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AUTHOR Hefferlin, JR Lon
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 INSTITUTION California Univ., Berkeley. Center for Research and Development in Higher Education.
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ABSTRACT

Throughout the evolution of academic institutions, the technique of organizing separate and parallel units of existing institutions has been the easiest means of academic reform. The creation of cluster colleges is one example, as well as the creation of parallel colleges such as Radcliffe and Pembroke. A second technique is the device called "election" whereby students can choose from parallel competing courses. Parallelism is a popular device because it doesn't change existing programs, but it is not a technique for reforming the existing curriculum, except by undercutting it. The most pressing problem of curricular renewal is not the lack of new ideas, but the difficulty of getting these ideas implemented. A common technique of altering the curriculum has been to wait for a faculty member to resign, retire or die. Another technique has been radical upheaval and reorganization. Several factors are important in effecting change; the most influential of which seems to be "reward." This includes the need, motivation, market, incentive, pressure for and anticipated benefits of change. When curricular revision seems to be less threatening than the consequences of inaction, revision blossoms. Other factors are the institution's own orientation toward change and structure. A patriarchal structure or collegium orientation is very detrimental to any change. (AF)

experience, as have many of my colleagues, an awkwardness in relating to it because it has been so noisily appropriated by the young. Many more will be ambivalent; repelled by some features of the new culture but disillusioned by the old. I put myself in that category, ambivalent, repelled by some features of the new, and somewhat disillusioned by the old.

I believe that change can take place in our society only when liberal and radical pressures are both strong. I don't think radicals appreciate that. I think they always have a fear of being coopted. I totally discard the radical theory that by making things worse, more repressive, the revolutionaries will be in the wings waiting for the repressive state in order to shake the hell out of that repressive state. You know what Hitler did to revolutionaries waiting in the wings! He threw them in the concentration camps.

I know of very few cases where a more repressive state ever led to the kind of reforms some of the intelligent new culture wants. And incidentally, provoking repression is an effective technique only if the repression itself is anarchic and confused; in this country that is not generally the case.

Liberal administrators, liberal people, often do much to initially soften up a status quo. They can often reduce anxiety and become linking pins.

Old culture moderates and liberals will be given the choice in the next decade between participating in the new culture or living in a fascist regime. The universities, in my view, are the litmus paper for what is going on in our nation. If we can find ways to absorb the new culture, or at least parts of it, this augurs well for society as a whole. If we cannot, and the campus becomes a police state, as many are suggesting it is becoming, it seems likely that the nation as a whole will follow the same path.



END RUNS AND LINE BUCKING

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JB LON HEFFERLIN

Throughout the entire evolution of academic institutions, the technique of organizing separate and parallel units of existing institutions—as illustrated by the creation of cluster colleges—has been the easiest means of academic reform. Indeed, historically the most common means of adapting educational institutions to new conditions has been by the device of parallelism; the creation of programs and courses which offer students an alternative to existing programs.

Recall earlier illustrations of the marvellous utility of this technique of parallelism. How were women added to the student body of our long-established men's colleges during the nineteenth century? By creating separate but parallel women's colleges such as Radcliffe, Pembroke, Barnard, and others. How were the classical nineteenth-century literary colleges transformed to meet the needs of American society? Parallel programs were organized in competition with the restricted curriculum of the literary college such as those programs in the new sciences and technologies at Harvard's Lawrence Scientific School, established in 1847, and Yale's Sheffield Scientific School, established in 1860, which led to a Bachelor of Science rather than a Bachelor of Arts degree. Our great land-grant universities broke the elite concept of higher education once and for all by organizing a multitude of parallel curricula open to freshmen: schools of agriculture, engineering, education, nursing, home economics, and others. These vocationally-oriented curricula offered students an education they could not receive in the prescribed curriculum of the college of arts and letters a hundred years ago, just as today's cluster colleges—anti-vocational and anti-departmental as they are—now offer students opportunities they cannot find in traditional departmentalized undergraduate curricula.

A second technique of parallelism has been employed to reform the undergraduate college of arts and science itself: the device called "election," whereby students can choose from parallel competing courses. All of today's modern scholarship and knowledge has been introduced into the liberal arts college through this device: new courses were added and students permitted to select among them. And parallel departments were added to

teach these new courses. Thus in the nineteenth century the physiologists found it easier to create departments of physiology rather than reorient the existing departments of anatomy.

In short, through parallelism our present-day universities have expanded their services by gradually absorbing the multitude of functions formerly performed in specialized institutions. This was accomplished by grafting onto the literary college the purposes of the technical institute, graduate school, research bureau, independent professional school, experiment station, Chautauqua, lyceum, correspondence school, night school, boarding house, finishing school, and museum.

These examples illustrate why parallelism is such a successful method of institutional change, and why the cluster-college movement is so strong today. Parallelism lets sleeping dogs lie—achieves goals without disturbing already existing programs, courses, and departments. Indeed, in recent years, when passive resistance within existing departments has been so strong, it has been almost the only viable technique open to academic reformers.

But, the technique of creating a parallel program does not solve the problem of the existing program: it merely offers an alternative to it. It is not a device for reforming the existing curriculum, except by undercutting it. That is, the creation of a new option may possibly stimulate the old program to change, but it is a passive technique of leaving old programs to their own fate: perhaps to become rejuvenated; perhaps to wither, die, and be superseded. It's an *end run* technique—a means of making progress by skirting the opposition and outflanking it.

It is a beautiful ploy, but it is a ploy of diversion, of solving a problem by avoiding the problem. A ploy of "benign neglect" that does nothing directly about existing problems. Are there ways of transforming current programs other than by simply hoping for repercussions from the formation of new programs—of active intervention rather than neglect; of *bucking the line* rather than making end runs?

This was the problem that the Kettering Foundation asked Earl McGrath at Teachers College and me to investigate in the Study of Institutional Vitality, reported in *Dynamics of Academic Reform* (1969).⁹ We were not concerned about the options open to brand-new institutions nor with the technique of merely adding more and more accretions to institutions, but rather with the dynamics of renewing the present undergraduate curriculum. It seemed to us and to the Kettering Foundation that the most pressing problem of curricular renewal was not a lack of new ideas about possible improvements, but instead the difficulty educators experience trying to get these ideas implemented. It is much like the farmer claiming that he didn't need any more agricultural information from the county agent because he still wasn't using what he already knew. I'd like to report the major implications from our study and briefly summarize the techniques we think are most widely used to change curricula.

The most common technique of actively altering the curriculum—as contrasted with setting up parallel cur-

ricula—is to wait for the slow, inevitable, and irreversible process of faculty resignations, retirement, and death to take its toll, and then appoint new professors to introduce new ideas; hoping that these new faculty members won't go stale too soon. That is, to renew the curriculum, we rely primarily on the tactic of personnel turnover. It is a technique of *changing persons* through rotation and replacement, rather than a technique of *changing people's activities and skills*. Some institutions follow this tactic so single-mindedly as their means of reform that they deliberately let old programs and departments deteriorate and wait until the last professor retires before killing the program for good or rebuilding it with a completely new staff. When the professor of Greek retires, Greek is quietly discontinued and a biochemist is hired instead.

Observe two examples of our reliance on this technique in the history of American higher education. First, the role of the professor during the nineteenth century shifted dramatically from that of a listener to student recitations

*End runs: making
progress by skirting
the opposition and
outflanking it.*

to that of a lecturer. Was lecturing introduced into American colleges by retraining faculty members who had spent years running recitations? Instead, young scholars who were returning from graduate study in Germany were hired and they introduced teaching as we now know it. Second, during the early decades of the twentieth century, when the Germanic model of the professor as lecturer had triumphed, were new academics and scholars asked to concern themselves against their wishes with the personal problems of their students? Again, no. Instead the profession of student personnel worker was invented to do what the new professors were unwilling to do—listen to students.

A less frequent but far more dramatic tactic is that of radical upheaval and reorganization, where the entire institution and all its curricula is recast and its faculty members adopt new roles. Some of the most publicized

⁹Heffertin, J. L. *Dynamics of Academic Reform*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969.

curricular revisions have occurred this way: Brown University's in 1850, Antioch's in 1921, St. John's in 1937, Parsons' in 1955, and Kalamazoo's in the late 1950s. In the past forty years attempts have been made to institutionalize this technique by the device of "self-study"—an intensive period of institutional soul-searching and self-analysis, that for better or worse has become incorporated into the evaluation procedures of our several accrediting agencies. But radical, thorough-going reorganization is necessarily traumatic, and self-study frequently seems an exercise in futility. Thus the tactic of infrequent massive reorganizations has its own limitations.

There are several factors that Earl McGrath and I, as well as other observers of academic change, have found to be particularly important in effecting change in the curriculum, or leading to reform, whether by the tactic of personnel turnover, massive self-study, or other devices.

First of all, our evidence doesn't point to any single, all-important source of reform—no individual factor or influence or mechanism that alone seems necessary to bring about curricular change. That is, academic reform has multiple causes, and a whole network of interrelated factors impinge on it. But among all of these factors, the most influential can be summarized as that of *reward*. By reward, I refer to such phenomena as the need for change, the motivation for change, the market for change, the anticipated benefits of change, the incentive for change, and the pressure for change. And I think the evidence is clear that changes in the curriculum, as in other organizational characteristics, are unlikely until the rewards of change come to outweigh the liabilities. In other words, until a greater pay-off is likely to be gained from change than from maintaining the status quo, it is unreasonable to expect it to occur. Without the incentive of potential benefit—be it financial, psychological, social, political, or even spiritual—it is unlikely. I think it is correct to say that academic reform tends to occur whenever, and not until, there is no more acceptable alternative to the individual concerned than reform. It is unrealistic to expect our institutions, our fellow faculty members, or even ourselves to change our procedures without good cause, without the likelihood of benefit, and without the likelihood of a market.

Why has there been such a plethora of talk during the 1960s about innovation and such a paucity of results? Because, for most of our institutions and most academics, there frankly has been no reward for change. Why is there likely to be considerable ferment during the next decade within the curriculum? Because the responses will be to that which is inevitable. Millar Upton of Beloit College has written pointedly about the consequences of crisis:

When a college is on the verge of oblivion there is no problem in its achieving instant curricular revision, so to speak. All interested parties recognize that it is this or nothing. . . . Panic always produces action that is unobtainable during normal times.

In short, the resources available to higher education determine the direction of higher education. When women's colleges cannot survive, they try coeducation. When Greek and Latin will not sell, French and German get a try. And when students begin to bring pressure to bear, when financial support from reform develops, when curricular revision seems less threatening than the consequences of inaction, then revision blossoms. Would Harvard have instituted its freshman seminars without the insistence of Ed Land that his financial contribution be used specifically for freshmen? Would Swarthmore have succeeded in introducing honors programs without the backing of funds from Abraham Flexner at the General Education Board? And today, since the processes of the diffusion of academic innovation and fashion are not basically different from that of other innovations and fashions, would the idea of cluster colleges or of January intersessions be so widely accepted unless colleges felt that more may be lost from not joining the bandwagon than by joining it? And why was one of the most important experiments in curricular structuring—Hiram College's "intensive course" system of teaching one course at a time—abandoned in 1958 and replaced at Hiram by the three-three plan? Because the former plan was too far out. It was too far out for a new generation of Hiram professors and administrators unfamiliar with it, and too unusual for high school guidance counsellors to understand it. It was educationally successful but economically marginal.

Beyond the fundamental influence of rewards and resources within American society for academic reform, a second general factor that seems to influence the process of reform is that of an institution's own orientation toward change, particularly the orientation of the institution's most influential members or leaders. Here traditions, norms, and philosophy influence the pace and techniques of curricular change. What generally seems to be rewarded: initiative or standard operating procedures? What hope do faculty members or administrators or students see of achieving any significant changes if they were to try? How are the most powerful members of the



Line bucking:

*transforming current
programs by
active intervention.*

institution viewed in relation to proposals for change: as obstructionist or as sympathetic; as someone who questions "why" about proposals or agrees "why not." What is considered sacred at an institution: a tradition of honoring tradition, or a tradition of change? In short, what is the psychological climate or impact of an institution: opportunity or restriction, freedom or frustration? Since the likelihood of curricular change hinges so greatly at most institutions on the quality of people attracted to the institution, it is probably obvious how critical are these psychological conditions in attracting and retaining the right people.

Related to these questions of orientation is the factor of institutional structure. It is safe to say that curricular change depends not only on resources and orientation, but on the structural flexibility and even instability of the institution. Indeed, changes in courses, degree programs, and requirements for graduation are all a function to some extent of structural changes—of turnover of personnel, of shifts in positions of power, even of simple expansion in institutional size.

Here are just a few questions about some of these factors that appear to influence the curriculum: How much discretion do individuals and instructional units within an institution have? How closely regulated are their activities? How much flexibility do departments have in transferring funds among budget categories? Are any discretionary funds allotted to the several separate divisions of the institution for their own use? Are job descriptions for the faculty and staff detailed or general?

How frequently do outside educational consultants or experts visit a campus and do members of the faculty visit other campuses? And who has power? Who sits on the curriculum committee? Can new members of a faculty vote in faculty meetings? How long do department chairs remain in office? Do trustees have a retirement-age policy? And who has veto power over proposed changes in the curriculum?

None of these elements, or others like them can by themselves assure continuous educational change. But the combination of such factors seems to determine the responsiveness of colleges and universities to their environment, to potential rewards and resources, and to the impact of new personnel.

There are two particular types of organizational structure and orientation that are particularly deadly in terms of continuous academic reform. One of these organizational types can be termed "patriarchal" in style or orientation—where power is held by the most senior members of the institution, either by a presidential autocrat or by a geriatric oligarchy. "Patriarchy" is governance by seniority and crony: the president continues to consolidate his power over the institution throughout his tenure rather than increasingly delegating operational decisions to his associates; he alone selects the members of the policy bodies; department heads remain in office indefinitely until they retire as professors; department heads themselves form the curriculum committee; members of the governing board suffer from senility and tend to fall asleep at board meetings from old age. This patriarchal style of operation can, of course, permit drastic academic change if the patriarch himself chooses to act. But it tends to put too much reliance for reform on too few people, for when the patriarch fails to change, the institution will also fail to change.

The opposite but equally serious problem stems from what I would term a "collegium" orientation: the faculty as a body permits no individual leadership, initiative, or experimentation, but instead requires that every change be approved by the total group; the faculty is reluctant to authorize temporary educational experiments or special educational programs; it limits the electives open to students for fear that faculty advisors will lure their advisees into their own courses; it must approve every course offering and is the final court of appeal for the creation of any new program.

I recommend, for continued renewal of a curriculum, a style of operation that lies between these two extremes. It avoids the domination of the patriarch as an academic autocrat on the one hand and the domination of the professorial peer-group or brotherhood of the professors on the other. Its most characteristic element is an "avuncular" orientation: a style of operation characterized by uncle-like relationships of expertise, advisement, counsel, and assistance. In such an institution, administrators basically play an avuncular role as expert, advisor, and mentor. Trustees, consultants, and visiting educators are looked to for information and counsel. Faculty members basically serve as avuncular models for their student apprentices, and individual initiative at every level of the institution is encouraged. The president of one of the most dynamic colleges in the nation illustrates this avuncular approach in his comment: "I have conceived of the presidency as an office for finding very creative people, giving them freedom, and protecting them from one another."

In sum, as the result of our studies thus far, I would suggest that beyond the creation of new parallel programs, the existing curriculum deserves reform; that the most important factor in its reform will be the rewards one can generate for reform; and that one major way to help assure rewards for change is by an avuncular style of organization and operation.