

“The Role of Faculty in the Common Enterprise University “

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It is an honor for me to be asked to visit one of North America’s great centers of research and learning, a university which (like NYU) embraces its location as part of its essence and celebrates conversations across culture and traditional boundaries. I thank Vice Chancellor Gilles Patry and all at the University of Ottawa who have reached south to invite me to offer some ideas on the nature of what it is that occupies those of us who have been called to the vocation of education.

A year ago, in my installation address as President of New York University, I began to articulate a vision of what I called a common enterprise university. Today I offer an elaboration of that general notion, focused on the role of faculty in such a university, seen primarily from the perspective of large urban research universities like NYU or the University of Ottawa.

Preface

Begin with the undeniable reality of the powerful forces – good and bad - that are reshaping our society, our times and inevitably our universities. What we confront is not just

change, but hyperchange – and most importantly, hyperchange in the very province in which universities live and operate, the domain of knowledge and of ideas. Today universities confront the collapse of traditional boundaries – in disciplines, in time, in space, and in culture.

Such hyperchange compels dramatic adaptation within higher education, rooted in serious reflection on the nature of who we are, what we do and how we do it. Thus, research universities – those universities which operate at the frontier of knowledge – are at a critical threshold, and I believe that the years ahead will see a paradigm shift in our understanding of their nature and operation

Each university will have its own version of change, and each successful university will shape its future through an explicit articulation of mission. On this view, universities are in a race, not with each other, but with their own distinct vision and ideals, and are called to apply to their study of institutional self the same principles of continuous, rigorous examination and inquiry that guide academic research and dialogue.

The Research University in Ideal Form

Viewed properly, the research university provides the broadest, deepest and most immediate forum for conversation and criticism. It both observes and enforces the established norms of the disciplines and is a rebuke to intellectual silos, in its essence insisting on the widest and most rigorous exploration and testing of ideas. So, for example, the disciplines of philosophy, linguistics and psychology were seed ground for cognitive science, only to find

themselves transformed in turn by it. This is not unusual; indeed, the general lesson is that when disciplines engage seriously with each other, their influence upon each other typically is reciprocal and the benefits mutual.

But there is something more that characterizes and justifies the research university – an explicit connection of the great researchers within our universities to students at all levels. The students who choose to study at our research universities expect to be engaged in a field, in a frame of mind, in a spirit of inquiry and in the excitement of the creative endeavor. And it is this characteristic of the research university which justifies the presence of students, and the concomitant support of the research enterprise which their tuition provides.

The Reality of Today's Research University

But today the high station enjoyed by research universities also can be a source of complacency. Our great universities are so successful, so in demand, and have been for so long, that frankly they are tempted to presume their own worth and, in a quite remarkable way, sometimes fall into a kind of unreflective definition of excellence, largely autobiographical, that simply reifies their view of themselves.

Consequently, a disconnect often exists between the ideal and the reality of the research university – one that is sufficiently widespread to engage our attention. It manifests itself, for example, in the tendency even at the finest research universities to entrust undergraduate teaching to part time faculty. Today, at private research universities in the United States, at least

one out of every three classes is taught by part time faculty or graduate students. And this reality has been accompanied by a reduction of the commitment of many senior faculty to teaching.

This is quite troubling, for to be attractive to students, the research university must ensure the connection between learning and research which is its justification. We must take care to avoid a set of incentives which create and reinforce a dichotomy in which faculty are not encouraged to view the teaching enterprise – or at least undergraduate teaching – as a natural concomitant of the research enterprise. We must be careful lest research come to be seen as the privilege and teaching undergraduates as a painful chore.

Toward a Common Enterprise University

The conventional wisdom among the public, encouraged by a set of popular books written largely by ideologues outside the university and with relatively little experience of it, is that professors in research universities are essentially under-worked, over-indulged and primarily productive of solipsistic tracts. The data are quite to the contrary. Notwithstanding the fact that work of the mind is extremely taxing and difficult to sustain over long periods of times, and thus not susceptible to clock-punching, there is hard evidence that professors in higher education generally work on average 50 hours a week. And in research universities the number rises to 60 hours a week.

Nonetheless, there are examples in elite universities of faculty who view themselves simply as independent contractors, and there are too many forces at work, both inside and

outside the research university, that press in the direction of self-indulgent autonomy and little sense of institutional loyalty.

We should not underestimate the forces that encourage the independent contractor model. Thus, for example, as our celebrity society has come increasingly to influence the academy, the economy of rewards and recognition tends to push faculty members to seek compensation and satisfaction outside their university, and to consider the university as honored by their affiliation. To such faculty, tenure may be no more than a retainer, the university merely one of many clients.

Contributing to this attitude is a phenomenon that is otherwise powerfully positive: the acceleration through the internet and the communications revolution of a disciplinary community characterized by a continuing conversation that is unconfined by the boundaries of institution, space or time. The result is that scholars may come to regard their academic specialization and not their academic institution as their primary allegiance. This phenomenon could accelerate even further as now unimagined technological advances offer faculty more absorbing and more meaningful membership in virtual academic communities that literally can span the globe.

In my view, the challenge is not to discourage faculty loyalty to disciplines, but to produce appreciation that one of the best tools for inquiry and insight is examining intellectual formulations, not just with colleagues in the same discipline, wherever they are located, but with colleagues in the same discipline and in other disciplines within a scholar's own university. Put

another way, there is a richness at home, sometimes discovered quite serendipitously and without the affirmative act of seeking conversation, that can be invaluable to the scholar.

In the university I envision, faculty will be present – not just on the campus, but of it. They will welcome and engage with colleagues of differing views and expertise. They will be even more available to mentor and advise students – and to continue the classroom conversation outside of class. And in doing so, they will dedicate their time and energy not only to their graduate students, but also to undergraduates. In all this and more, they will internalize the collective interest as part of their own interests. The notion of the common enterprise university is grounded in part in the rightness of collective faculty responsibility and ownership.

There is, however, a utilitarian ground for the common enterprise university. The harsh economic realities of our time cannot be denied. And this is not a short term problem. In the United States, and the Western world generally, the gulf between public esteem for higher education and public willingness to pay for it is wide and growing wider as public finances come under increasing pressure. At the same time, higher education faces the increased costs of hiring the best faculty, stocking libraries with an expanding range of more expensive books and journals, obtaining and sustaining the latest facilities in technology and the sciences. The explosion of new academic fields and curricular areas, from human genetics to cognitive sciences, yields great societal and academic benefits, but here, too, the costs can rise. And, in traditional fields as well as new ones, as Max Planck observed, each new advance in knowledge costs more than the one before. It is not only true that first come the easier questions, then the

harder ones; it is concomitantly true that first come the less expensive questions and then the more expensive ones.

How then will we generate the resources to fulfill our mission? The answer again is found in the move to common enterprise with its emphasis on faculty engagement in the setting of priorities as well as faculty ownership of the decisions made and in all parts of the university, led by the faculty, a willingness occasionally to sacrifice for the collective good.

The Responsibilities of the Common Enterprise Faculty

In short, the argument for a common enterprise faculty flows, at several levels, from enlightened self-interest. But, beyond that, the common enterprise university will demand that faculty have deep in their souls an inclination to build community – a spirit that will display itself in different ways at different moments. This, for example, may involve a reversal of conventional assumptions about seniority. The key is to understand that, with regard to institutional direction, senior faculty, even as they exercise authority, must view themselves as standing not just at a shaping point but at a listening point. In short, the generation in power must accept that one of their most crucial roles is to hear and heed the voices of the next generation of leaders.

I recognize that this strategy for institutional continuity and organic, consensual evolution may not win ready acceptance from some who have climbed to the pinnacle. The hyperchange environment of our day often will produce phenomena which will be seen more clearly by

scholars who are younger in years or experience. So the common enterprise university must resist a hierarchy that suppresses younger faculty and makes them wait their turn. Instead, such universities – in an iterative and progressive process – must foster an empowering inter-generational relationship across its faculty.

The Attractiveness to Faculty of the Common Enterprise Model

But now we must ask: if a university demands so much of faculty will it compromise its ability to secure the talent it seeks? The answer, based on my experience, although perhaps counterintuitive, is that creating such a social contract of obligation will make the common enterprise university irresistibly attractive to some of the finest scholars – because a good number of those who are drawn to the life of the mind derive joy not so much from material reward – although those rewards must be sufficient – but from a stronger sense of vocation. Many of the best, although concededly not all, are attracted powerfully and primarily to the satisfactions of unfettered inquiry, the serious and at times even playful exchange of ideas. And, they are likely to value the return that flows to them from building a stronger university, one committed to excellence and centered in a vibrant intellectual community.

The Common Enterprise Faculty in Action

The common enterprise university I envision, animated as it is by a desire of each member of the faculty orchestra to produce (in cooperation with other instrumentalists) a

symphony of discovery and learning, will witness the development of new kinds of players, with each addition enhancing the overall product in some way.

Of course, every faculty member – from the most senior world-renowned scholar to the most junior adjunct – must embrace the importance of integrating knowledge creation with knowledge transmission and understand their place in the process. The principal responsibility for this integration lies with the tenured faculty, who have been chosen for their dual capacities in research and teaching, in effect making them the primary incarnation of the core purpose of the research university.

While I am unwilling at this stage to subscribe to a single formula for deployment, I am certain that the research faculty at our great universities must accept that undergraduate teaching is a vital part of their vocation. This is not to say that every tenured professor must teach undergraduates every semester. Our aim must be a moving of the dial, a reweighing of the balance, so every student will have contact not only with those who write the textbooks used in the classroom, but also with those who are forging the ideas that will inform the next generation of those books. For the moment, I offer this as a possible benchmark: that even in the first year students will enroll in more than one class with an actively engaged leader in the field – and by senior year a majority of a student's courses ought to be taught by such professors.

My experience at NYU leads me to be optimistic about the willingness of even august academics to commit themselves to this. Some of our leading researchers, senior and junior alike, find it extremely rewarding to teach large introductory courses, ranging from economics to

German history. And every one of NYU's University Professors has agreed – and in the future will be expected – to teach a Freshman Seminar. For twelve years, I myself have done so – first, as Dean of the Law School and now as President of the University.

The tenured faculty is only part of the story, however. As important as they are and always will be, the tenured faculty increasingly will comprise only a segment – albeit the core segment – of the research university. Notwithstanding that every course, introductory or advanced, is an integral component of the educational mission of the university, the tenured faculty do not do all the teaching in the research university today, and they should not do it in the research university of tomorrow. Thus, at every university, new forms of faculty, many of whom are on full-time or even multi-year contracts, have multiplied – with the effect that important parts of the curriculum at today's universities are entrusted to faculty who are neither tenured nor on the tenured track.

As this important phenomenon has developed, however, too little (if any) thought has been given to the definition, role, and rewards of the array of faculty who all carry significant responsibilities in the teaching enterprise. Even less attention has been paid to connecting the deployment of those faculty to the ideal of the research university. What results is a kind of unexamined, often accidental and incidental evolution of faculty functions, which has led to the existence of a host of actors inside the research university whose presence may be critical, but who are frequently underappreciated and undervalued.

I will not pause here to review the taxonomy of titles that have blossomed in the research university – or to enumerate the variety of privileges, rights, and worth attendant to each. Suffice it to say that at most research universities there are scores of such titles, and they have sprung up ad hoc. This in turn has generated increasingly stark divisions and valuations among segments of the faculty, with too many feeling they are second or third class citizens.

One explanation frequently offered for the proliferation of faculty forms is financial. While financial pressures are real on every campus, I will contend that new forms of faculty ought to exist quite apart from such considerations, because they bring value to the academic enterprise and indeed for some roles, bring a unique value which tenured faculty could not bring.

Today I propose to discuss three broad categories of faculty, by and large outside the tenure system. I will give each of these categories a name; I emphasize, however, that any connection between the name that I offer and the use of a similar term in the taxonomy of titles now existing in any university is purely coincidental - and I refuse to be limited in my exposition by any assumptions arising from the status quo.

First I will discuss what I call the teaching professor – a category which will evoke existing forms of faculty on many campuses, but which adds a new dimension to them. Next is what I call the global professor, and then finally the adjunct or part time professor. These three categories do not exhaust all of the categories outside of the tenured faculty - for example, emeriti faculty, visiting faculty, or faculty fellows. The three categories I treat are sufficient, however, to capture the principles of faculty deployment I mean to advance here.

The Teaching Professor

I define the ideal of the teaching professor as someone chosen through a rigorous academic review process to join the faculty because he or she has been adjudged to be capable of conveying the most advanced stage of a discipline and of appreciating the creative side of the venture, while possessing a particular ability in knowledge transmission. The teaching professor causes students to think, to reason, to question and ask the right questions, to push beyond conventional assumptions, and to reach higher than they might have reached on their own; the teaching professor will instill in students a desire to understand the subject and to see the beauty of linking that subject to others. The teaching professor will dedicate a full professional life to the university as an active participant in the institution and a premier participant in the education of students. The teaching professor will not be given the lifetime position we associate with tenure, but the possibility of remaining with the institution for a whole professional career will be very real.

It will be my claim that teaching professors will be and ought to be key players in the symphony – in other words, as I have said before, that even in a world unrestrained by considerations of time and resources, the tenured faculty is not best suited to cover every course.

The Global Professor

This is also true of a relatively new but increasingly important category of faculty, the global professor. By this I mean a distinguished academic from outside the United States and Canada, who, if not willing to move here permanently, is willing on a long term continuing basis to commit a portion of the year – two or three months – to the research university. Global professors engage in collaborative research with others on the faculty, teach courses on a compressed schedule, and make themselves available to the university’s students throughout the year – when students study abroad or through cyberspace.

Global faculty add perspective and dimension – both inside disciplines, which may manifest themselves differently in different cultural contexts, and in a more general sense, because they bring their version of reality and the richness of their distinct values into the wider university conversation. As the pace of globalization accelerates and the value of integrating cultural perspectives other than our own is accepted in disciplines or professions that have not already embraced it, the university will enlist an increasing number of global professors.

The Adjunct Faculty

At the same time, the common enterprise university will value and valorize adjunct faculty who truly can make distinctive contributions. Do not confuse this category with present meanings of the term. In my lexicon, an adjunct professor is someone selected because he or she, while forswearing a full time academic life, comes into the classroom as an exemplar of the

application of knowledge creation in the world outside the gates. His or her commitment to the university will be less intense, since it is a part time commitment in both directions.

Consider the advantage of such adjuncts at a university, like Ottawa or NYU, which is blessed by location and is able to draw on the unparalleled pool of talent in a capital city. To bring that breadth of experience and expertise to our students is not an expedient measure; it adds another layer of richness and depth to a liberal education.

Adjuncts can offer students exposure to knowledge, experience, and insight from creative and professional careers that have changed society and even the very disciplines we teach and study. A Spike Lee can be an extraordinary gift to film students. And what law student would not want to learn from someone like Marty Lipton, who has changed the face of corporate law?

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that universities should invite a response by faculty to a wonderful vocation, one that adds another requirement of our traditional criteria for selecting faculty. The faculty of the university I envision will display excellence in scholarship and teaching, but they also will manifest a dedication to common enterprise. Some potential faculty may be allergic to this ideal; but for many, the very demand will appeal to their higher and more aspirational conception of themselves, will raise the standard of their ambitions and will affect every aspect of what they do. For them the mutual obligations of the social compact will be a positive and even irresistibly powerful magnet.

In the end, each institution will find its own path. But I am convinced that the common enterprise university will be one of the most exciting developments of our transformed and transformative era. We, in our generation of university leadership, have been given the challenge and the opportunity of literally recreating higher education. I look forward to the continuing dialogue ahead, the work to be done, and the achievements within our grasp.