In recent years there has been much controversy about how best to accommodate the heterogeneous academic abilities of student bodies in community colleges. In order to ascertain faculty members' attitudes on this subject, a random sample of instructors on the central campus of Broward Community College in Fort Lauderdale, Florida were asked to complete two questionnaires concerning their areas of community college instruction and curriculum; one of the instruments was objective in nature, while the other required written, indepth responses. Covered in the surveys were such topics as (1) dealing with underprepared students, (2) programmed and individualized instruction, (3) use of instructional "hardware," and (4) accountability and student evaluation. Although perhaps 25 percent of the instructors appear to opt for still more innovative curriculums, the majority indicate that the rate of innovation should be reduced—at least for the immediate future. It is recommended that optimum student achievement can perhaps best be gained from a more moderately innovative approach in the areas of instruction and curriculum. (Author/MJK)
FACULTY VIEWS ON INSTRUCTION AND CURRICULUM
AT BROWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

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A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
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In recent years especially there has been much controversy about how best to accommodate the heterogeneous academic abilities of student bodies, which have been ubiquitous in community colleges. In order to ascertain faculty members' attitudes on this subject, a random sample of instructors on the Central Campus of Broward Community College in Fort Lauderdale, Florida were asked to complete two questionnaires concerning their areas of community college instruction and curriculum; one of the instruments was objective in nature, while the other required written, in-depth responses.

Although a sizable minority of perhaps twenty-five percent of the instructors appear to opt for still more radically innovative curricula and non-punitive grading, the majority indicate that the rate of innovation should be reduced—at least for the immediate future. Many of the latter responses point out that phenomena such as academic grade inflation, erosion of academic standards and student achievement levels, and too little emphasis on cognitive learning have to some degree been the consequence of many so-called innovative programs which in the past decade have not lived up to the promises of their optimistic and overly zealous sponsors. Several respondents are even more vehement in their
negative attitudes towards too much dependence on many of these programs. It is not so much that the respondents are opposed to innovations per se. Indeed, changing times require new approaches in all areas of human endeavor. It appears, rather, that these instructors would prefer that innovative teaching and curriculum formats should be required to prove themselves before their wholesale adoption.

While the sample employed in this study is admittedly limited, it does indicate how some community college faculty members react to many of the practices now being employed. As a result of the data gleaned from this practicum, it is recommended that optimum student achievement can perhaps best be gained from a more moderately innovative approach in the areas of instruction and curriculum. The best of the traditional methods should be combined with a limited number of carefully examined innovative approaches. Such a format appears to be more suitable to the majority of Broward Community College instructors, at least in the areas of the social sciences and in communications, rather than the continued adoption of wholesale innovation, with the consequent phasing out of traditional methods.
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Introduction

In recent years, especially, there has been much controversy concerning which teaching methods and curriculum formats are most valid for community college students. Many educators point out that since two-year institutions must accommodate heterogeneous student bodies, including many underprepared and disadvantaged students, radically new teaching-learning approaches are in order and should even be the "norm." Some faculty members prefer a more structured approach to teaching—even including the use of the so-called "learning objectives" concept. Others claim that underprepared and heterogeneous student populations should be taught by means of unstructured formats; that this technique appeals to them more than a structured one, which might tend to "intimidate" students. Some insist on constant and radical innovation in the instructional and curriculum areas. Others argue that a more traditional methodology combined with a quite limited innovative approach is the optimum procedure. Of course, there are many intermediate viewpoints between these two extremes.

An article titled "Back to the Basics in the Schools" in a recent issue of Newsweek points out that innovative teaching techniques have proliferated in America's schools and colleges at an extraordinary rate for more than a decade. Says Newsweek:
Bolstered by a surge of public interest in education, massive infusions of funds for experimentation, and in particular by the zeal of the reformers, new educational policies, some excellent, others downright nonsensical—were adopted on an almost nationwide basis. But in the process far too many teachers just let the basics slide.1

The purpose of this practicum is to ascertain by means of two questionnaires, one objective and one subjective in nature, just what Broward Community College faculty members believe are valid and invalid approaches in the areas of curriculum and instruction.

In recent months, especially, both the popular media and scholarly journals have become more critical than ever of the drop in academic achievement of American students. This deterioration has been reported from the results of various scholastic aptitude tests given by such well-known testing organizations as the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the American College Testing Program (ATC). Both of these agencies report that achievement scores for entering college freshmen have dropped every year for the past ten years for a total of more than 15 percent. Similar results have been reported for those taking the Florida Twelfth Grade Achievement Tests. As a result, students coming to college are often not prepared to do college work. Indeed, as has variously been reported, perhaps a majority of community college students, who usually enter on an "open door" policy, are two or more years below "grade level" as they enter college.

Since innovative teaching techniques in the public schools have been ubiquitous in the public schools for more than a decade, and have long been employed in community colleges as well, some critics are be-
giving to argue that these methods, whatever their form, may not be the panacea that their supporters have long claimed them to be. Obviously, there are many other factors for the present disappointing student achievement levels in the schools and in community colleges. Still, it is important to reconsider some of the optimistic promises which "change" was supposed to produce. Obviously, change and innovation are needed in the curriculum and instruction. It is the degree of change which is the stumbling block.

Topics to be considered in this practicum will include:

a) dealing with underprepared students
b) programmed and individualized instruction
c) testing characteristics and formats
d) the use of educational "hardware"
e) instructional accountability
f) student evaluations of instructors
g) transfer and career education
h) instructional accountability
i) innovative programs in general

Background and Significance

It is disquieting to read that after five years of "the most flexible and progressive undergraduate curriculum to be found in any major American university today," the program at Brown University is now struggling for survival against heavy odds and criticism. Report Robert Reinhold explains Brown's difficulty with its innovative curriculum by quoting Brown University student body president John Carusone:
I represent the mainstream of student sentiment in seeking career goals and moving away from intellectual finger painting. A lot of illusions have been shattered—there has been a resurgence of realism. People realize that the world is a competitive place.  

*U. S.* News and World Report likewise reports disillusionment with some of the innovative programs that only a decade ago promised to bring success to the public school and college classrooms, which in previous years may have been somewhat less than intriguing to some students—especially to the "new students."  

Most experimental courses, sometimes called "finger painting" courses by cynical undergraduates, are reported to be not nearly so popular as a few years ago. Some of these, critics say, were "bull sessions" with no specific intellectual merit.  

The same popular journal reports in another article that today educators the country over are taking a fresh and often disillusioned look at "new math" and other innovations that were supposed to revolutionize classroom learning during the last fifteen years.  

_Says U. S. News:_

In many cities now expensive teaching machines gather dust in storerooms because both students and teachers are bored with them—or because there is no longer anyone around to operate and repair them. All but 10 of 30 regional education laboratories that the federal government established for testing such new techniques have been closed in the last few years.  

Yet not all that has been introduced into the curriculum in recent years should be discarded; indeed, some of it is quite useful.  

Mortimer Smith, Executive Director of the Council for Basic Education, which is hardly an organization standing for great amounts of innovative instruction admits:
'Back to the basics' or 'up the three R's' are comforting but simplistic battle cries. My hope is that we will borrow the best of both worlds and end up challenging and instructing students without stifling or confusing them.

Many critics of the more liberal persuasion claim that the acquisition of cognitive information is not a major purpose of higher education. More importantly, as has been pointed out for decades on the public school level, are the attitudes, interests, skills and interpersonal relationships which students may receive from their educational experience. Many critics who take this position maintain that the student would be better served if less emphasis were placed on the so-called "basics" (reading, writing, mathematics, and study skills) and more were put on teaching teaching techniques which "attract" students to the "learning situation." The more "varied" the learning experience, according to this argument, the better it is for the student—especially for the underprepared student.

Samuel Baskin, President of the American College Union, indicates that a single college course of one semester could employ the following teaching approaches: independent studies, team teaching, "field" experience, new instructional spaces, seminar instructional television, computer technology, films, learning centers, telecultures, interdisciplinary approaches—and even others. This varied approach may attract many students, particularly the disinterested or underprepared community college student. But it should be remembered that most community college classes meet only 150 minutes per week. It appears almost physically impossible to accomplish all of these media changes and techniques during
the relatively few instructor-student contact hours available and still manage to cover sufficient substantive material—if that too were an objective.

Yet John Roueche is perhaps correct when he points out that a curriculum dictated by tradition makes little sense to the so-called new students. He refers to a recent session with minority students and English faculty members at one community college when the question was asked:

"Who decided that all students should be required to learn only that literature written on a small group of islands off the coast of Western Europe? Why do we always start each literature course with this fellow Beowulf? Has anyone in England written anything since 1900? Do you honestly expect us to like this stuff? It has no meaning in our world."

Roueche points out that non-traditional students need to see why they are required to learn a particular subject. They seek higher education because they are looking for particular jobs, which will produce higher incomes and the benefits of a better life. He also claims that grading policies and practices should be non-punitive in order that such students can gain a feeling of success which they may have lacked previously. Rather than lowering standards, Roueche argues that this plan would give such students as much time as is necessary to accomplish the required learning tasks.

Roueche claims that the use of so-called "learning packages" is useful, especially for the underprepared disinterested student. These packages, he explains, include a variety of media, ranging from programmed materials and coordinated presentations to using slides and audio tapes,
and simulation models and games. The argument goes that since different students learn in different ways, varied teaching-learning strategies should be available for student selection. This strategy should be effective in keeping students in schools and colleges and positively motivated.\textsuperscript{12}

Many of the above suggestions by Roueche are undoubtedly commendable in some respects. It is possible that some of these approaches might help the unmotivated or underprepared student. Indeed, there are numerous investigations that appear to indicate beneficial results from instructional methods such as Roueche's. On the other hand, recent evidence points out that many of these innovative ideas, which take competition out of learning and achievement, and which sometimes stress innovation and accommodation at the expense of cognitive information, have not brought the happy results which their optimistic advocates had expected. Dr. Kenneth Clark, the respected Negro social psychologist, is scathing in his appraisal of what has happened to our schools over the past decade.\textsuperscript{13} Says Clark:

\begin{quote}
Without apology I would say that I am a traditionalist... Any theory that a student shouldn't be pressured, that he shouldn't be frustrated, imposes on the child the most horrible form of self-deception.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

The above quotation hardly agrees with Roueche's arguments that students should not be subject to punitive grading or that they should be allowed to study at their own (often leisurely) pace. Clark goes on to say: "Under the guise of protecting and not frustrating the student, educators use double-talk and alibis to hide the fact that many teachers simply don't teach."\textsuperscript{15}
Miami Herald columnist Martin L. Gross, who often writes on educational subjects, is especially critical of the use of so-called teaching machines. He claims that this type of "hardware" has been in use in many classrooms for over a decade, with generally disappointing results. Such modern learning techniques, says Gross, were supposed to revolutionize education and make the old-fashioned methods—and teacher—look awkward by comparison. Gross refers to a study made by Dr. Philip D. Smith (among others) of the Learning Research Center of West Chester State College (Pa.), coordinator of a project to study the effectiveness of foreign language laboratory systems in Pennsylvania schools. The results of this and other studies have been most disappointing.

Still other modern teaching methodologies which promised so much no longer look so promising, says Dr. Fred T. Wilhelms, Executive Secretary of the National Association of Secondary Principals, who decries the general failure of the concept of "team teaching," once claimed to be the acme of modern educational methodology. Gross points out that some of the blame for the above disappointments lies on America's too optimistic reliance on "systems," even in areas where method may be less important than a dedicated instructor.

Yet the above criticisms of some of the innovative teaching techniques of recent years should not be an indictment of other successful experiments which are now being developed in the schools and colleges. Cooperative and work-study programs, while not exactly new, are widely accepted as the best tools for career education; but their spread
is blocked by child labor laws and scarcity of jobs and union contracts. The community colleges can do a still better job in preparing young people for jobs by giving them better and more realistic guidance. These colleges in particular have been offering workers a change in mid-career so that they are not condemned for life to a bad job.\textsuperscript{20}

Writing in \textit{The Chronicle of Higher Education}, Allen Lacy points out significantly that of all the "new" or "innovative" undergraduate colleges that were established in the 1960's, such as Hampshire, New College, Kirkland, Eisenhower, Stockton State, and others, none have fully realized the utopian hopes of their founders. All, says Lacy, "were conceived in optimism and born with high hopes that they would become laboratories of innovation and creativity for the rest of higher education." Lacy, formerly at Kirkland and presently at innovative Stockton State, says sadly:

The new colleges have not only failed to reform American higher education by their example; they have also tended swiftly to disappoint the high hopes of their founders... Those who come to new colleges expect that the rhetoric will be true, that the goals and ideas proclaimed in the catalog will be descriptions of what actually goes on, that "Erewhon" will in fact be relevant, interdisciplinary, student-centered, communitarian, innovative, or what-have-you; before long faculty members and students begin to express their doubts.\textsuperscript{21}

An editorial in \textit{The Chapel Hill (N. C.) Newspaper} points out that it is ridiculously easy these days to graduate from high school, and from some colleges, "without doing anything more than brushing lightly against education." It blames educators for their specious arguments that flunking those who fail to learn will scar students psychologically by telling
them they have failed. It also criticizes college faculty members who argue that it is not their responsibility to teach students to read and write. While the editorial does not blame colleges for the latter problem, it severely criticizes them "for enrolling semi-illiterates and graduating them, willy nilly, just as the high schools do."22

Falling academic standards, as indicated above, are more and more becoming a matter of real concern of responsible public officials and the public alike. Chancellor Robert Mautz of Florida's university system has recently told the State Board of Regents that "C" could no longer be considered the "benchmark" because professors in the state's universities are handing out too many A's and B's.23 Mautz' report explains that in Florida's universities more than 50 percent of the students are getting A's and B's; and that at the state's largest institution, the University of Florida with 24,000 students, about 60 percent of the students are in this category. Mautz says that such academic grade inflation:

misleads parents into thinking that their children are doing better work than they are. The grading system is no longer meaningful. Obviously not 60 percent of our students are above average.24

In agreement with Mautz is Regent Marshall Criser, saying that in his opinion "a B-plus now indicates an average student." He points out that "students, parents and faculty are ill-served by this kind of soft grading, and soft thinking." The Mautz report indicates that other factors tend to contradict any justification for a continuing trend toward higher grades. It explains that while grades have gone up, students' performances on most state and national standardized tests, such as the
Florida Twelfth Grade Test and the Educational Testing Service examinations, noted above, have continued to go down. The Report blames the "soft grading" on a concept of no-failure—"meaning that students are passed through the educational system despite the fact that they may do failure work." 25

The Chancellor's report also blames the problem on student evaluations of their professors, explaining that some instructors are afraid to give tough grades because of the evaluations which students might give them at the end of the course. After giving several other reasons for easy grading, Mautz says that he plans to try to get the state's professors to start using more C's in their grading, although he admits that professors have the right to grade as they please. 26

The above examples may be some of the reasons why so-called "quality education" is being threatened. While it is true that grades in themselves are not the criterion for good education, inflated grading, which does not in any way reflect the real achievement of college students, is a factor which can threaten academic standards and the quality of higher education.

Procedures

In order to make this practicum manageable, it was decided to limit this study to two broad academic areas at Broward Community College to the Social Sciences Division and to the English-Foreign Languages Departments. Twenty faculty members, ten each from these two academic areas, completed two questionnaires concerning their ideas about many of
the problems discussed above. The first is a ten item objective instrument, scaled from 1 to 5 to represent degrees of agreement, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The second questionnaire is made up of three parts; each of which calls for in-depth, subjective responses.

The respondents were encouraged to use an open-ended and somewhat detailed response to these questions in order that their philosophies of education might be included. It was hoped that this plan would contribute to stronger and more comprehensive findings.

The following is a copy of the two part instrument which was completed by the twenty faculty members participating in this study:

PART I

Objective Questions

Fill in the correct responses according to your beliefs.

Response Scale:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = undecided
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

1. The prime consideration of many community colleges is to accommodate the underprepared student.

2. More innovative programs should be introduced into the community college.

3. In recent years community colleges, in their effort to accommodate the disadvantaged and underprepared student, may have emphasized accommodation too much and cognitive learning too little.

4. Many specific liberal arts or general education course requirements are no longer mandatory at community colleges. Is this a good trend?
5. Student evaluations of their instructors may intimidate the latter. This may tend to cause academic grade inflation.

6. The state of Florida has recently required more instructional accountability. Is this a good trend in general for community college education?

7. College entrance scores are reported to have deteriorated by more than 15 percent in recent years. Do you believe this development should be a matter for serious concern in higher education?

8. A fairly structured course is more compatible for my teaching format than an unstructured one.

9. Do you believe so-called "educational hardware" will take over most of the duties of the instructor in a few years so that he will become more of a "facilitator for learning" than an instructor as the term is now understood?

10. The trend of the future in community college education will include much more individualized instruction, which will allow students to study at their own rates in most classes.

This ten item instrument is a two dimensional contingency tabulation, which can be seen graphically in the Appendix of this Practicum. A space preceding each of the ten questions is provided for the numerical objective responses. A copy of both the objective and subjective sections of both parts of the instrument may also be found in the Appendix.

Results and Analysis of the Ten Objective Questions

1. Question No. 1 states that the prime consideration of most community colleges is to accommodate the underprepared student. There were eight strongly disagree answers of 1, and four disagree responses of 2. Two undecided or 3 responses, four agree or 4 answers and two strongly agree or 5 responses complete the number of answers. These results indicate that the majority of respondents are in disagreement with the question. Yet since four agree and two strongly agree, there is a significant minority taking the opposing position. While it is true that a large percentage of community college students are in the underprepared category, the minority viewpoint can be understood.
a significant minority believes that
Yet it is somewhat discouraging to realize that/dealing with the underprepared student is the major purpose of the community college, especially when in a state like Florida more than half of first year college students are in community colleges. Hopefully there are other equally or perhaps even more important reasons for the existence of the community college than this one. If not, this fact may be a very severe indictment of the public secondary schools in America.

2. Question No. 2, which states that more innovative programs should be introduced into the community college, received eight 1's and four 2's, showing much disagreement. There were two undecided responses (3's), two 4's, and three 5's.

Responses for this question show more disagreement than agreement. Yet two 4's and three 5's indicate that the minority vote is 25 percent. Eight 1 responses and four 2's may indicate that for these instructors, at least for the time being, it appears that innovation in the curriculum and instruction has gone far enough. Some very likely believe that digesting new methods and procedures is more important than adding still more; they undoubtedly have other reasons for not opting for more change—as will be noticed in Part II of the questionnaire. Those supporting innovation obviously have their own reasons later to be answered more fully.

3. Question No. 3 states that in recent years community colleges, in their effort to accommodate the disadvantaged and underprepared student, may have emphasized accommodation too much and cognitive learning too little. Ten 5's, or strongly agree responses, clearly indicate that in this area many respondents feel rather certain about their beliefs. Four 4's add to this position. Yet the single 2 responses and the three 1's show that some teachers still may believe that cognitive learning is only a secondary feature of college work. There are two 3 or undecided responses.

4. Question No. 4 states that many specific general education course requirements are no longer mandatory at community colleges. It asks if this is a good trend.

The fact that eight instructors wrote 1's and four indicated 2's may show that most faculty members involved in the study are in disagreement with the statement. Only two gave 5 for their response and four indicated 4's; there were two 3's. It is readily understandable that foreign language instructors are unhappy that a foreign language is no longer necessary for the A.A. degree. The other faculty members responding may believe that their subjects should still be required courses, especially for students working toward the A.A. degree.
5. Question No. 5 states that student evaluations of their instructors may intimidate the latter, which may tend to cause academic grade inflation. Eight respondents give the highest level of agreement on this question with 5's. Four more reply with 4's and three write 3's or undecided. Only three strongly disagree and two disagree at a 2 level. Causes for the rather high level of disagreement on this question may have resulted from: (1) instructors' own knowledge that their course grading is actually higher than in previous years; (2) many recent articles in the popular media stating that this phenomenon has occurred both in Florida colleges and in institutions of higher education in other states; and (3) a recent study at B.C.C. which states that academic grade inflation has indeed occurred there in recent years.

6. This question states that the State of Florida has recently required more instructional accountability; it then asks if this is a good trend in general for community college education.

Responses to this question are ambivalent. Only three respondents give the strongly agree answer of 5, but four agree with 4's. As many as five are undecided, with 3's; three disagree, writing 2 and five strongly disagree, with 1's. While there has been quite a bit of news coverage on the fact that the State of Florida plans to require more accountability from its community colleges in all areas, including curriculum and instruction, which basically sounds like a good plan, some instructors appear to believe that the methods used to obtain this information may be wrong; that it may simply lead to more "red tape" rather than to better education. Increased instructional loads per instructor have already resulted from state accountability requirements; some instructors are not happy about this development. Yet it must be realized that in this time of economic difficulties, "belt tightening" in education as in other areas is necessary.

7. Question No. 7 states that college entrance scores are reported to have deteriorated in recent years. It asks if this development should be a matter for serious concern in higher education.

The affirmative response to this question is high, with as many as nine strongly agreeing with 5's. Three more agree with 4's and three are undecided. Three disagree and only two strongly disagree. The reasons for the strong agreement may have been: (1) because of the news media and academic journal reports that nation-wide testing services have repeatedly reported; and (2) perhaps some instructors have noticed this phenomenon to have occurred in their own classes—or in those of their colleagues.
8. Question No. 8 states that a structured course is more compatible for one's teaching format than an unstructured one. Seven respondents strongly agree with 5's and four agree with 4's. Perhaps the rather large number of 4's indicates that some instructors agree but prefer a "moderately structured" format. Three disagree with 2's and five strongly disagree with 1's. It can be seen that while more prefer a structured format, a sizable minority prefer an unstructured one. This strong negative minority may represent highly innovative instructors who may like to alter their teaching strategies with the interests and attitudes of their classes. They may decide to cover a much smaller amount of the prescribed course in order to accommodate underprepared or disadvantaged students—"to play it by ear." There are, of course, both advantages and disadvantages to this type of approach.

9. Question No. 9 asks whether so-called "educational hardware" will take over most of the duties of the instructor in a few years so that he will become more of a "facilitator for learning" than an instructor as the term is now understood.

Only three respondents give a strongly agree 5 answer to this question and only two agree with 4's. Four are undecided and wrote 3. Four disagree with 2's and eight strongly disagree, writing down 1's. Perhaps a major reason why twelve answers are in the negative is because a number of faculty members may have become disillusioned with some of the optimistic promises which certain "educational hardware" and innovative techniques had promised—promises which have not always lived up to their expectations. Others may have indicated a negative response because they feel that education should be more than impersonal, programmed learning. Perhaps they believe that an instructor should "teach" rather than simply be a "learning resource" or "facilitator for learning."

10. The last objective question states that the trend of the future in community college education will include much more individualized instruction, which will allow students to study at their own rate in most classes.

Five respondents strongly agree with this statement, recording 5's on their answer. Three more agree—with fours, while two are undecided. Five disagree, writing 2's and five strongly disagree, with 1's. Question 10 and Question 9 are similar in some respects, but Question 9 is much stronger in concept than 10. This may be the reason why Question 10 received more favorable response than No. 9. Actually, the responses for No. 10 were fairly evenly divided. Respondents apparently see the possibility of more individualized instruction in the future but are less willing to agree that most of this would rely on "educational hardware." This, plus other
strategies for individualization of instruction, apparently, are more compatible for them than the use of "educational hardware" alone as the major factor in the individualization of instruction. In any event, opinions at B.C.C. apparently differ in this area, even as they do among critics who write for journals of higher education.

PART II

Results and Analysis of the Three Subjective, Open-ended Questions

Question No. 1

What are some of the adjustments made at your community college to accommodate the underprepared student? Which ones do you believe to be useful and proper? Do some of these adjustments threaten academic standards and goals?

Responses

a) Adjustments made in the curriculum and in academic standards at B.C.C., as undoubtedly in many other community colleges, have been too extensive. This is particularly true of academic standards. Too much consideration has been given to increasing enrollment and lowering standards to accommodate underprepared students; not enough to quality education and to the better students.

b) If by adjustments in the curriculum you mean allowing students a far greater latitude in their choices of subjects to fulfill program major and graduation requirements, we have gone too far. The student who expects to earn a university parallel A.A. degree should be required to take at least one year of English composition, two years of a foreign language, one year of history, etc. By giving the student the complete smorgasbord to pick from, he ends up with a hodge-podge of unrelated subjects and with no firm foundation in anything. It is human nature to choose the easy "rap" subjects like psychology, sociology, art, etc. and to avoid the "hard content" courses—math, science, languages, and history, etc. If a student is not working for a degree, let him take what he damn well pleases; but there should be some standardization of curriculum for degree students. Furthermore, the trend to offer some exotic and esoteric courses at the community college level is ridiculous—how does one specialize before he has an overview of the whole field?

c) Currently, especially in the community college system, instructors are faced with students who are vastly unlike themselves in that they may be culturally different, academically underprepared, and not well
socialized into the school system. For those students, the majority of our community college students, standard classroom procedures are a repetition of the devices which have proved unsuccessful throughout their previous twelve years of education. In 1974 in the community college, with the majority of community college students, the only way to educate is to create new methods; in other words, to innovate. Such adjustments do not threaten academic standards and goals. Since when is an education a threat to academic standards? Biased, narrow-minded educators, who only wish to educate those like themselves, excuse their lack of relationship with the undereducated with the argument that the underprepared "lower the standards." Not so; if the underprepared are given a proper background at the community college, they could INCREASE the standards. Besides, we are discussing a community college—not Harvard.

d) The curriculum designed to reach modern day concerns are applicable to students' interests. They are flexible and vary extensively. This is difficult to incorporate, but if the instructor is innovative, this new design is ideal.

e) It is a function of the community college to provide opportunity to people with a minimum of financial risk. This is fine as long as it does not result in the lowering of standards to remain in college. The administration in pushing the notion of retaining as many students as possible in order to keep state financial support high. This results in the lowering of standards to remain in college. The effect is not good on the student, on the taxpayer, or on the professional standards of the higher education profession.

f) The adjustments made at B.C.C. include SPANS and various other programs to accommodate the underprepared. This is a community college and thus it must meet the needs of our community. These needs are not always academic. Often courses don't cover the material they are supposed to—or go along with "standards." This does not matter anyway.

g) I feel that some of the adjustments in curriculum for "new students" (when I define as culturally derived) are excellent. However, any lowering of academic standards I find deplorable. The goals of the community college seem to differ now from what they were ten or more years ago; i.e., the curricula being "post high school age" regardless of whether the student wants professional, academic, technical, or enrichment courses.

h) Instruction in the community college must meet the needs of the students. This means a reduction of the past higher academic levels as students' abilities have declined. Contemporary methods and teaching aids must be utilized to stimulate the students' learning process.
Every possible system must now be altered and re geared to match the incoming student. A new challenge greets education: to expand and to function not as a conservative institution but one of communication with students who need assistance. The classroom will no longer suffice for each and every student. New emphasis must be placed on a closer teacher-student relationship if these now students are to be encouraged to continue in higher education. Study aids of all types and descriptions must be used. The lecture approach must be re oriented with more interesting discussions developed on a question and answer approach. Bend to meet the students, or education will become a babysitting service even on the junior college level.

1) The use of reading and writing labs would possibly help; also, perhaps a semester of non-credit preparatory work. Otherwise, remedial work could better be done by high schools or some other type of institution.

J) Education has become a business, and success is now equated to numbers of students and not to quality education. Students in the grammar schools are passed without mastering the three R’s, and over half of so-called college students are functional illiterates. I cannot imagine a worse educational system in the modern world than the United States. We must turn back the clock and teach fundamentals and hold students to a proper level of accomplishment. “Innovation” started in the 1940’s began the decline of education, and this fact can easily be established.

Analysis of Responses to Question No. 1

The above comments show a wide spectrum of how social science and communications instructors at the Central Campus of Broward Community College react to the question of accommodating underprepared students. While it is true that every means should be employed to help improve these students’ academic abilities and achievement, there probably is a limit to how much community colleges can do for many of these students, no matter what methods are used to achieve this aim. The past ten to fifteen years and more have seen innumerable innovative teaching approaches used on unmotivated and underprepared students; yet too often, perhaps, the results have been disappointing. In the
public schools innovative instructional methods have been ubiquitous for an even longer period of time, with often equally limited results.

While it is true that there have been myriad factors at work in recent years to hamper academic achievement, and innovative teaching techniques cannot overcome many of these, it perhaps must be admitted that a great deal of money and effort have been expended in the name of "change," resulting in less than expected gains. Many critics who push for still more innovation often blame the limited gains so far on the fact that many innovative procedures have been improperly put into effect—and perhaps so. While it is undoubtedly true that some new teaching techniques have yielded limited successes, it is also just as likely that far more have been a dismal failure. The fact remains that Florida Twelfth Grade Test scores continue to decline, as do similar standardized test scores elsewhere—as already noted above. Optimum results, of course, will be achieved when the best of traditional methods are employed together with carefully developed newer techniques. But such gains will not be reached by wholesale adoption of innovative techniques which often proves to be will-of-the wisps instead of panaceas.

While several of the responses to Subjective Question No. 1 have supported more innovative teaching techniques and curriculums, a still larger group shows negative reactions. The final answer to this controversial topic is still not resolved among the critics. Yet for the majority of those instructors at B.C.C. responding to this question there still remains, after many years of experience, a great deal of doubt and skepticism.
Question No. 2

Comment on the practice of academic grade inflation (instructors grading students higher than their work warrants) which is reported in the popular media and in education journals in recent years. Do you believe this has indeed occurred? If so, what are some of the reasons for this phenomenon? Is the recently ubiquitous practice of students' evaluating their instructors one of these reasons? Comment.

Responses

a) Academic grade inflation is definitely with us. This is largely due to pressure on instructors from administrators who are primarily interested in swelling enrollments. Further; our present day society seems brainwashed with the idea that everyone should have a college education, regardless of his interests or abilities. It has been proven repeatedly that the majority of the students evaluate the instructor by how well they individually are doing in that instructor's class. As a result, many instructors engage in a popularity contest with their colleagues in order to obtain a high evaluation, with the detrimental outcome of reduced academic standards and the giving of inflated grades.

b) Students are in college now who should not be there. The courses are "watered down" and grades are adjusted accordingly. The process partially stems from the fact that this is the "T.V., audio-visual student" who has not been taught to read and write, thus hampering the learning process. Student evaluations of their instructors also play a part in academic grade inflation.

c) I do not believe academic grade inflation has occurred here. Some institutions have always done this but they have been matched by teachers who have always graded too hard. I am 100 percent in favor of teacher evaluations (by students-ed.). Of course, the format can always be improved, but I am not a specialist in this area. Perhaps more questions.

d) I am not sure if I have seen it (academic grade inflation) at B.C.C. But the greatest force encouraging it is the pernicious practice of students evaluating faculty by administrative edict. Students will always evaluate instructors, and teachers should be interested in the students' opinions. However, this should be of no value to the administration.

e) It is unfortunate, but academic grade inflation has occurred even at the best of universities. I don't know why this has occurred—competition for students is only part of the answer. Good universities still have more applicants than openings. At community colleges
like B.C.C. I believe student evaluations of instructors, and the concept that "no student shall fail" etc., are responsible to some extent.

f) Academic grade inflation has been a serious matter since the mid-sixties. I have read a number of articles pointing this problem out and agree with them. I believe this was brought about by the failure of administrators to take positive action during a period of civil unrest. Many professors have been forced to maintain student appeal for job security reasons.

g) I do not believe there has been much academic grade inflation. Even if there has been, it does not matter. The main job in community college teaching is to try to interest students in a field rather than to require high standards or factual knowledge. Most students won't go to graduate school anyway.

h) Instructors are increasingly in competition to "hold" their students. Many more courses are now electives rather than required. So give A's and B's and keep 'em. Student evaluations of their teachers has a definite effect on academic grade inflation.

i) If it (academic grade inflation) has occurred, it doesn't bother me. I find it worthwhile to stress a student's achievements. It is a bit difficult, I am sure, for graduate schools to evaluate products of academic grade inflation, but they always have the G.R.E.

j) I do think academic grade inflation has occurred at B.C.C. and elsewhere. I attribute it largely to the mandate handed down to teachers not to fail students. Like many things, this too will soon pass.

k) I do not believe that there has been academic grade inflation. The mass media and, thereby, an increase in students' background knowledge give us better students. Too much is attempted to be earned in the classroom anyway. A test cannot test or replace that [this statement apparently means that classroom tests cannot test what should be learned outside the classroom—ed.]

Analysis of Responses to Question No. 2

Most of the above responses generally appear to deplore the academic grade inflation that has occurred in recent years, not only in two year but also in four year institutions. Two of the respondents, and to some extent a third, are not concerned about the
phenomenon, and even appear to be unaware of it—even though it has often been reported in the media and elsewhere. While several respondents point out that the recently popular practice of students' formally evaluating their instructors, which has become widespread at approximately the same time when academic grade inflation developed, the majority seem to agree that grade inflation may be the result of a number of factors. One of this writer's previous practicum reports, submitted to and approved by Nova University, "Academic Grade Inflation at Broward Community College," presents statistics which indicate that the percentage of A's given by all B.C.C. instructors in Term I of 1963-1964 was 8.7%; B's, 20.6%; C's, 26.2%; D's, 11.3%; and F's, 8.1%. By contrast, for Term I of 1973-1974, 18.89% of all grades were A's; 23.43% were B's; and 18.34% were C's; 4.31%, D's, and 3.02%, F's. Yet it must again be pointed out that academic grade inflation is a phenomenon in higher education in general rather than in community colleges alone. To argue, as one of the above respondents does, that "grades don't matter anyway," and that "most students won't go to graduate or professional schools anyway," seems to beg the question. To indicate that a student is doing honors work when in reality he may be doing marginal work is a questionable practice.

Question No. 3
Do you believe that there has been an overuse of the all-objective testing format in Broward Community College classroom examinations? Should students be required to take more subjective or combination-type tests (objective-subjective) in order to gain some ability in organizing and writing skills under test conditions? Comment.
Analysis of Responses to Question No. 3

a) Yes indeed. How are English instructors supposed to convince their students of the need to develop proper writing skills when almost no other instructors require a demonstration of such skills? "Writing it down" makes one think more clearly, avoid sloppy wording and vague generalities, as well as false conclusions (so that the instructor can correct it). I observe that many (perhaps a majority) cannot spell, refuse to use the dictionary, have only a vague notion about proper punctuation, even capitalization.

b) No. The few essay type tests which a teacher can evaluate do not give each student enough practice in organization to do any good at this level. Unless students spend full time on writing, they would never become good writers—and then, would they learn anything they don't already know?

c) Yes. More writing and substantial evaluation of the ability to express oneself, and smaller sections to make this feasible.

d) No. Most community college students can't write or express themselves on paper anyway. So why spend hours making corrections on exam papers which they don't bother to read? If they haven't learned to spell and punctuate in high school, they won't learn it in college. Too many papers to read.

e) Writing and organizing skills are becoming more and more neglected, unfortunately. An ultimate concept of this trend will envision "push button graduates!"

f) There is no doubt but what students need to express themselves through writing responses under pressure. The objective test gives no indication of a student's ability in this direction, nor does it give him any practical experience in writing. A big weakness in our educational system today is the lack of preparation in these fundamentals in the students' pre-college years. Most instructors here use objective tests only.

g) The objective test alone is not a true measure of one's knowledge. I believe some written work should be required. This is particularly true if the student has not reached the level where he can read and write the language with some facility. Recognition ability, which is required on objective tests, does not indicate that a student can explain an answer—even briefly. We have become slaves to the computer and to the easiest and quickest way out.

h) By students tell me that the only writing they have done at B.C.C. is in the English class. All other testing is objective. DEPLORABLE!
Summary and Recommendations

The above responses give a graphic picture of some of the problems which exist at Broward Community College in particular and at many other two-year institutions as well. The three topics considered in the subjective part of the instrument produced all shades of responses—from one extreme to the other. While some respondents speak out for more innovative programs and are not especially concerned with reports of declining achievement scores and writing skills, which appear to be going hand in hand with academic grade inflation, considerably more are very much concerned with these problems.

It is worth noting that while several instructors who deplore the fact that most classroom testing at Broward is done by objective formats only, these very instructors themselves employ these formats virtually to the exclusion of any others. This phenomenon may occur for several reasons. One is that these instructors may feel that since most of the other faculty members in their areas, at least, don’t bother to put in hours of work grading subjective-type tests, why should they do so? Also, the administration at B.C.C. has apparently never suggested to the faculty that completely objective testing is a disservice to the students. Further, students in general repeatedly express their dislike for taking written or “blue book” tests, and they criticize the few instructors who occasionally require them to do so. This criticism is probably because the students themselves recognize their limited ability in writing such tests; also they appear to very much dislike the effort involved in writing. Many of the students claim they prefer to take their chances with
"putting dots on computer cards" and to "go along with the curve" (grade curve). Classroom testing should be of a more varied type than the all objective ones for optimum results; the more traditional subjective type test is still useful.

An editorial in Change magazine, "Revitalizing Undergraduate Education," says:

One must, therefore, be particularly diligent, in this time of bandwagon reform and easy enthusiasms for nontraditional patterns of learning, to look at each case with special discrimination, and not to think that any change is necessarily a genuine step forward. Desperation, whether institutional or personal, can lead to interesting new styles, but it can also lead to curious forms of grand self-delusion. Rising student enrollments, and even outside financial support, may well follow installation of new forms, but will rarely attract them when such things are tried fraudulently.

Change is certainly a necessary ingredient for education if education is to be meaningful, relevant and timely. Yet according to Collins W. Burnett, change, which may be the only constant factor in life, has too often become a panacea for solving many of our problems. He claims that frequently in higher education change may be no better, or even less effective, than a plan or an idea that was replaced. Says Burnett:

The concept of open admissions may be a part of present egalitarian philosophy, lent without a massive outlay of resources to provide for program options and remedial services in counseling, English composition, reading, mathematics, and study skills, the effort may be dishonest, autocratic, and frustrating to many students.
Some of the major issues to be resolved pertinent to this practicum have involved such questions as what are really good teaching strategies and curriculums, and what are suitable academic standards and methods of accountability? While a consensus of responses was not achieved in the present study, of course, the majority of B.C.C. instructors appear to opt for moderate change if that change or innovation does not exclude "basic" or "fundamental" education. The implications and significance of a study such as this one are evident, although the size of the sample involved is limited. Faculty members ordinarily are in a position to observe and to evaluate the student body more carefully than almost anyone else on the college staff. It is in the classroom that the primary function between the institution and the students takes place. To learn how faculty members react to the major curriculum issues with which they will be confronted in this inquiry is to find out much about students, faculty, staff, and community college education in general. It is important to learn how a sample of the faculty reacts to many of the above issues, and the degree to which innovational and traditional approaches are favored.

The findings of this study could be made known to the board of trustees, administration, and staff of the college—as well as to the entire faculty itself. An improved faculty development program might be one result of the study. This might serve to inform the administration as to what degree both traditional and innovative teaching techniques are being used and the reaction of faculty members (at least in two broad areas) to them. The above findings might encourage two or three interested faculty members to develop especially designed innovative methods on an
experimental basis, the results of which could be compared with their own teaching methods.

Instructors have usually argued that grading large numbers of written examinations is too time consuming. This problem could be resolved if perhaps two of four major course examinations were all objective in nature. The other two might be half objective and half subjective. Even if an instructor had as many as 150 students in his classes, he could still rather conveniently grade the subjective half of two tests. This would probably be less time consuming than that needed by university professors who may have fewer student papers to grade but who usually grade tests which are completely of the "blue book" or written type.

Instructors, guidance counsellors, and others could benefit from this investigation by learning how a limited sample of the faculty at their institution reacts to various instructional techniques and curricula. It would not be necessary for the names of the respondents to be disclosed, of course. Nevertheless, instructors would be able to ascertain where they stood on the above issues compared with other members of the faculty.

The results of this investigation could point the way to further studies which might be made on a much larger scale. For example, if an investigation were made involving all of the community colleges and their entire faculties in a single state such as Florida, more definite findings could result. In fact, the present writer plans to do a larger study, with more "open-ended" questions involving at least five community colleges.
Such a study could indicate in a more comprehensive fashion to what extent new instructional techniques are being used and how well they are succeeding—at least from a faculty viewpoint.

Relatively few of the above responses are critical of innovation in itself. Indeed, so-called "academic hardware," if not overused, and more flexible teaching techniques can produce good results—even if they do not manage to solve many of the pedagogic problems which their most avid sponsors claim for them. Such techniques, together with more traditional methods, can combine for a better teaching situation. It was Edmund Burke who once said that the best of the traditional should be united with the best of the new to make for the optimum form of government. But many revolutionary teaching techniques which have been developed in the past decade have too often not lived up to their expectations. For example, the overuse of "hardware" has resulted in many millions of dollars worth of equipment rusting in school closets and basements all over the country. Simply to argue that new conditions and new times demand new teaching techniques has too often brought about a worse rather than an improved situation.

The above data and responses indicate that innovative teaching methods can be helpful so long as they demand substantive learning. They must not be used simply to amuse, entertain or allow students to think they are learning when they really are not—as is too often the case. Community colleges should continue to encourage all students to attend who can really benefit from such attendance. The danger for community
colleges is that they too often allow academic standards to be drastically lowered as a result of the institutions' zeal to "accommodate" all students, whatever their academic potential, interest in learning, or willingness to study, so-called community college philosophy notwithstanding. Lowered standards combined with contrived "successful" achievement in the long run do not "encourage" a student to better performance (as some educators appear to contend). Making classes entertaining but academically unchallenging simply to increase a college's enrollment and "holding power" will eventually bring the student and the college little benefit and much harm.

The above suggestions would still manage to accommodate individual student differences, disadvantaged and underprepared students, and moderate innovation in teaching techniques. Certainly the knowledge explosion of recent years calls for additions and deletions in the curriculum. Yet this fact should not be an excuse for introducing the many dubious innovative teaching techniques and curriculums now so prevalent in education, which have for too long taken refuge under the term innovation.

In conclusion, it should be stated that perhaps no amount of research, however carefully or exhaustively performed, will drastically change everyone's philosophy of education. Some instructors prefer using teaching methods and techniques which they believe have succeeded for them, although few are so biased in their thinking that they will not consider others. All faculty members should not employ the same methods,
whether traditional or innovative. Students should be allowed to experience various approaches to instruction and to alternative curriculums. But it is hoped that the findings to be derived from this study may become a useful guide for anyone interested in community college teaching today.
LIST OF FOOTNOTES

1"Back to Basics in the Schools," Newsweek, October 21, 1974, p. 88.
2The Chapel Hill Newspaper (N.C.), February 24, 1974, p. 4A, col. 1.
3Ibid.
5Ibid.
7Ibid.
8Ibid., pp. 65-66.
11Ibid., pp. 85-87.
12"Back to the Basics in the Schools," October 21, 1974, p. 91.
13Ibid.
14Ibid.
17Ibid., cols. 2-3.
18Ibid.
19Ibid., col. 3.


24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., col. 2.

26 Ibid., cols. 2, 3.

27 Ibid., col. 3.


31 Ibid.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


"Chancellor Plans to Reestablish "C''s As State Colleges' Average Grade," The Miami Herald, December 10, 1974, p. 6B, col. 1.


The Chapel Hill Newspaper, February 24, 1974, p. 4A, col. 1.
APPENDIX

Part I

Objective Questions

Response Scale:

1 = strongly disagree  4 = agree
2 = disagree           5 = strongly agree
3 = undecided

Place the appropriate number beside each question in the indicated space.

1. The prime consideration of most community colleges should be to accommodate the underprepared student.

2. More innovative programs should be introduced into the community college.

3. In recent years community colleges, in their effort to accommodate the disadvantaged and underprepared student, may have emphasized accommodation too much and cognitive learning too little.

4. Many specific liberal arts or general education course requirements are no longer mandatory at community colleges. Is this a good trend?

5. Student evaluations of their instructor may intimidate the latter. This may tend to cause academic grade inflation.

6. The State of Florida has recently required more instructional accountability. Is this a good trend in general for community college education?

7. College entrance scores are reported to have deteriorated by more than 15 percent in recent years. Do you believe this development should be a matter for serious concern in higher education?

8. A structured course is more compatible for my teaching format than an unstructured one.

9. Do you believe so-called "educational hardware" will take over most of the duties of the instructor in a few years so that he will become more of a "facilitator for learning," than an instructor as the term is now understood?

10. The trend of the future in community college education will include much more individualized instruction, which will allow students to study at their own rate in most classes.
APPENDIX

Part II

Structured Interview Questions

Respond in some detail to the following questions on separate sheets of paper.

1. Do you believe the use of the College Educational Program (CLEP) test, which often allows a student to preempt a course if he scores at least in the 50th percentile, is a proper substitute for taking a course? Should the percentile requirement for passing be higher? Should some subjective or written responses also be mandatory as well as the objective ones now required?

2. Comment on the use of individualized instructional formats (study at your own rate, etc.) for classroom learning? What do you think of learning objectives and behavioral objectives systems as an instructional format? What experience, if any, have you had with them?

3. What are some of the adjustments made at your community college to accommodate the underprepared student? Which ones do you believe are useful and proper? Do any of these adjustments threaten academic standards or goals?

4. Comment on the use of the lecture and class discussion in the community college classroom. To what extent do you use each and why?

5. Do you believe that there has been an overuse of the all-objective test format in classroom tests? Should students be required to take more subjective or combination-type tests (objective-subjective) in order to gain some experience in writing and organizing skills under test conditions?

6. Comment on the practice of "academic grade inflation" (instructors grading students higher than their work warrants), which is reported to have occurred in recent years. Do you believe this has occurred? If so, what are some of the reasons why this may have occurred?

7. Comment on the practice of student evaluations of their instructors. To what degree do you support this? Does the format need to be improved? If so, how?
8. Do you believe that the community college makes to strenuous an effort to recruit underprepared students? Explain.

9. Do you believe that there has been a recent trend towards more career education and less emphasis on general education at the community college? If so, is this a healthy trend? Comment.
APPENDIX

Part III

Graphic Representation of the Objective Responses to Part II of the Questionnaire.

Instructors 1 - 20

1 = strongly disagree  
2 = disagree  
3 = undecided  
4 = agree  
5 = strongly agree

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