts colleges and in research-oriented doctoral degree universities. The twenty-three California State University campuses still list their primary purpose in all of their catalogs as "superior teaching."

A very serious question has been raised by reputable academics who have studied this period of change in American higher education: Why do so many faculty in teaching-oriented colleges and universities still look to the prestige of the research model? Ernest Boyer, in his seminal work, Scholarship Reconsidered, has addressed this question. As the research funding grew exponentially, and the institutions grew in numbers and enrollment, they needed thousands of faculty. Boyer noted that "a veritable army of freshly minted PhDs fanned out to campuses across the country" and ". . . sought to replicate the research climate they themselves had recently experienced."⁸ Countless additional studies, reviews and institutional histories have supported this same condition, from California to Massachusetts. In many institutions, new presidents with these same backgrounds and interests have adopted publish-or-perish criteria for faculty evaluations and made tenure, promotion, and salary increases based on them. Hersh and Merrow, in the report on their recent two-year study, Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk (2005), include chapters verifying these same conditions. Their accompanying television documentary cites a common condition: a physics teacher at Western Kentucky University, one of the comprehensive group, who stated that he had no hope of promotion or salary increase without three professional publications. David Kirp's chapter and Murray Sperber's chapter provide other poignant examples of the problems of superb teachers who went unrecognized and the "metastizing" of the research imperative as the basis for academic quality. One informed insider, knowledgeable about the status of

comprehensive institutions, estimated that at least one half of the AASCU membership could be classified as “wannabees,” with leadership committed to a program based on research as their prime quality indicator for the institution and its faculty. With research funding centered in so few institutions these plans for their institutional future will lead, almost inevitably, to frustration of many faculty and campus discord.

Two major solutions have been, and are currently, proposed to ameliorate these conditions and provide educational programs at the doctoral level for college and university teaching professionals. First, The Doctor of Arts was proposed by Alden Dunham of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in the 1960s. He had just completed the first of the Carnegie series on types of institutions, on the new group, the Comprehensives, titled Colleges of the Forgotten Americans.⁹ He found that faculty with doctorates from research universities “...will do all they can to transform their employing institutions into what they have just left as students. This is bound to occur despite the evidence that 85 percent of those PhDs never publish anything after their dissertation”. Dunham planned for the Doctor of Arts to be a full-fledged doctorate, a “college teaching degree.” The Foundation supported a carefully-planned series of grants to a number of universities which established these doctoral programs. By 1975, thirty-one universities had established the D.A. degree in forty-two fields with 2,000 Doctor of Arts completed. In the last thirty years some have been dropped, and a few institutions added. Currently, thirteen universities offer the degree in eleven states. The National Doctor of Arts Association membership is spread throughout the country. Its members offering the degree are Ball State University, Clark Atlanta University, George Mason University, Idaho State University, Middle Tennessee State University, New York University, St. John's University, Simmons College, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, University of Miami, University of Mississippi, University of North Dakota, and Washington State University. The association reports that their graduates are in demand.

Second, there are some limited proposals to provide a two-track Ph.D. degree redefined as “scholarly citizenship” rather than just a way to “replenish the professoriate.” A project of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, called the “Responsive PhD,” it has proposed a new paradigm to improve on the current “mismatch PhDs receive in graduate school and the careers available to them.” In addition to preparing doctoral students for work in the wider world, beyond their department/discipline in non-academic worlds, it stresses more pedagogical training. It points out that in many fields the doctoral students teach what their own faculty members do not want to teach, and that teaching is the final resort for funding of doctoral students who are not appointed to research assistant positions. And finally, it states that those who will become teachers rather than researchers need a broader, more systematic approach to quality teaching.

John Schaefer, president of the Research Corporation, and his board and professional staff have gone even farther to develop and fund a highly specialized grant program for beginning teachers. It was designed in 1990 for faculty in their third year of teaching who wished to make contributions as teacher-scholars, and especially in undergraduate science education. The Cottrell Scholars grant program originally provided \$50,000 grants, based on the potential grantee's Teaching Proposal, and its proposed plan to improve the professor's teaching work and complementing research in the field. It was a very novel and unusual award program and almost 200 grantees have developed innovative approaches to teaching science to undergraduates. Grants are now at 75,000 and encourage a different approach to providing quality teaching at existing universities in the sciences.

A final illustration, based on the current PhD programs, was proposed by Boyer in Scholarship Revisited, also in 1990. He proposed the use of a special seminar for doctoral students planning to go into college teaching. In addition, he proposed that the special mission that each college be the basis for faculty recognition and reward, and the scholarship of teaching be rewarded in teaching institutions. This was one of four types of research. The other types he defined as discovery, integration, and application, with discovery the one usually meant as research by academics. Scholarship of teaching includes “. . . transmitting knowledge, and transforming and extending it as well.” Personally' I would add “continuing scholarly study” as a main component of faculty practice, so that all syllabi and class discussions are based on the cutting edge of knowledge in the field of study. Boyer dismissed his predecessor's "idea of the Doctor of Arts degree” as not desirable. He preferred the more limited seminar

which he thought should be given academic credit, and he cited several university departments for taking this step. But clearly, to date, this approach appears to be limited. He suggested that accrediting associations should use his definition of scholarship of teaching. The Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs, formed in 1988 and now with 400 members, used his plan with some emphasis on each of the four types. But institutional accreditors did not respond to his admonition in the main. His excellent coverage of the problems involved should be and could be an excellent resource to cure some of higher education's current problems.¹⁰

Clearly, the accountability movement, with categorical statements such as those of this National Commission, realizes that faculty effort is the key to improving student outcomes and success. The main thing lacking is more emphasis on the national understanding that most of the 3600 institutions are not basically producers of faculty research, plus the following points:

1. There is greater need for national recognition that the quality of an institution is based on excellent performance of the special mission of the institution.
2. Faculty reward plans should be based on recognition of excellent teaching. The evaluation of teaching could be based on portfolios, including evidence of "continuing scholarly study", up-to-date syllabi, and the materials showing careful evaluation of student papers and other means of student evaluation.
3. Quality assurance, often through institutional and specialized programmatic accreditation, should be based on criteria and standards that reflect these same premises.

Hopefully, constant repetition, in the press and academic publications, that academic quality is based solely on research and its funding can be replaced by accountability standards based on differing missions. And faculty can pride itself on excellent teaching and the successful learning and achievement of their students rather than shame because they are in a teaching-centered college or university.

As the National Commission wrote so cogently ". . . accountability for higher education is a social contract whose force and meaning is based more on internal commitments and aspirations (and) The organizing principle for accountability is pride." For faculty in over 90 percent of our colleges and universities, these are the psychic rewards, in addition to the formal awards, that lead to lifetime commitments.

References

1. Boyer, Ernest, Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Jossey-Bass, Inc. 1990, p.53.
2. Morison, Samuel Eliot, The Founding of Harvard College, Harvard University Press, 1935, pp: 168-170, 235-237, 246-259, 334-335.
3. National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education, Accountability For Better Results: A National Imperative For Higher Education, State Higher Education Executive Officers, Denver, Colorado, pp.13, 22, 28.
4. Canby, Henry Seidel, Alma Mater: The Gothic Age of the American College, Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., New York, 1936, 138-39, 226 and last page.
5. Sperber, Murray, "How Undergraduate Education Became College Lite – and a Personal Apology, Chapter 9 in Hersh and Merrow, Declining By Degrees: Higher Education at Risk, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, p.138.
6. Harclerod, Fred and Ostar, Allan, Colleges and Universities For Change: America's Comprehensive Public State Colleges and Universities, University Press (for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities), Washington, D.C., 1987, pp.1-4 147-150.
7. Craig, Diane D., Top American Research Universities, The Center for Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Florida, from the Center Reports, January, 2002, <http://thecenter.ufl.edu>.
8. Boyer, Ibid, p. 10.
9. Dunham, E. Alden, Colleges of the Forgotten Americans: A Profile of State Colleges and Regional Universities, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969, pp. 156-57.
10. Boyer, Ibid, pp.24, 57, 70-71.