

The Learning College: Displaying our values.

The teaching and learning climate is the visible product of a particular institution's invisible values. What faculty, administrators, board members, and staff truly believe about students and their abilities to learn, and about teachers and their abilities to teach, is reflected in the climate of teaching and learning. It is a case of yin and yang in which values influence climate, and climate, in turn, influences values. The values and climate are made most visible in the written policies and statements, practices, and related behaviors of the stakeholders in the institutions.

*-O' Banion, T. (1994) Teaching and Learning in the Community College.
Washington, D.C: AACC.*

**A Workshop of the
Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
Parkland College**

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A synthesis of the literature.

The “learning paradigm” is simply part of a broader transformation in society. A benchmark for this transformation was the 1990 publication of Peter Senge’s *The Fifth Discipline*. Senge stated that “A Learning Organization is a place where people continually expand their capacity to create its future, where adaptive learning is joined by generative learning” (p. 14). In Senge’s conception of an organization, there are five areas of organizational and personal mastery:

Mental models. Continually reflecting on, clarifying, and improving our internal pictures of the world and noticing how they shape our actions and decisions.

Shared visions. Building group commitment by developing shared images of the future we seek to create and the principles and guiding practices by which we expect to get there.

Team learning. Transforming conversational and collective thinking skills so that groups can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of the individual members’ talents.

Systems thinking. Learning a new way of thinking about, describing, and understanding the forces and interrelationships that shape the behavior of systems, to see how to change the systems, to see how to change systems effectively, and to act in tune with the larger natural and economic processes.

Alfred and Carter (2002) have conceptualized the Experience College. Such a place, they say, should include the following attributes:

- Evaluation: assess individual students.
- Relationship building.
- Design teams that include both internal and external participants.
- Listening.
- A culture of accountability.

- A culture of innovation with acceptance of failure to encourage success.
- High standards and expectations. Developmental, not punitive, but with sunset provisions (We'll give you lots of chances and support, but at some point, it may be time to move on.)
- Alignment with values.
- Civility.
- The guest is at the center of design. Alternatives. Flexibility.

The Experience College, like the Organizational Learning proposed by Senge, comes from business models that have been adopted in the education sector. Another conceptualization of the future educational organizations comes from the technology community. Richard Katz from Educause states that "...a number of leading institutions herald the emergence of the *information or knowledge-based organization*. The information-based organization is a metaphor that describes a communication information systems infrastructure...that recognizes individual users and tailors accessible information and services to the needs, interests, and authorities of each individual" (Katz, R., Source Unknown, emphasis in the original).

The movement from teaching to learning can be traced to Robert Barr and John Tagg who published "From teaching to learning- a new paradigm for undergraduate education" in *Change* magazine in 1995. Barr and Tagg lamented the "design flaw" in the traditional model of education- one in which lecture and the dispensing of content is primary. Instead, they argue, we must refocus our goals on what our students are learning. This refocusing should pervade the organization- from its Mission and Purposes, where the institution should be taking responsibility for student learning, to teaching-learning structures- where collaboration, formative assessment, and time-free learning are valued. The instruction-centered classroom, they state, is "atomistic" and values discrete units of time and fixed means of instruction. The learner-centered classroom should use rigorous assessment of outcomes to fix the results instead. And if the results come in the first week- the student has met the goal. "In the Learning Paradigm, then, a college degree would represent not time spent and credit hours dutifully accumulated, but would certify that the student had demonstrably attained specific knowledge and skills...[C]olleges would move away from educational atomism and move toward treating holistically the knowledge and skills required for the degree" (Barr & Tagg, 1995, pg. 18).

About the same time that Barr and Tagg were formulating their paradigm shift, Terry O'Banion & Associates were editing a book on teaching and learning in the community college (O'Banion & Associates, 1994). The book accentuates the need for policy and leadership to focus on creating an environment in which teaching and learning can flourish. Particular emphasis is placed on the need for college-wide and classroom assessment of outcomes and the need for faculty to become scholars of learning. The book focuses heavily on systems and espouses transformation of faculty through Centers for Excellence and transformation of institutions through a college-wide audit of teaching and learning.

In 1997, O'Banion & Associates' work combined with the paradigm shift of Barr and Tagg in *The Learning College for the 21st Century* (O'Banion, T.,, 1997). The shift to learning, at least, in the literature was complete.

Why do we need to be learning colleges?

Currently, our institutions are not up to the challenge of educating our citizens. There are a number of limits we place on ourselves in the traditional conception of education institutions (See Figure 1).

While we all are forces for resistance, we must become learning colleges in order to survive the pressures of economic, demographic, technological, and competitive change in today's society.

Figure 1: Traditional limits on education (O'Banion, 1997, page 10)

<p>Time-bound</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class hours • Semester course • School year 	<p>Efficiency bound</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linear, sequential • FTEs • Credits/grades
<p>Place bound</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus • Classroom • Library 	<p>Role bound</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert • Lecture • Sole judge

How do we become a learning college?

“The Six Principles”

1. Create substantive change in individual learners.
2. Engage everyone as full partners in the learning process with the learner assuming responsibility for their own learning.
3. Create and offer many options for learning.
4. Assist learners in forming collaborations.
5. Define the role of the “faculty” (learning facilitators) by the needs of the learner.
6. Document expanded learning.

Figure 2: Roles for staff and faculty (O’Banion, 1997, p. 58)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and facilitate enrollment • Assess student needs • Encourage participation and attendance. • Design learning experiences • Locate resources • Provide technical assistance • Provide content expertise • Develop feedback mechanisms • Lecture • Lead discussions • Coordinate field trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange work based and service learning • Nurture community and relationship • Create connections • Guide, tutor, coach • Create standards and outcomes • Conduct research • Maintain an attractive environment • Coordinate systems • Provide vision • Award credentials
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What does a learner-centered classroom look like?

Seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education

1. encourage student-faculty contact
2. encourage cooperation among students.
3. encourage active learning.
4. give prompt feedback.
5. emphasize time on task.
6. communicate high expectations.
7. respect diverse talents and ways of knowing (Chickering and Gamson, 1987).

Constructivism v. Objectivism

“Constructivists create real problems for real environments (contextual learning), and learners examine, analyze, and create to solve these problems and make meaning for themselves. Knowledge is ‘constructed’ by each learner in terms of his or her own perceptions of the world, the learner’s mental models....Two goals of pedagogy in the constructivist’s view are to facilitate the learner’s in-depth examination of knowledge and to develop multiple perspectives” (O’Banion, 1997, p. 83).

Pedagogy

A learning college will incorporate Gardner’s seven ways of knowing, learning styles such as the Kolb model, feminist pedagogy (Gilligan, *Women’s ways of knowing*), brain-based learning and intercultural models such as Guild’s research on the way learners from different cultural backgrounds learn (See Figure 3) (Guild, 1994).

Figure 3: Generalizations of preferred learning styles as a function of cultural background (Guild, 1994).

Mexican Americans	Personal relationship, broad concepts
African American	Oral experience, physical activity, collaboration
Native Americans	Imagery, reflective thinking
Euro Americans	Independence, analytic thinking, objectivity

Bogg's (2000) describes four "tents" that the educational organization must raise:

1. The mission is student learning, not instruction.
2. Institutions must accept responsibility for student outcomes, not just access.
3. Supporting and promoting student learning is everyone's job- not just the teachers. While the student still has responsibility, everyone has a stake.
4. Evaluation of institutions should be based on student outcomes. Input, endowment, library holdings, etc is not appropriate.

Why at the community college? (Boggs, 2000)

"Universities identify the students who need their help the most and exclude them." John Roueche

1. Greater inherent focus on students
2. Greater freedom to innovate.
3. Concern for retention.

What are the impacts?

What does this mean for the institution? (Boggs, 2000)

Institutional outcomes

1. Institutions must use academic assessment.
2. Structural changes (Wingspread group on HE)
3. Revise bureaucratic processes to facilitate learning.
4. Planning and decision making should focus on what happens to students.
5. Evaluation of programs will need to change to focus on what students learn.
6. We must find ways to break out of "bordered" conceptions of our departments, support, etc.
7. Degrees and certificates should be based on demonstrated knowledge, skills, and outcomes not credits.
8. Changing how financial aid is disbursed.

Staff Impact

1. Unity of purpose.
2. Better identification with college mission.

3. More emphasis on teamwork.

Student Impact

1. Students retain prime responsibility.
 - a. Many don't know the basics-help them acclimate.
2. Great collaboration and cooperative.
3. More use of college support services. Students who use them do well.
4. Technology use.
 - a. Success comes from time with instructor & time with students, technology can help.
 - b. Increased flexibility.
5. Learning communities.
6. Service learning.

Student Learning

The learning college movement does not say that lectures, writing assignments, labs, and other traditional instructional uses are bad, but passive techniques alone do not work.

- Constructivism is needed (MRI has shown activity to increase when the technique is used.)
- Learning styles
- Involvement in disciplines
- Group learning (Treisman, 1985)- taught calculus, observed successful group (Asians) studied in groups-recreated it with success
- Meta-cognitive skill building

Faculty Impact

1. Design learning environments.
2. Measure outcomes
3. Connect students to one another and support services.
4. Guide students to sources of information/Information evaluation & citation.
5. Treat teaching as a scholarly activity (Boyer *Scholarship Reconsidered*)

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Other Resources:

Creating a Learning College (PBS) <http://www.pbs.org/als/revolution/index.html>

The Learning College Project <http://www.league.org/league/projects/lcp/index.htm>

Reflective Questions for Learning College Workshop.

Section 1: First Questions

What kind of society do we want our children and grandchildren to live in?

Questions taken from Howard Bowen, "The State of the Nation and the Agenda for Higher Education." San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982.

Section 2: Taking Values Seriously

What steps will we take to assure that next year's entering students will graduate as individuals of character more sensitive to the needs of community, more competent to contribute to society, more civil in their habits of thought, speech, and action?

Section 3: Putting Learning First

How do we encourage and assist students to develop the basic values required for learning, e.g., self-discipline, perseverance, responsibility, hard work, intellectual openness?

In what ways are we assessing learning to diagnose needs and accomplishments? How could we improve feedback to students and faculty on student performance in order to enhance both teaching and learning?

In what ways are we applying what is known about learning to the teaching practices of our faculty? How do our pedagogical approaches enhance learning, and where do they fall short?

How do we support faculty initiatives to improve learning and teaching? In particular, is our faculty well grounded in the available research concerning adult learning? If not, what will we do to improve our record?

Section 4: Creating a Nation of Learners

In what ways do we work with K-12 systems to enlarge our understanding of their difficulties, encourage teachers and administrators to see us as resources, and enlarge our own competences? In what ways have we relegated this effort to our school of education? How have we tried to involve the entire campus?

How is our campus working with local schools and other colleges and universities to bring teaching and learning to state-of-the-art standards from kindergarten through the undergraduate years? What more can we do?

Information taken from Appendix A of *An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education*, a report from the Wingspread Group on Higher Education.

Reflective Questions for Learning College Workshop.

Section 1: First Questions

How can we best shape our institution to nurture those kinds of people and that kind of society?

Questions taken from Howard Bowen, "The State of the Nation and the Agenda for Higher Education." San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982.

Section 2: Taking Values Seriously

In what ways does our institution model the values and skills expected in our community? Where and how are we falling short?

In what ways does our institution and its educational program promote the development of shared values, among our students? (Refer to Core Values)

Section 3: Putting Learning First

What steps should we take to establish or improve a rigorous curriculum requiring core knowledge and competences of our students?

To what extent are our educational programs, class schedules, registration, and other administrative and support services organized around the needs of learners rather than the convenience of the institution? What improvements can we make?

What other related questions should we address at our institution to improve the quality of learning?

Section 4: Creating a Nation of Learners

How might we provide the same level of service and support to "non-traditional" students, and students in non-traditional learning programs, as we do for traditional full-time students? Within our mission, when have we examined alternative, more flexible, and student-oriented ways to provide for student learning?

How often do we survey employers of our recent graduates—and the graduates themselves—to discover how and under what circumstances graduates succeed or fall short? How can that process be improved?

Information taken from Appendix A of *An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education*, a report from the Wingspread Group on Higher Education.

Reflective Questions for Learning College Workshop.

Section 1: First Questions

Responses to the following three questions will provide a helpful context in which to assess one's institution.

What kind of people do we want our children and grandchildren to be?

Questions taken from Howard Bowen, "The State of the Nation and the Agenda for Higher Education." San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982.

Section 2: Taking Values Seriously

How does our core curriculum of required courses respond to the needs of our students for a rigorous liberal education enabling them to "live rightly and well in a free society?" Where does it fall short?

What steps will we take to assure that next year's entering students will graduate as individuals of character more sensitive to the needs of community, more competent to contribute to society, more civil in their habits of thought, speech, and action?

Section 3: Putting Learning First

In what ways could we do a better job of helping our students to attain higher levels of both knowledge and skills?

In what ways are we assessing learning to diagnose needs and accomplishments? How could we improve feedback to students and faculty on student performance in order to enhance both teaching and learning?

How does our institution assure that students have demonstrated a high level of achievement, consistent with our published standards for acquiring both knowledge and skills, as a basis for receiving our degrees or certificates? Can we raise our standards?

What other related questions should we address at our institution to improve the quality of learning?

Section 4: Creating a Nation of Learners

In what ways have we organized our programs to develop and support a capacity for lifelong learning among our students?

What other related questions should we address in an effort to reduce the institutional barriers to learning and to make our institution more responsive to the needs of others, e.g., K-12 education, employers, and other institutions of higher education?

Information taken from Appendix A of *An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education*, a report from the Wingspread Group on Higher Education.