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“Changing Roles, Changing Perceptions: Faculty in the American Research University”¹
Thomas G. Dyer
Professor Emeritus



When the symposium committee invited me to join you for lunch today, they said that they would like for me to talk about the changing roles of faculty members in research universities. Since I have spent large portions of my career in administrative roles, it may seem presumptuous, even audacious for me to speak to you as the committee has asked. But I defer, of course, to their wisdom and the always splendid judgment of such committees. Here goes.

In 1952, the University of Georgia issued a new handbook for members of the faculty. The handbook spoke of expectations that the university had of each faculty member. Here are a few examples:

1. All faculty members (and these are direct quotes) are expected to participate in Processions at Baccalaureate Sermons, Graduation Exercises, and other events where an Academic Procession is part of the program. Excuses from participation in such formal processions must be secured from the Office of the Dean of Faculties.
2. The University statutes require that no faculty member shall engage in any outside work or activity even though it does not interfere with his University engagements until he receives the approval of the Dean of Faculties.
3. Faculty members on a nine month basis who are to be away from the campus for any purpose . . . must report in advance to the office of the Dean of Faculties giving the dates that they are to be away.
4. Faculty members serve as chaperones for student social activities. . . . Chaperones should be present at the time authorized for an activity to begin and should not absent themselves until the authorized closing time. [Chaperones should] discourage disorderly conduct of any sort and see that University regulations are enforced. . . .

Each of these regulations is a window into a different era when faculty members had substantially less freedom and substantially less discretionary time than today. The **requirement** that faculty members attend convocations and graduation suggests that the University put a value on the maintenance of community through plural ceremonies and other

rites of initiation and passage for undergraduates. The regulations pertaining to faculty members taking on outside work speaks to the tight control that the institution maintained regarding extra employment. Consulting was virtually nonexistent at UGA in 1952.

The regulation concerning absences from campuses seems particularly archaic in an age when faculty members can routinely absent themselves from campus for extended periods by the careful planning of teaching responsibilities to be concentrated in a single semester. And, the extensive regulation(s) concerning chaperoning seem similarly quaint in an age when some faculty members may pass an entire career without contact with any undergraduate student activity – except, perhaps inadvertently, through the various saturnalian rites associated with the football season.

Collectively, the regulations speak to ensuring the loyalty of faculty members to the institution and to the high premium placed upon the maintenance of an academic community – firmly rooted in an undergraduate academic culture.

The massive change in faculty roles over the past fifty or sixty years is evident. So also are the similarities and differences in the ways in which faculty members spend their time. For many decades, how faculty in American colleges and universities spend their time has been an endless source of interest and fascination to trustees and policymakers, as well as to faculty members themselves. Stereotypes of lazy professors reach back to the universities of the Middle Ages and are nearly as old as academic life itself. Today, their persistence rests, in part, on the great freedom attached to being a professor, particularly in research-oriented universities where a great weight is placed on scholarly productivity.

The results of studies concerning how much faculty work are surprisingly consistent over at least the last sixty years. In 1942, an analysis at Ohio State University dealt with the public perception that faculty work was limited to the approximately ten hours per week that they spent in classroom instructional time. The study found the median workload to be 58.4 hours per week. Nearly all of the faculty spent time working on Saturdays and Sundays at a time when Ohio State likely conducted Saturday classes as did many American universities.²

In the past five decades, at least one hundred studies have been undertaken of faculty workloads. They conclude consistently that faculty members in research universities work about 55 to 57 hours per week or roughly the equivalent of seven eight-hour work days each week.³ Professors in research universities tend to work slightly more hours weekly than professors in other four-year institutions and considerably more than those in two-year colleges. They also spend more time, on average, *physically at their institutions* than faculty do at other types of colleges.⁴

Although overall workloads have remained relatively constant, it seems clear that faculty teaching loads, as measured by hours spent in the classroom, have declined steadily over the last sixty to eighty years. A report from the University of Michigan in 1924 declared that twenty classroom hours weekly should be considered the “basic norm” in determining individual teaching loads but provided for released time.⁵ In 1929, a survey of teaching loads in

colleges and universities in the North Central Association (of which Michigan was a member) revealed details of time commitments to the classroom. On average, professors across a variety of disciplines spent 13.1 hours per week in the classroom.⁶ At present, “normal” teaching loads as measured by classroom hours per week are less than half that, typically said to be six hours for tenure-line faculty members.

Critics point to a steady drift away from the classroom and associated involvements with students (particularly undergraduates) and a growth in faculty discretionary time (defined as “time for pursuing professional and personal goals”) that have collectively resulted in a “loosening of their institutional ties and responsibilities.”⁷ Faculty members will argue that the expectations, demands, and pressures placed upon them necessitate that they have “discretionary” time. In fact, however, few see such time as discretionary since assignments of time can specify what activity (usually research, public service, or administration) will occupy the time that the critics refer to as “discretionary.” Failure to be productive in nonteaching areas can be injurious to a career.

Increasingly, even inexorably, today’s universities require faculty to generate funding from outside. Faculty members in the sciences have long been familiar with the pressures of grant- and contract-getting. Gradually, over the past two decades or so, similar requirements are being felt elsewhere as the pressures for generation of external funds or enterprises spreads into those disciplines (like my own) where there has heretofore been a blissful unawareness of such things.

All of this coincides with a major reconfiguring of professorial roles at the macro-level. Higher education, it is frequently argued, is presently undergoing a massive shift as it becomes what Martin Finkelstein calls “an engine of the information-based, globalized economy.” Some higher education analysts, Finkelstein goes on, have adopted this general frame of reference and now study higher education as though it were a business or industry “indeed as the core business of the new economy” with powerful implications for the use of measures of “performance, accountability, value-added, and costs containment.”

Finkelstein (and others) point out that we are already seeing manifestations of the new paradigm in the reduction of the numbers of core (tenure-line) faculty, increasing numbers of part-time faculty, and in some cases the creation of specialized or segmented faculties whose work focuses on particular groups in the academy. College teaching, says Finkelstein, is “moving toward a contingent work force,” although he concedes that the full weight of this transformation will likely be felt with less force in the research universities where traditional staffing patterns will be more enduring. Some departments in the research universities, however, are already showing signs of becoming “collections of transients,” particularly in areas like languages, mathematics, and business.⁸

We have precious few narratives of the lives of faculty members in research universities or detailed, comprehensive descriptions of the work that they do. However, there are a few, and these provide valuable perspectives. One such narrative describes the multifarious duties and activities of a faculty member in a major research institution. For this professor, “teaching

obligations structure [her] workweek.” Each semester, she teaches two three-credit-hour courses containing eighty to one hundred students. She meets each class either two or three times per week, but a variety of other tasks support and supplement the classroom instructional time.

The details of this professor’s approach to teaching are themselves instructive. She constantly revises her notes, prepares supplemental materials, particularly on topics of difficulty to the students. She writes examinations and quizzes. She grades. And then she grades some more. There are three examinations, typically essays, in each of the classes each semester. In addition, her graduate students each write two take-home examinations that run to approximately twenty pages each. At the end of the previous semester she graded eighty research papers of ten pages each. Students who graduate from her university, she says, “must be effective writers.” She confers with students on a variety of topics useful to them. She writes letters of recommendation. She maintains a healthy e-mail correspondence with her students and, for good measure, directs undergraduate theses and meets regularly with the students who are writing the theses.

It is teaching, as she points out, that structures her workweek. So, in the spaces between the multiple tasks that make up “teaching,” she does the research that will keep her (and her students) intellectually fresh, add to the foundation of knowledge, and bring her the recognition of her peers. She, like most professors, has a keen appreciation for the ways in which scholarly inquiry sustains the life of the mind, but also realizes how her ability and experience in inquiring and writing make it much easier to impart those critical skills to her students. The “mutual engagement in the process of inquiry and discovery,” she says, “creates an arc of energy that connects teacher to student.”

She presents three or four scholarly papers per year at conferences; writes articles for scholarly journals at a pace of two per year; and competes with scholars both in the United States and abroad for placement of her articles in the best journals. In addition, she takes part in faculty governance by serving on an assortment of committees requiring more work (some of which involves extensive writing) and is a faculty advisor to a lively (and time-demanding) student literary society. She also speaks to other student groups and, at the request of the admissions office, gives welcoming speeches to first-year students. She’s busy. And incredibly disciplined.⁹

Detractors can argue that this professor’s deep involvement in her work and in the life of the university does not typify that of the vast majority of faculty members. But if the multifariousness of her activity is typical, it shows how intense and diverse the demands are on faculty time, even in an age of “reduced” teaching loads and “discretionary” time.

Some university presidents have a much different role on the changing roles of faculty. Frank H.T. Rhodes, former president of Cornell University, and James J. Duderstadt, former president of the University of Michigan, each perceives faculty in ways that fall far short of being complimentary. In fact, both level **searing criticism** at contemporary faculty members and both comment in general on a significant reorientation of faculty roles.

For Rhodes, excessive professionalism has resulted in a modern faculty with little allegiance to the university. Profitable consulting arrangements, lucrative positions on corporate boards, income from royalties and patents, “coveys of assistants . . . enviable research support, favorable salaries, popular books, successful videotapes, the international lecture circuit, superior working facilities,” and other perquisites have resulted in an entrepreneurial professoriate. Says, Rhodes:

Successful professors view themselves as favoring the university by their presence. It is their base, but scarcely their employer. Rather, they are entrepreneurs, paid a substantial retainer for their services, but free to exercise their judgment on what to teach and to study, how to do it, and even when to do it. Their allegiance is not to their institution, not to their college, not primarily to their students, but to their profession, their guild, their colleagues, most of them beyond the campus, and to their clients.¹⁰

Rhodes sees the relationship between faculty members and institutions as one-sided with the university providing “tenure, compensation, professional support, technical services, facilities, equipment, and the protection of academic freedom to the professoriate, while the reciprocal obligations of the faculty member are no where specified.” He proposes a professional code of conduct to which faculty would subscribe and which would establish in detail their obligations to their universities.¹¹

Duderstadt argues that large numbers of faculty members see their appointments “as simply another step up the faculty ladder,” and he agrees with Rhodes that their loyalties are primarily to their “disciplines and careers.” In addition, he believes that faculty are usually poorly informed about the university itself, because they are located in insular “almost feudal department structures, frequently with little interaction even with disciplinary neighbors, much less with students, faculty and staff across the university.” Today’s faculty member, Duderstadt notes with ample cynicism, is no longer linked to his across-campus colleagues by concerns about parking but “by the misinformation they receive about their university from the local newspaper.”¹²

These are dark views and to some extent, Rhodes’s and Duderstadt’s meditations on the faculty evoke the memory of a dozen or so volumes published in the 1980s and 1990s that offered severe, even strident criticism of the academy as a whole. Rhodes and Duderstadt’s views, however, cannot be so easily dismissed as can those of the ideologues who wrote some of the anti-university books of ten or fifteen years ago. Both are distinguished figures in American higher education, and both spent many years in the institutions that they served.

Unlike Rhodes, Duderstadt proposes no specific remedy but provides an important insight that helps us understand the dynamism of changing roles within research universities and how the construct of loyalty, collegiality, and academic citizenship operates within those institutions. (Remember the UGA Hand Book of 1952 and its focus on loyalty?). Duderstadt finds the locus of loyalty among the nonprofessorial *staff* of the university and invites us to consider the

continuity, stability, and allegiance that characterize the staff of a university who typically outnumber faculty members several times over. He notes that, as a group, “the staff” is nearly as difficult to define precisely as “the faculty,” but that it includes persons who work in a variety of areas in the institution running from health care to finance; from athletics to facilities. Duderstadt also observes that many staff persons have advanced degrees and “credentials every bit as extensive as faculty members,” and that the cultures that characterize faculty life and staff life inevitably become “somewhat blurred and confused.”¹³

However, there is no blurring when it comes to institutional loyalty. Staff members, Duderstadt writes, “are far more loyal to the university than students or faculty.” He regards students as “essentially tourists” and faculty members as having primary loyalties “to their disciplines and careers.” From this perspective, the faculty member is a transitory phenomenon, susceptible to offers from other institutions and inclined to move on.

Staff members, on the other hand are likely to remain for all of their careers at one institution where they “sustain the continuity, the corporate memory, and the momentum of the university.” Ironically, staff members “sometimes develop a far broader view of the university, its array of activities, and even its history, than do the relative short-timers among the faculty and students.”¹⁴

In effect, Duderstadt argues that staff members have, over time, accrued responsibilities and roles historically performed by faculty members who continue to see themselves as being the heart of the university but do not fully appreciate that the staff play “key roles” formerly filled by faculty. Although they may achieve greater freedoms than comparable persons in business and industry, staff members cannot expect the same degree of rewards and acknowledgment that faculty members expect and have certain career paths closed to them. “No staff member,” Duderstadt argues, “could ever aspire to be the CEO of a university.”¹⁵

Neither Duderstadt nor Rhodes directly defines “loyalty” as it pertains to the relationship between faculty and the university or, for that matter, loyalty as it applies to the relationships between presidents, provosts, and deans on the one hand and the university on the other. Presumably, academic citizenship and longtime associations with the institution are at the heart of the construct of loyalty as these two former presidents see it.

Loyalty, however, is a complex phenomenon. Faculty members (and for that matter, presidents, deans, and provosts) have multiple loyalties. Allegiances to department, discipline, colleagues, profession, and other loyalties compete with or are complemented by loyalty to the university. Faculty members are likely to rebel at the notion that they are expected to be loyal to the institution in ways that resemble, for example, national loyalty, and they clearly are not as sympathetic as they once were to the notion that it is their responsibility to maintain the culture and memory of the institution.

If Duderstadt and Rhodes primarily equate loyalty with long-term service to the institution and the absence of loyalty with an aggressive professionalism on the part of the faculty, then

they must assign responsibility for the absence of loyalty in part to the ceaseless quest for advantage among American research universities and the vigorous recruitment of faculty by competitor institutions. Perhaps they should also take into account the behavior of presidents and provosts who jump from one institution to another, a venerable tradition, it would seem, if one accepts the research of the sociologist Clyde Barrow who has shown that presidential loyalties were redefined at least eighty years ago away from individual universities toward economic concerns and external prestige.¹⁶ While loyalty is complex, it nonetheless constitutes a vital part in the process through which universities maintain their culture and identity, key aspects for both educational mission and sustenance of a sense of community.¹⁷

One president has commented on the seriousness of the loss of institutional **memory** and **tradition**, and has warned that such a loss produces institutions susceptible to becoming “mindless bureaucracies.”¹⁸ Professors and administrators alike may fail to see that the drift toward bureaucratic or corporate-like behavior may be partly accounted to the diminution or disappearance altogether of the academical side of institutional culture, which in turn may be attributed to the diminution of long-term loyalties to the institution, both faculty and administrative.

When responsibility for maintenance of academic traditions, ceremonies, and other practices that create and maintain community are passed by default to persons who are not members of the faculty, it contributes to the ascendancy or even dominance of other institutional values like those associated with intercollegiate athletics. As academic traditions wither, different cultures and traditions can completely displace older forms of institutional identity. The more transitory that faculties and senior administrators become, the more they leave the preserving and the perpetuating of institutional traditions in the hands of others inside and outside the institution.

Thus, the changing roles of professors, are symptomatic of a much more extensive and profound change in the nature of the research universities themselves as they take further steps in the century-long progression toward becoming enterprise institutions. In short, many of the hallmarks of the university as an institution in service to society, which prizes above all else the exchange of ideas and the creation of original scholarship, may be giving way before the onslaught of a new competitive order, the central values and practices of which descend directly from economic life and the capitalist spirit of neo-liberalism than from the medieval institutions of Europe.

Large research universities that have been able to maintain their academic cultures have done so through conscious action of administrators, the deep involvement of faculty members in undergraduate life (like the faculty member profiled earlier) and the laudable participation of core faculty in the life and traditions of the university – all in addition to the vital roles played by staff in the transmission of institutional culture.

In the end, however, if universities maintain strong academic cultures and traditions, it will be because their faculties come to value those things and put aside cynicism about the ways in which academic communities bind themselves. I am fully aware of the ways in which some of

our colleagues (like those cited by Duderstadt and Rhodes) advance themselves through manipulation of the system and thereby create additional work for those who are fully committed to the life of the mind and the responsibilities of collegiality.

I take heart from the countless members of the faculty of this university whose devotion to the institution and its students is its most valuable resource. In an era of swirling change, that is a constant that must and will be preserved.

NOTES

1. These remarks are based in part on Thomas G. Dyer, "Administrators and Faculty in the American Research University: Changing Roles, Changing Perceptions," unpublished paper, March 2004, all rights reserved.
2. W.W. Charters, "How Much Do Professors Work?" *Journal of Higher Education* 13 (June 1942), 298-301.
3. James Fairweather, *Faculty Work and Public Trust Restoring the Value of Teaching and Public Service in American Academic Life* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996), 25. The most extensive detailed quantitative study of faculty work and workloads is Robert T. Blackburn and Janet H. Lawrence, *Faculty at Work Motivation, Expectation, Satisfaction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). Also see Harold E. Yuker, *Faculty Workload: Research, Theory, and Interpretation*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 10, 1984.
4. Henry L. Allen, "Faculty Workload and Productivity in the 1990s: Preliminary Findings," *The NEA 1996 Almanac of Higher Education* (Washington, D.C.: NEA Communications Services, 1996), 25.
5. C. O. Davis, "The Teaching Load in a University," *School and Society* 19 (1924), 556-58.
6. Arthur L. Foley, "Report of Committee on Teaching Load in Colleges," *North Central Association Quarterly* 4 (1929), 250-57.
7. Quoted in William F. Massy and Robert Zemsky, "Faculty Discretionary Time: Departments and the 'Academic Ratchet,'" *Journal of Higher Education* 65 (January-February 1994), 21.
8. Martin Finkelstein, "The Morphing of the American Academic Profession," *Liberal Education* (Fall 2003), 6-15.
9. S. Lindquist, University of Georgia, 2003. By courtesy of Professor Lindquist.
10. Frank H. T. Rhodes, *The Creation of the Future the Role of the American University* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 36.
11. *Ibid.*, 221.
12. James J. Duderstadt, *A University for the 21st Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 159-160.
13. *Ibid.*, 160.
14. *Ibid.*, 161.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Clyde W. Barrow, *Universities and the Capitalist State Corporate Liberalism and the Reconstruction of American Higher Education, 1894-1928* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) 78-79.

17. The preceding discussion on loyalty is based upon a variety of sources drawn from my own work on the subject. For a particularly cogent treatment of loyalty as a concept, see George P. Fletcher, *Loyalty: an Essay on the Morality of Relationships* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1993). For s case study of the nature of loyalty, see Thomas G. Dyer, *Secret Yankees: the Union Circle in Confederate Atlanta* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
 18. William Troutt, “The Everyday Challenges of the Storyteller,” *The Presidency* (Fall 2002), 35.
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