

Minutes: Reinvention Center Western Regional Network Meeting  
March 30, 2001

The first regional network meeting of western research universities sponsored by the Reinvention Center took place on March 30, 2001 at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. It was attended by 47 faculty and senior administrators from 22 public and private institutions. A list of attendees is attached.

Wendy Katkin, Director of the recently-established Center, opened the session by introducing herself and providing background on the Center's founding and the factors leading to this meeting. The purpose, she explained, was to explore the merits and feasibility of creating a regional network made up of faculty and senior administrators from research universities within the same broad geographic area. In addition to the San Francisco meeting, the Center has held similar meetings in New York City in December, in Washington, DC in March, and in Chicago in May.

Dr. Katkin explained that when the Reinvention Center was created a year ago, she was given three years to determine whether a Center focusing exclusively on research universities made sense and, if so, what its role might be. After a year of visiting campuses, talking with colleagues at universities, professional societies and government agencies and attending meetings of education-oriented organizations like the AACU, AAHE and Project Kaleidoscope, she determined that indeed such a Center could fill a critical gap and have many functions. Her reasoning was based on the observation that most existing organizations focusing on undergraduate education are geared primarily for four-year colleges. These colleges, however, start out with different assumptions and have needs and interests that are quite different from those of research universities. As a result, the organizations have generally failed to engage administrators and especially faculty from research universities. A forum made up exclusively of research universities would be able to concentrate on issues specific to their environments and to the demands and expectations of their faculty. Dr. Katkin envisions the proposed networks as small communities made up of colleagues from institutions that face common challenges and who might benefit from working together and sharing experiences. Her model is the group of ten research institutions that received the NSF RAIRE (Recognition Award for the Integration of Research and Education) awards in 1997. Over the past three years, faculty and administrators from these institutions have met informally on numerous occasions, have come to know one another personally and with reference to many of their programs, and they have become valuable resources for one another on a wide variety of issues. Dr. Katkin expressed her hope that the regional network would function in the same way. Based on the feedback following the New York City and DC meetings, it appears that the majority of those attending see the potential value of the network approach and are interested in further discussion of the role the Center might play and possible areas for activity. The New York group has scheduled a second session, to take place in early June, and the DC group likewise determined to meet a second time in September or early October.

Following the opening comments, a representative from each institution present was asked to provide a brief overview of the institution and to identify one or two pressing issues that the Center network might address. The introductions revealed a major difference in the composition

of the western university group and those attending the New York and DC meetings. Whereas the New York and DC meetings both had a fairly even mix of public and private institutions, the western group was made up primarily of public universities. Among the 22 represented, only 4 were private. As a consequence of this imbalance, the concerns of the public institutions drove the agenda and, to a great extent, shaped the discussions.

For the public universities, the overriding issue is the enormous growth in enrollments projected for the next ten years and the challenge of dealing with these increases in ways that do not compromise quality; a related question is whether institutions have the capacity to provide a quality education when they have 35,000 undergraduates. The rise in the number of students to be served has important curricular, pedagogical, structural and budgetary implications. Universities facing significant growth, for example, may want to re-think their large lecture formats and other means for delivering instruction; they will also need to devise methods for using technology creatively and effectively. They may want to move from the traditional academic year calendar to an extended summer school or to a full calendar year program to accommodate the new students; this will entail delivering a 12-month curriculum. Other options are to revisit the number of credits required for graduation and to provide incentives to reduce the time to graduation. An additional topic of concern is the need to hire large numbers of faculty in a relatively short period. Finally, there is the question of budget. At public universities, funding is often based on enrollment, usually without any consideration of quality or of the additional infrastructure and support staff that will be required to accommodate a larger student population. In some states, the dollars have not increased, though the cost of education is constantly rising and will do so even more with the increased enrollment.

Other significant issues emerged as well.

### Curriculum.

- General education seems to top the agenda for public and private institutions alike. Many campuses have been re-visiting their general education requirements and experimenting with different models in order to engage students and foster the development of critical skills and foundations they will need for study in a major. The revisions aim to create a general education curriculum whose requirements are simpler, fewer in number, and more intellectually rigorous. A key question that universities face is how to get students, many of whom have a vocational orientation, to see the connection between general education and their future educational and career goals.
- Significant efforts are being made, again at almost all institutions, to facilitate students' development of good written and oral communication skills; many campuses are increasing their writing requirements and extending them into upper as well as lower division courses. Their need to enhance and extend writing instruction has been heightened in recent years by the increasing number of students at many universities for whom English is not the primary language.
- Faculty and administrators across the board seem to agree that their institutions should be offering small seminars taught by experienced faculty to first-year students. Almost all are doing so, though often to only a small number of

students. The question is how to staff these seminars to reach more students, particularly at institutions where resources are scarce.

- While there has been a lot of attention focused on the first-year experience, the second-year experience also needs to be addressed.
- Linkages between undergraduate education and the university's research mission need to be strengthened and made more apparent to students and faculty alike. The most common linkage is through student participation in research. Universities need to expand opportunities, particularly in non-laboratory based disciplines where student involvement tends to be low. One suggestion was to look at untapped resources, such as the library, and, for example, engage students and faculty in the humanities in bibliographic development.
- Depending on their major, all undergraduates do not have equal opportunities. Students in the social sciences, for example, almost never have small classes, and if they do, they usually come in the senior year. Students in the Humanities rarely have an experience doing independent scholarship. Again, what kind of strategies can be adopted to offer enriching experiences to all students?
- New technologies create unique opportunities for faculty to re-think their courses and to teach differently. How can we persuade faculty to take advantage of the resources available on most campuses to learn about these new technologies and to assist them in their use?
- Much student learning takes place outside the classroom—through extracurricular activities in which students are involved, community service, and other venues. How can we harness these experiences so that they become integral to the education research universities offer?

#### Faculty and Graduate Students

- Engaging faculty in general education and undergraduate education more generally remains a major problem. Many faculty at research universities have more loyalty to their individual specializations or disciplines than they do to their institutions, and within the institution, their primary loyalties are to their research and graduate students. For research university leaders, the question is how to increase loyalty to the whole institution, including undergraduates.
- While almost all research universities now have teaching resource centers to aid faculty, participation in these centers' programs at many institutions is low. Other universities have been more successful. What kinds of strategies have proved to be effective in reaching faculty and getting them to buy in?
- There is great interest in further involving graduate students in meaningful ways. Campuses are experimenting with having advanced graduate students participate in teaching first-year seminars and block-scheduled courses and in supervising student research.

#### Administration

- At many campuses undergraduate education is decentralized. Although campuses may have a vice provost for undergraduate education or similar position, the real responsibility and capacity to deliver the curriculum is usually with deans who control both faculty lines and resources. At some universities,

the academic senate has ownership of the curriculum. Is it possible to create and deliver a coherent undergraduate curriculum, given these separations in responsibility, ownership and resources? What kinds of administrative structures are likely to work best?

- While virtually every campus has programs that aim to improve undergraduate education, their potential value is limited because of fragmentation, duplication, and a lack of coordination. Few campuses seem to have mechanisms in place to address this lack of coordination.
- Most of the “terrific islands of excellence” on campuses are expensive and typically reach only a small number of students. A major issue is how to expand them so that they benefit more and a wider spectrum of undergraduates.
- There is a need to better integrate academic support units such as teaching resource centers, writing centers, enrollment management offices and academic advising with research universities’ academic missions.
- Academic advising needs to be improved so that it is offered early in the student’s studies and is in depth.
- How can research universities communicate and demonstrate to the public the unique advantages of attending a research university?

#### Assessment

- What is it that research universities want to assess with respect to undergraduate education? What are the outcomes we are looking for, and what are the measures we should use?
- How can research universities measure the “value added” in obtaining an undergraduate education at a research university? We need to develop modes of assessment that demonstrate this value added.
- How can research universities develop assessment tools that satisfy a range of constituents (i.e. faculty, administrators, external accrediting agencies, boards of regents or trustees, political officials, students’ parents)?

#### Diversity

- The lack of diversity at all levels appears to be a much more significant issue at many western institutions than it is at institutions in other regions. This lack is the result of legislative actions that have halted major efforts at affirmative action. Some schools are actively recruiting students of diverse backgrounds; a small number have special scholarships for underrepresented students.
- At institutions with diverse student populations, the challenge is to figure out what students already know and how to fill in gap so that they will be able to participate effectively in the full range of educational experiences offered by the university.
- At some institutions the greatest diversity exists among graduate students. The question here is how to train international graduate students so that they understand this country’s cultural mores and can deal effectively with students of diverse backgrounds.

## Conclusion

There appeared to be a consensus among those present that they have many common issues and that a network made up of research universities offers a valuable opportunity for faculty and administrators directly responsible for undergraduate education to share experiences and learn from one another. The UC vice chancellors already meet regularly and find their meetings very valuable. The group devoted the final hour of the meeting to a discussion of the various roles the Reinvention Center might play in facilitating this sharing and in providing leadership to efforts to improve undergraduate education at research universities.

It was generally agreed that the Center's most useful function might be to serve as a repository or clearing-house and disseminator of best practices. This function might be carried out through several means. One is the Spotlight feature on the Center's Web site (<http://www.sunysb.edu/Reinventioncenter/spotlight.html>), which was created to focus attention on specific topics of common interest and provide descriptions of successful models. The current Spotlight, on "The First-Year Experience," has an essay by Bruce Alberts, President of the National Academy of Sciences, on the importance of the first year and examples of four different approaches--at Cornell, Northwestern, UCLA, and the University of Maryland. Future Spotlights will include an essay by Ellen Woods, Senior Associate Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education, at Stanford University, on strategies for increasing undergraduate participation in research, and one by Greg Bothun, Professor of Physics at the University of Oregon on structural impediments to innovation. Members of the network are invited to suggest topics for other Spotlights and to contribute short essays and descriptions of initiatives. The Center Web site also has a Resources feature (<http://www.sunysb.edu/Reinventioncenter/resources.html>), which categorizes different kinds of programs that have been implemented on campuses and has links to their Web sites for further information. Again, network members are invited to view the Resources feature and send us links to initiatives they would like included.

Other technology-based methods suggested for sharing best practices and stimulating discussion include: a bulletin board format on which individuals will post their thoughts and "converse" on specified topics; fostering dialog among Center constituents by creating list-servs made up of members of all four Center networks; and by establishing links on the Reinvention Center Web site to known, potentially useful repositories and calling attention to them. Greg Bothun and Lucy Lynch at the University of Oregon have graciously agreed to set up the list-servs and bulletin boards for the Center. They may be visited at <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/%7Ellynch/rclists.html>.

The group agreed that the Center and network could perform other important functions as well:

- Form sub-committees to work on different topics, which individuals will join based on their interest. It was suggested that the Center start by using the Boyer Report recommendations as a basis for the first groups to be formed.
- Work collectively to further the agenda of research universities with professional societies and funding agencies.
- Have a national meeting on a focused topic, perhaps in association with a larger national organization meeting.
- Serve as a resource to faculty and administrators who are trying to effect change within their own institutions.

- Marshal the resources of research universities to promote and focus public attention on the unique educational experience research universities can offer. The underlying goal will be to re-cast the discussion of higher education so that the general public and diverse constituents (government officials, policy makers, funding agencies, boards of trustees, prospective students and their parents) understand the ways this experience differs from educational experiences at four-year and comprehensive institutions and the benefits to be gained.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. Katkin asked all participants to send her a list of no more than five issues that they would like to see the networks focus on in future meetings and activities. The following issues emerged, echoing and reinforcing the issues raised at the meeting:

### **Faculty issues**

- Promoting undergraduate research in the Humanities and Social Sciences by providing good models, faculty incentives and student support. One problem is the lack of an undergraduate research tradition in these disciplines. Are there successful models? How are campuses addressing the "overload" experience for faculty, which seems particularly acute in these disciplines?
- Addressing faculty workload issues, in light of growing demands on faculty to mentor undergraduate research and teach small classes
- Finding ways of engaging and maintaining faculty interest in general education and lower division teaching.
- Building institutional consensus for making improvements to undergraduate education
- Examining the role of leadership in supporting change

### **Student-learning issues**

- Incorporating research-based learning into large lecture courses. This will become increasingly important as enrollments increase.
- Finding ways to increase student-faculty interaction outside as well as inside the classroom. Again, this will become increasingly difficult with the projected enrollment increases.
- Developing students' "information literacy." This includes gaining not only technical skills but also the ability to evaluate information presented on the Web.

### **Resources**

- Coping with shortages of resources and with financial allocation models that may inhibit innovation, interdisciplinary cooperation, and expanding and sustaining effective initiatives
- Finding new resources, both internal and external, to support undergraduate education

### **Unique nature of a research university**

- Articulating clearly to both the lay public and the university community what is unique, special and relevant to today's world about the undergraduate experience in a research university.
- Identifying the opportunities and obstacles presented by the decentralized nature of the research university. In a decentralized environment, is a centralized approach desirable and/or feasible?

## Assessment

- Developing effective assessment methods and tools for the evaluation of undergraduate education reform, bearing in mind the pitfalls as well as the promises of assessment efforts

Finally, virtually everyone is interested in “sharing ‘best practices’ across the board.”

The group agreed to have a second meeting in the late fall, 2001. Information will follow.

In the meantime, the Reinvention Center invites short descriptions of first-year programs at your University, to be included on its Web site in the Resource section. In anticipation of Ellen Woods’ essay, we would also like descriptions of any strategies you have adopted to increase student participation in research. Please send your descriptions to: [wendy.katkin@sunysb.edu](mailto:wendy.katkin@sunysb.edu).

The Center invites suggestions for subjects to be “spotlighted” on the Web. If you are interested in writing a short essay for the Reinvention Center Spotlight, consult the Web site ([www.sunysb.edu/Reinventioncenter](http://www.sunysb.edu/Reinventioncenter)) or contact Wendy Katkin.

## PARTICIPANTS

Brigham Young University  
Clark Webb, Associate Dean, General Education and Honors for the Freshman Year

California Institute of Technology  
Carolyn Merkel, Director, Student-Faculty Programs

Stanford University  
Russell Berman, Cognizant Dean for Undergraduate Studies, School of Humanities and Sciences

Sharon Palmer, Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Director, Freshman and Sophomore Programs

Ellen Woods, Senior Associate Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education

Texas A&M University  
Mark Weichold, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs & Academic Services

University of California, System Office  
Julie B. Gordon, Coordinator, Intercampus Academic Programs

Linda Guerra, Director of Planning and Analysis

University of California, Berkeley  
Barbara Davis, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Student Life-Education Development

Patricia Iannuzzi, Associate University Librarian and Director, Doe/Moffitt

Christina Maslach, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Ellen Meltzer, Head, Teaching Library

Alix Schwartz, Co-Director, Office of Undergraduate Policy and Analysis

Kwong-loi Shun, Dean, Undergraduate Division, College of Letters and Science

Terry Strathman, Director, Office of Undergraduate Research

University of California, Davis

Joseph E. Kiskis, Professor of Physics

Patricia Turner, Vice Provost

University of California, Irvine

Meredith Lee, Dean, Division of Undergraduate Education

University of California, Los Angeles

Lucy Blackmar, Director of Undergraduate Education Initiatives

Elizabeth Ligon Bjork, Professor of Psychology

Frederick Burwick, Professor of English

Angie Hamner, General Education Administrative Support

Greg Kendrick, Instructional Coordinator

Mark Morris, Professor of Physics and Astronomy

Judith Smith, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Robert Watson, Professor of English

University of California, Riverside

Susan Carter, Director, Center for Teaching Excellence and Professor of Economics

Yat-Sun Poon, Associate Dean, Physical and Mathematical Sciences and Professor of Mathematics

Richard Sutch, Distinguished Professor of Economics and Director, Center for Social and Economic

## Policy

University of California, Santa Barbara  
Ronald Tobin, Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic Programs

Alan Wyner, Acting Dean, Undergraduate Studies

University of California, Santa Cruz  
Lynda Goff, Vice Provost and Dean, Undergraduate Education

University of Colorado at Boulder  
Ross Corotis, Dean, College of Engineering and Applied Science

University of Hawaii at Manoa  
Ronald Cambra, Associate Dean, Arts and Sciences

University of New Mexico  
Joel Nossoff, Director of New Student Programs

Peter White, Dean of Undergraduate Studies

University of Oregon  
Greg Bothun, Professor of Physics

Lucy E. Lynch, Academic User Services, Computing Center

University of Southern California  
Joseph Hellige, Vice Provost for Academic Programs

University of Texas at Austin  
Lucia Gilbert, Vice Provost and Professor of Educational Psychology

University of Utah  
John Francis, Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies

Utah State University  
Joyce Kinhead, Associate Vice President for Research

David Lancy, Professor of Anthropology and Director of Honors

Washington State University  
Barbara Couture, Dean of Liberal Arts