

## Changing Perceptions of the University as a Community of Learning: The Case of Penn State

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Writing in 1990 for the Carnegie Foundation and the American Council on Education, Ernest Boyer described the importance of strengthening the colleges and universities as vital communities of learning by emphasizing six critical dimensions or characteristics of campus life: educationally purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative. Boyer's work was widely discussed and provided a framework for change as administrators across the country sought to meet the new and emerging challenges of their institutions. How successful have these efforts been? To what extent do instructors and students see their campuses as exemplifying these principles? Is there evidence of changes across time in their views? Survey data collected in 1995-97 and 2011-12 from instructors and students at Penn State University's main campus and its satellite campuses found a sizable increase over time for both groups in the proportion who viewed their campuses as having the attributes of a Community of Learning.

Historically, access to higher education was largely limited to the training of privileged young males, with the academy serving *en loco parentis* during their period of schooling. Across the years, as the desire for, and access to, higher education became more widespread in American society, colleges and universities grew in number, size, and complexity. Student enrollments expanded and became more diversified, curricula became more varied and specialized, and technological/societal change underscored the need for these institutions to lead in developing new knowledge through research and discovery.

By 1990, the old rules of governance within colleges and universities appeared outmoded and unworkable, and educators sought new ways to organize campus life and culture. It was in the context of these debates that the work of Ernest Boyer, then President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, called for the development of Campus Communities of Learning where shared norms and values fostered the pursuit of knowledge, personal growth, social responsibility, and respect for others (Boyer, 1990a). Six principles were defined by Boyer as the cornerstones of a Community of Learning:

- It is an *educationally purposeful* community where members work together to strengthen teaching and learning.
- It is an *open* community where freedom of expression is protected and affirmed.
- It is a *just* community where the sacredness of the person is honored and diversity is pursued.
- It is a *disciplined* community where individuals accept their responsibilities to the group and well-defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good.

- It is a *caring* community where the well-being of each member is supported and where service to others is encouraged.
- It is a *celebrative* community where heritage and rituals that affirm both tradition and change are shared.

Boyer's call to arms resonated with educators across the nation, and it found expression in the development of a variety of activities and programs designed to strengthen individual campus communities (McDonald, et al., 2002). However, the pressures that precipitated Boyer's work more than two decades ago continue to challenge colleges and universities today and may indeed have become exacerbated. There are concerns that higher education institutions have lost touch with the essential characteristics that distinguish the academy from other less inclusive environments. Academic programs have been seen as drifting away from broad intellectual expansion and scholarship and toward incredibly focused student placements and the filling of employment opportunities (Boyer, 1990a; Boyer, 1990b; McDonald et al., 2002). Intellectual development and active citizenship are seen as being sacrificed by emphasizing narrowly defined skill sets rather than developing student potentials for both personal and societal contributions. Students have gradually been encouraged to be less focused on their role in the great society, but instead on their own professional and economic advancement.

Similarly, the focus of the professoriate has been viewed as evolving away from in-depth scholarship and student-focused teaching to the procurement of large scale research funding and journal article production (publish or perish). As a result, it may be that the presence and purpose of "community" on modern college campuses, if it ever existed, has declined to the point where it is unrecognizable. Some institutions and

faculty answered Boyer's call to action. Included were efforts to return our attention to our academic roots, to reward excellence in teaching and innovation, to make active efforts to imbed application into teaching, and to provide institutional funding for centers and specialized programs designed to link scholarship with an active community of learning. Such was the call to action at Penn State where such actions took place and continue.

### **The Academy as a Community**

#### **Community**

Relevant to understanding the academy as a community of learning is the concept of "community" itself. Both scholars and the public use the term loosely to define places, patterns of social interaction, cultural norms, and social values (Brennan, Bridger, & Alter, 2013; Bridger, Brennan, & Luloff, 2009; Bridger & Luloff 1999; Bridger, Luloff, & Krannich 2003; Wilkinson 1991). Thus, the term refers to an ecological location. Boyer refers to a "campus" as a community, underscoring the idea that the community entails geographic space—a physical setting of brick and mortar buildings, classrooms, and traditional landscapes. But, it is also clear that the physical entity does not completely define what he (or others) means by "community."

Community also implies the presence of people who share the locale and participate in a field of social interaction in which their collective actions are directed purposively to the creation and maintenance of the social system of which they are a part (Brennan et al., 2013; Bridger et al., 2009; Wilkinson 1991). From this perspective, "community" is not taken as a "given." Rather it is a dynamic entity that develops and is continually re-created through social interaction. On campus, as in all localities, there are groupings of people or special interest groups organized around specific interests and goals. In the college/university setting, examples of such groups include academic units, colleges, administrative structures, service providers, and, of course, students and teachers. For a campus community to emerge, there must be a general awareness of overarching common needs, interests, and goals among these divergent fields. This awareness is developed by creating linkages among groups that otherwise would not interact. As these relationships are strengthened, they simultaneously increase local capacity to address the many problems and issues of the larger community field that inevitably cut across special interest groups.

From these interactions, a culture of shared histories, traditions, behavior patterns, and norms that embody the desired and desirable aspects of community life emerge. While culture also can, and does, change

in response to the dynamics of social interaction, it provides a more or less stable set of values and beliefs which shape current social interaction within the community. To Boyer, campus communities should personify a culture that is educationally purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative. Thus, "community" involves not only a representation of what "is" but also a social value whose worth goes beyond the possible contributions made in meeting the instrumental goals of the social unit. "Community" refers to the social bonds among members associated with cohesion, unity, reciprocity, and attachment. These linkages enable people to commit themselves to each other and to knit the social fabric that encourages engagement and group action. Such cohesion is also viewed positively from the perspective of the individual actor for whom attachment and belongingness are seen as contributing to psychological or personal well-being (Brennan et al., 2013; Wilkinson, 1991).

The concept of community as described by the above scholars, but also by Boyer, contributes to the attainment of educational missions. Our colleges and universities are not just an aggregate of individuals pursuing individual goals in isolation. While many students may be fiercely goal-oriented, they still exist and learn in an environment of students and scholars who learn from each other. Through collective exploration, critical analysis of topics, and an interactive learning environment, learning is a group dynamic. These conditions, along with common identities, rituals, and traditions, create a community that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

Boyer's call for developing campus Communities of Learning embodies all of these components of "community" with the vision that, by doing so not only will colleges and universities best fulfill their educational missions, but also "perhaps it is not too much to hope that as colleges and universities affirm a new vision of community on campus, they may also promote the common good in the neighborhood, the nation, and the world." (Boyer, 1990a, p. 67).

#### **Loss of Community**

The issues that gave rise to Boyer's urgings for the development of new communities of learning were predicated on his observation that social patterns of behavior and culture which had bound campus participants together in an earlier era in which colleges were smaller, more intimate, and more homogenous, were lost with changing circumstances. Other observers have also bemoaned the loss of community in campus life (Cheng, 2004). Moreover, it has been suggested that the loss of community is endemic to society overall. Through the years, scholars have pointed to presumed weakening of community bonds as small

local settlements gave way to urban conglomerates. This hypothesized loss of community found early expression in the polar concepts of classical theorists including Toennies' shift from *Gemeinschaft- to- Gessellschaft* and Durkhiem's changes from mechanical to organic solidarity. The theme has been repeated through the years (Stein, 1960; Warren, 1978) with more recent statements by Robert Putnam (2000) in his much quoted book, *Bowling Alone* and Andrew Leigh's (2010) publication, *Disconnected*. Although some have criticized both the methodologies and conclusions of these latter writers (Durlauf 2002; McLean, Schultz, & Steger, 2002), popular conceptions often echo the theme that society today is increasingly less civically engaged, with fewer shared interactions, more divergent values, a lessening of community bonds, and a loss of social belongingness.

Boyer suggested means for reversing such presumed declines by engaging in purposive action directed to the strengthening of campus communities. In response, many institutions heeded his suggestions and initiated actions to stay or reverse the presumed loss of community.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to assess the extent to which Boyer's principles defining a Community of Learning are manifest today and how (if at all) these have changed across time. Although Boyer based his assessments of the state of the academy on interviews with college and university administrators, the current study utilized the reports of students and teachers to assess the goodness of fit of the six principles to their campuses. As actors playing differing roles in their campus settings, it seemed possible that their perspectives might differ.

The analysis draws upon separate surveys of students and instructors carried out in 1995-97 and again in 2011-12 at both the "main" campus of The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) located at University Park, PA., and at "satellite" campuses that comprise the University's Commonwealth Campuses. In all cases, respondents were asked to report how well each of Boyer's principles described the overall university and campus life at their institution. Data from these surveys were used to address the following research questions:

- What changes (if any) have occurred during the 15 years covered by the surveys in the perceptions of students and teachers at University Park and the Commonwealth Campuses in the degree to which they felt their campus was an *educationally purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring and celebrative* Community of Learning?

- How do students and teachers in each of these two time periods differ from one another in their views of their campus as a Community of Learning?

### The Setting

Penn State is a large, multifaceted institution with historic roots in the Land Grant Act of 1863. The current study focused on two differing settings which are parts of the Penn State undergraduate instructional system: the "main" campus at University Park, and 19 separate locations which together form the Commonwealth Campuses.

The campus at University Park (UP) serves as the administrative and research hub of the University. It employs approximately 3,200 full-time faculty members and enrolls over 45,000 graduate and undergraduate students from throughout the world. Administratively, there are seventeen individual colleges located at University Park with hundreds of majors and thousands of course offerings.

A total of nineteen Commonwealth Campuses are scattered throughout Pennsylvania. While administratively and academically integrated parts of the Penn State system, these sites operate as somewhat separate units. Most offer a limited number of 4-year baccalaureate degrees and 2-year programs. However, many students take only their first two years of study at these locations, relocating to University Park or another Penn State campus to complete their degrees. These campuses vary in size from about 600 to more than 4,000 students in any given semester.

### Changes in Campus Life

During the years between the 1996-97 and 2011-12 surveys, numerous resources and programming initiatives were directed to developing Penn State as a Community of Learning that embodied the elements enunciated by Boyer. Thus, a 1995 Student Encampment brought Ernest Boyer to campus to describe the work of the Carnegie Foundation and to encourage the building of a civil community of learning. This was followed by a series of Conversations on Teaching and Learning sponsored by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and the USG Senate/Academic Assembly that engaged students, teachers, and administrators in defining mechanisms for accomplishing this goal (Enerson, 1996).

Elements of these principles were included in University statements of the mission, values, vision and goals in the faculty and staff newspaper; in formal presentations of the University's President and the Vice

President of Student Affairs; and in annual “State of the University” addresses by then President Graham Spanier (cited in Willits, Janota, Moore, & Enerson, 1996). The Office of Student Affairs took leadership in developing strategic planning efforts to strengthen the campus as a community of learning through academic alliances linking faculty, students, and staff; utilizing technology for sharing information; directing campus dialogues and other resources to focus on maintaining a just and caring environment; and building alliances with the larger community of which the campus is a part to encourage responsible citizenship (Moore & Carter, 2002). Many of these efforts continue today. If they have been at all successful, changes in the extent to which Penn State exemplifies the principles of a Community of Learning would be expected to have increased across the years. This study explores the veracity of that expectation.

### The Data

During fall semester 1995 a random sample of 492 undergraduate students at University Park was contacted and asked to participate in the survey; 362 agreed to do so (a 74% response rate) (Willits et al., 1996). Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5 how well each of six statements drawn from Boyer’s descriptions of a Community of Learning characterized the University Park Campus. A score of 1 meant the description did not fit at all; a score of 5 indicated it was a perfect fit. Codes 4 and 5 were combined for this analysis to mean the descriptions “fit” the campus community; codes 1, 2, and 3 were grouped as meaning the descriptions did not apply well to the campus. The specific items were as follows:

- 1) Penn State is an educationally purposeful community where faculty and students work together and share academic goals.
- 2) Penn State is an open community where freedom of expression is protected and civility is embraced.
- 3) Penn State is a just community where each person is honored and diversity is pursued.
- 4) Penn State is a disciplined community where obligations and behaviors are regulated for the good of the group.
- 5) Penn State is a caring community where service to others is encouraged and the well-being of each individual is important.
- 6) Penn State is a community whose history is remembered and whose traditions and rituals are celebrated.

Several months later, a mail survey of faculty members at University Park was carried out addressing

these same issues. The same questions concerning the extent to which Boyer’s descriptions of a Community of Learning accurately described the University Park campus were included. Questionnaires were sent via campus mail to a random sample of 1,072 of faculty who had taught during fall semester, 1995. Of these, 589 returned completed surveys – a 55% response rate.

In spring, 1997, mail surveys of both students and teachers at the 19 locations that now form the Commonwealth Campus were carried out (Willits, Seifried, & Higginson, 1998). A total of 993 students and 1028 teachers responded to these surveys. As with the University Park studies, respondents were asked to rate the “fit” of Boyer’s six characteristics of a Community of Learning to their specific campus locations.

More than 15 years after these first surveys, during spring semester 2011, a total of 7,500 randomly selected undergraduate students at University Park were contacted by e-mail and invited to participate in an online survey containing many of the same questions that had been included in the earlier studies. Of those students contacted, 1,837 completed the survey – a 25% response rate. Also during spring semester 2011, a listing of all instructors who had taught one or more courses at University Park during the fall semester 2010 were invited to participate in a similar online survey. Of the 3,953 instructors contacted, 1,537 did so – a 39% response rate. Both of these surveys asked the same six questions of faculty and students concerning their perceptions of the extent to which Boyer’s descriptions of a Campus Community of Learning “fit” the University Park campus (Willits et al., 2013a).

Using the same protocols, students and instructors at the nineteen Commonwealth Campus locations of Penn State were contacted and asked to complete an online survey with identical measures to that used at University Park Campus. A total of 1,566 students and 921 faculty members responded. The survey included identical questions concerning the extent to which respondents felt the attributes of a Community of Learning “fit” their particular campus (Willits et al., 2013b).

### Analysis

#### The Campus at University Park (1995-2011)

Students surveyed in 2011 at University Park were significantly more likely than their counterparts in 1995 to report the campus “fit” the description of a Community of Learning (Table 1). For every one of the six criteria suggested by Boyer as important in defining such a community – *educationally purposeful*, *open*, *just*, *disciplined*, *caring* and *celebrative* – the percentage of students giving ratings of 4 or 5 on the goodness of fit rating scale in 2011 was greater than

Table 1  
*Percentages of University Park Students and Faculty Who Felt the Characteristics of a Community of Learning “Fit” Their Campus in 1995 and 2011.*

Characteristic	1995		2011	
	Students (n=362)*	Faculty (n=589)	Students (n=1837)	Faculty (n=1537)
	%**			
Educationally purposeful	57	25	69	50
Open	53	40	78	66
Just	49	29	72	58
Disciplined	46	29	58	45
Caring	54	23	72	54
Celebrative	70	47	85	64

Note. \*Numbers of cases varies due to nonresponse to some items.

\*\*Percentage rating the “fit” as 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale.

had been the case in 1995. Moreover, these were not small shifts. In every case, the differences between comparable percentages in 1995 and 2011 were more than 10 percentage points, and in two cases the shift was more than 20 percentage points. Thus, the percentages of students in 1995 reporting that the campus was *open* in embracing civil expression of differing views increased from 53% to 78% between 1995 and 2011, and the percentages characterizing the campus as a *just* community where each person is honored and diversity is pursued rose from 49% to 72%. The percentage of students who perceived the campus as a *caring* community where individual well-being and service prevailed increased from 54% to 72%. Descriptions of the campus as *disciplined* with behavior and obligations regulated for the good of the group increased from 46% in 1995 to 58% in 2011. Somewhat lesser, but still significant shifts occurred for reporting the campus was *celebrative* of campus history and traditions, (70% to 85%) and *educationally purposeful* (57% to 69%).

The dramatic shifts in student perceptions of the University Park campus wane when compared to the changes in views of instructors there that occurred during the same period. Whereas at the time of the survey (in 1995) fewer than half of the faculty reported that any of the six characteristics of a Community of Learning “fit” the University Park situation, in 2011 these percentages had increased by 25-percentage points or more for four of the six items, with no increase of less than 15-percentage points for any item. Thus, while just 23% of the faculty surveyed in 1995 reported the description of a *caring* community “fit” the University Park campus, in 2011, that percentage had more than doubled to 54%. Similarly, the percentage reporting the campus was *educationally purposeful* and

*just* doubled in the same time period (25% to 50% and 28% to 56%, respectively). Shifts in regard to *openness* (40% to 66%), *disciplined* (29% to 45%), and *celebrative* (47% to 64%) were also sizable.

In both time periods, students at the University Park campus were more likely than faculty at that location to see their campus as *educationally purposeful*, *open*, *just*, *disciplined*, *caring*, and *celebrative*. Despite shifts in views across time, most of the student faculty differences remained intact in 2011. Two exceptions are worthy of note in that they suggest some convergence in the views of the perceptions of these two groups: the difference between student and faculty perceptions of the campus as an *educational purposeful* community declined from 32 percentage points in 1995 to only 19 percentage points in 2011, and the difference in student and faculty acceptance of the campus as a *caring* community declined from 31 percentage points in 1995 to only 18 percentage points in 2011.

Also, for both students and faculty in 2011, the element least identified as characteristic of the University Park campus community was that of *disciplined*, suggesting that a sizable percentage of these groups failed to identify the campus as one where obligations and behaviors are regulated for the good of the group. Half of the instructors and about 30% of the students failed to identify the campus as *educationally purposeful* in 2011.

### The Commonwealth Campus (1997-2012)

There were also significant shifts in the extent to which students enrolled in the Commonwealth Campuses reported their locations met the Community of Learning criteria (Table 2). As was true for the

Table 2  
*Percentages of Commonwealth Campus Students and Faculty Who Felt the Characteristics of a Community of Learning “Fit” Their Campus in 1997 and 2012.*

Characteristic	1997		2012	
	Students (n=993)*	Faculty (n=1028)	Students (n=1566)	Faculty (n=921)
	%**			
Educationally purposeful	55	48	81	67
Open	58	64	82	77
Just	53	54	80	75
Disciplined	50	42	71	64
Caring	53	53	80	72
Celebrative	44	38	73	58

Note. \*Numbers of cases varies due to nonresponse to some items.

\*\*Percentage rating the “fit” as 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale.

University Park students, the percentages of Commonwealth Campus students indicating their campus location was *educationally purposeful*, *open*, *just*, *disciplined*, *caring*, and *celebrative* increased across the 15-plus years covered by the study. All of these shifts were statistically significant and sizable, reflecting more than a 20-percentage point increase. The greatest changes were in regard to the characteristics of *celebrative* (44% to 73%), *caring* (53% to 80%), *just* (53% to 80%) and *educationally purposeful* (55% to 81%).

There were similar but only slightly less dramatic increases between 1997 and 2012 in the percentages of faculty members at the Commonwealth Campus sites who reported their campus “fit” the characteristics of a Community of Learning. In every case, the percentage increased by at least thirteen percentage points over the study period, and in three instances (*disciplined*, *just*, and *celebrative*) the increase was 20-percentage points or more.

In 1997, there were relatively small and inconsistent Commonwealth Campus student-faculty differences in the percentages reporting the presence of each of the elements of a Community of Learning. However, in the 2012 survey, students were consistently more likely than instructors to view their campuses positively in terms of these elements, with largest student-faculty percentage differences in regard to the elements of *educationally purposeful* (81% vs. 67%) and *celebrative* (73% vs. 58%). In 2012, the attributes of celebrative and disciplined were the least likely to be identified by students and faculty alike as characteristic of their campus communalities.

### An Engaged Community

The six characteristics initially defined by Boyer and included in the previous analysis described the *internal* characteristics of a Community of Learning. In many ways they suggest a campus as a special place remote from worldly or practical affairs where members strive for an integrated, supportive, and diverse environment in which they devote themselves to study, personal growth, and the advancement of knowledge. This “ivory tower” image has developed pejorative connotations in recent years. Writers have criticized universities for engaging in esoteric research, outmoded learning styles, and the teaching of “useless” information unrelated to day-to-day realities with little utility for the learner or for the larger society. This was clearly *not* Boyer’s vision for the university or college community. In other writings, Boyer underscored the importance of involvement in what he termed the “scholarship of application”—or “engagement,” as it is now called—in which scholarly understandings, principles, and analyses are brought to bear on issues and problems in the larger society (Boyer, 1990b). Such engagement represents a kind of “service,” but not simply in the sense of “doing good”. Rather:

To be considered scholarship, service activities must be tied directly to one’s special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of this professional activity. Such service is serious, demanding work, requiring the rigor—and the accountability—traditionally associated with research activities (Simpson, 2000, p. 9).

In the intervening years, support for the “engaged university” has exploded as educators, students, government officials, local leaders, and the public have sought the input of academic knowledge into public and private decision-making with an emphasis on “engagement and application” schooling, including service learning and internships, as a means of applying “text-book” materials to real-life situations (Kellogg Commission, 1999). This desire to have students engage in their local and global societies and apply the broad range of diverse knowledge that they have achieved through their academic career is significantly different from the narrowly defined focus on select majors and career placement.

By 2011, support for the idea that Communities of Learning should be “engaged communities” had become sufficiently widespread that the surveys of students at both University Park and the Commonwealth Campuses asked respondents to report the extent to which the following statement described their Penn State campus: “It is a community that is engaged in addressing issues in the larger society.” Again, responses ranged from “1,” meaning the description “does not fit at all,” to “5,” meaning it was a perfect fit. As with the previous items, codes of “4” and “5” were combined to mean the campus was perceived as “engaged.”

More than 7 of 10 students reported they felt their campus was an “engaged” community. Commonwealth Campus students were more likely (74%) than those from University Park (72%) to answer “4” or “5” on the scale. Instructors at the Commonwealth Campus (62%) were less likely than their students to report their campus was an “engaged” community. The question was not asked of University Park instructors.

Of course, these data present no information on *changes* in the perceived levels of community engagement across the 15 years included in the current study since comparative data from 1997 were not available. However, it is noteworthy that although the idea of “engagement” was not even a part of Boyer’s original formulation, many students reported that this term described their campuses today.

### Summary and Discussion

Based on these data, one conclusion seems clear: over the decade and a half covered by the current analysis, there have been consistent, clear, and measurable increases in the extent to which Penn State was viewed by both students and teachers as a Community of Learning. This was true for every one of the six principles described by Ernest Boyer (1990a) as the defining criteria for such a community (*educationally purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring and celebrative*) as reflected in the perceptions

of students and faculty at both the University Park campus and the Commonwealth Campuses. Not only did the percentages of respondents reporting that these principles “fit” their campuses increase over the years, but these shifts were generally large. By the final surveys in 2011-12, for virtually every item a majority of both students and faculty at the University Park and Commonwealth Campus locations reported that the principles that exemplified a Community of Learning described their campus.

Of course, these data deal only with the *perceptions* of random samples of students and instructors in the University community; there was no attempt to arrive at objective indicators of these phenomena. However, we would argue that the *perception* of “community” among participants is both an important indicator and component of the *existence* of a community. Put otherwise, if things are believed to be real, they are real in their consequences (Merton, 1995; Thomas & Thomas, 1928).

Why has this remarkable shift occurred? It seems likely that much has been fostered by purposive action on the part of the University. Early on, the administration under then President Graham Spanier sought means for humanizing the University, and a wide range of programs were developed to enhance the academic and social climate of the campuses. Included were efforts to reward excellence in teaching and innovation, active efforts to imbed application into teaching, and institutional funding for efforts designed to link scholarship with an active community of learning. As a result, significant increases in student and faculty recognition of the university as a community of learning were achieved. This was particularly true among faculty members at the commonwealth campuses of Penn State. This, in part, can help explain the massive increase in University Park faculty responses to the items studied. In the past their scores were the lowest, and in the most recent survey were on par with the other comparison groups.

At the same time, public concerns over the loss of community in the larger society may have precipitated efforts that directly or indirectly impacted campus life. Whatever the cause(s), the results of this analysis support the conclusion that remarkable increases have occurred in student and faculty acceptance of the university as exemplifying Communities of Learning. Moreover, the relatively high percentages of students and instructors who in 2011 identified their campuses as “engaged” suggest this may also have increased as an important component in campus communities.

Several caveats should be noted, however, lest we celebrate these changes too eagerly. Although in the latest survey a majority of the students and, except for a single instance, at least 50% of the faculty did report their campus “fit” the description of each of Boyer’s six

principles defining a Community of Learning, a sizable minority did not agree. Particularly troubling is the finding that half of the University Park and one third of the Commonwealth Campus faculty did *not* feel their campus was educationally purposeful. About three out of ten of the University Park and almost one in five of students in the Commonwealth Campus also failed to see their campus as educationally purposeful. Since it is this dimension that would seem to be fundamental to the primary teaching mission of the University, these figures seem disappointingly low, although the significant positive changes in these perceptions over the study period suggest that even these perceptions may become more favorable in the years ahead.

The extent to which the findings of this study can be generalized to other college or university settings is uncertain, but analysis of the Penn State case provides a glimpse into the possible relevance of Boyer's ideas today and to the changes that have occurred over the preceding 15 years. Additional research is needed to monitor changes in the extent to which these attributes are perceived as occurring in these and other campus communities now and in the future.

How relevant are Boyer's ideas concerning Communities of Learning as we look ahead, given the changing face of higher education? Dramatic changes in technology, changing enrollment patterns, and demographic shifts will significantly alter higher education in the future. Although Boyer could not envision the nature and extent of these changes, nevertheless his call for developing communities of learning which are educationally purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, celebrative, and engaged remains relevant. This study has highlighted the remarkable shift toward developing such a community that was brought about by planning and structurally reinforced efforts on the part of a university. The challenge for educators and administrators in the years ahead is to remain adaptive to creatively meeting the challenges of changing environments in higher education and to developing ways to foster the growth of learning communities that exemplify Boyer's principles of educationally purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring and celebrative, and engaged.

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