



Envisioning the Faculty for the Twenty-First Century: Moving to a Mission-Oriented and Learner-Centered Model

Kezar, Adrianna; Masey, Daniel, eds.
Rutgers University Press, 2016

Book Review

Tags: diversifying the faculty | faculty development | faculty identity

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Date Reviewed: November 30, -0001

What functions occupy your time as an academic? Are they equally respected, sensibly arranged, and fairly evaluated? Are they well-coordinated with the mission of your institution? Do they complement the functions your colleagues carry out? Do they all contribute to student learning? If you have ever wondered about such questions, you must read this book.

Adrianna Kezar and David Maxey, of the Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success, gathered a distinguished group of contributors to produce this volume on the future role of faculty in U.S. higher education. They start by pairing two concerns often considered separately despite their proven interconnection: the erosion in recent decades of the traditional faculty model (the full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty member), and student success. The unbundling of faculty roles, and the consequent re-distribution to assorted academic personnel, of curriculum development, course design, content delivery, assessment, advising, research, community engagement, and so forth—has negatively affected faculty-student interactions and therefore student learning and self-efficacy. Adjunct faculty members are not the problem. Even the disappearance of tenure is not the problem. The problem has been the random, reactive, and poorly conceived responses to market forces and technological revolutions in education.

The volume goes on to raise many other concerns that changes to the faculty have effected, including: an evolving understanding of academic freedom based less on individual rights and more on collective responsibility, the way that internationalization of higher education and a global academic workforce challenge assumptions about U.S. supremacy, the need to base

faculty evaluations on the success of the department as well as individual achievement, a shift in faculty development programs from mere technology training toward adult learning, and the pros and cons of customizing academic careers to support work-life balance. Contributors do not uncritically valorize the traditional faculty model; while they generally support the return to more full-time positions, they also recognize the need for flexibility and coordination in the design of faculty roles, alignment of those roles with institutional priorities, and collaboration rather than competition among communities of scholars. One specific innovation lifted up as noteworthy is the way medical schools have created multiple tracks (investigator, clinical-educator, clinical, research, and educator) that provide distinct but parallel career pathways for their faculty while simultaneously serving their institutional needs.

Though the book does not conclude with a fully envisioned alternative model for the 21st century, several points of consensus do emerge, especially around the need for collegiality, professionalism, responsibility for students, differentiation and diversification of roles, and more expansive definitions of research and scholarship.

This collaboration is a rare and refreshing example of one to which the contributions are evenly strong. Every chapter piqued my interest. Readers of this journal may especially appreciate the chapter on academic freedom because it is written by a religion scholar and has a familiar ring.

Readers new to the literature on developments in higher education might first want to read Ernest Boyer's 1990 *Scholarship Reconsidered*, referenced frequently by contributors. *Envisioning the Faculty for the 21st Century* will become an equally important and influential work.

Works Cited

Boyer, Ernest L., author. Drew Moser, Todd C. Ream, and John M. Braxton, editors. 2016 expanded edition. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

https://wabash.center/resources/book_reviews/envisioning-the-faculty-for-the-twenty-first-century-moving-to-a-mission-oriented-and-learner-centered-model/