

Reinvention Center
Meeting of Vice Presidents for Undergraduate Education (UVP) ¹ at Research
Universities
New York University
June 17, 2005

Attendees: Wendy Katkin (RC director), Mark Aronoff (Stony Brook U), Agnes DeFranco (U of Houston), Sue Faerman (U of Albany), Stephen Fisher (Northwestern U), Susan Forman (Rutgers U), John Francis (U of Utah), Martha Garland (Ohio State U), Jerry Herron (Wayne State U), Rita Kean (U of Nebraska-Lincoln), Thomas Lancaster (Emory U), Linda Mills (NYU), Barry Qualls (Rutgers U), Matthew Santirocco (NYU), Peter White (U of New Mexico)

Introduction and Welcome

After welcoming remarks by meeting Matthew Santirocco, Dean of Arts and Sciences at NYU, Reinvention Center Director Wendy Katkin gave a brief history of events leading to this meeting. The idea to establish a national network of Vice Presidents and other senior officials responsible for Undergraduate Education (UVPs) originated with Judi Smith, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education at UCLA and a former member of the Reinvention Center Executive Board. Judi had started a similar network of senior officials from universities within the University of California (UC) system several years ago, when the position was first created at the UC institutions, and she and her colleagues in this new role were struggling to define and give it shape. Judi felt that they might help and support one another in understanding the parameters of the position and addressing common problems. Although the positions are now well established and some of the incumbents holding them have changed, the group continues to meet regularly to share experiences, discuss issues of common concern and counsel one another, and a genuine sense of collegiality and shared purpose has developed among the individual members.

In an effort to assess the level of interest in creating a national network, the Reinvention Center invited senior administrators with campus-wide responsibility for undergraduate education to a meeting this past November. A majority of the 54 attendees seemed to support the idea and recommended that the Reinvention Center continue to explore its feasibility. (A summary of the November meeting is available on the Reinvention Center Web site: http://www.sunysb.edu/Reinventioncenter/Conference_04/proceedings.htm) The Reinvention Center is following up on this recommending by having four meetings in different geographic regions: the plan is to bring together small groups of incumbents to determine the goals and possible roles of a national network, how often should it meet, and how it should be structured. The first group met in DC on June 10. The New York meeting is the second such session. A third meeting is planned for San Francisco on October 21. Depending on the outcomes and attendance at these three meetings, a fourth meeting may be held in Chicago in November.

Understanding and Strengthening the Position

¹ UVP refers to the senior officials at research university who have campus- or college-wide responsibility for undergraduate education.

Susan Forman, Professor in the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers and formerly Rutgers's Vice President for Undergraduate Education, facilitated the discussion. She opened by posing the question: How can a group like this help you do what you need and want to do? The deliberations first focused on what those present deemed the essential responsibilities of their position. The main responsibilities cited were:

- Campus-wide responsibility for undergraduate academic programs
- Serving as an advocate for the undergraduate mission, both on campus and externally
- Dealing with multiple tensions: Between the research university's research mission and its undergraduate education, between priorities for undergraduate education and strong deans and schools, each with their own academic agendas, between academic support functions and academic functions
- Working across campus: Brokering among colleges and units— academic and non-academic and including Student Affairs.
- Thinking creatively about innovation and reinvention and about how to link units and get individual units to also think creatively about reinvention
- Implementing innovations: The UVP does not necessarily have to be in charge; rather his or her task is to make connections and create conditions to make things happen.
- PR, which is “a big job:” The UVP needs to be in constant communication with a wide range of communities, both within and outside the university
- Enrollment management, which is a “critical” piece; deans are happy when the position delivers better students Addressing concerns of the legislature

Despite differences in their job descriptions and individual responsibilities, virtually everyone agreed that the “core” of the UVP position is “to draw connections.” They also agreed that their main tool for doing this, and for accomplishing most of their other goals, is the “power of persuasion.” In addition, “You need some budget to bring to the table.” Years ago, when the position was first being created, incumbents lamented that they weren't in charge of things; that has changed considerably. The job constantly evolves as new responsibilities are added. Individuals in this position need to be flexible and open to change.

Susan then shifted the discussion to barriers to the effective functioning of the UVP position. Participants identified the following:

- Academic decisions are typically made at schools and colleges within the university.
- Lack of authority over academic deans and lack of authority within the UVP position itself.
- Lack of faculty reporting to the UVP.
- Institutional authority and the way the position is structured. At Emory, for example, the position was created over 40 years ago, and the incumbent faces problems because he is not part of the Provost's office. At other institutions, where the position is within the Provost's purview, the lack of faculty reporting to

it creates its own problems. Many UVPs also serve as a dean, which means involvement in the business of the school. The structure of the position and the authority assigned to it can be strategic.

- The reward system at research universities which is tilted toward research and does not fully recognize activities directed at undergraduates.”
- Insufficient budget and staff: The position is often given responsibilities, but no budget to accompany them. First-year seminars offer a good example: UVPs are charged with getting faculty to design and teach them, but they are not given funds to attract or compensate the faculty.
- Offices that report to position often have their own mission; many times the mission pre-dates the reporting arrangement.
- Departmental hegemony. Departments often make their own plans with respect to undergraduate education without consulting with the UVP. The UVP should take part in conversations on where the department in order to achieve an alignment between UVP and departmental interests. The UVP should also be part of departmental reviews.
- Hard to measure success in this position.
- Loneliness of the position: “You don’t have anyone to compare to with respect to structure and duties.”

A member of the group observed that the very nature of the research university is probably the biggest barrier the position faces: Research universities have not completely committed themselves to undergraduate education, and the majority of faculty have not modified their activities nor been part of conversations on undergraduate education. As undergraduate education evolves, the question remains as to how the research university addresses this tension and uses its resources. Young faculty appear most willing to become engaged. UVPs and other senior officials need to bring faculty into the idea-generating and implementation processes within the customary processes and practices of their particular schools,

Returning to the subject of a national network, Susan asked, “How can this group help you to become more concrete? What will be the two most important things you will be working on in the next two years?” The responses are listed here:

Wayne State.

- 1) General education: Revising and trying to implement it; doing it so that it is something that faculty believe in rather than a battle among departments. A committee has already established the goals and come up with a plan for a revised general education, but the plan has a big “gray zone.” Implementing the goals, especially in the gray zone, will be difficult.
- 2) The University’s goal to increase student enrollment from 33,000 to 40,000 students. As it proceeds, questions arise: Which students does it target; how does the University serve the growing enrollment.

New Mexico

- 1) Increasing opportunities for innovation and creativity within the undergraduate experience
- 2) Changing the university culture so that it responds more to undergraduates. This gets right at the tension between the undergraduate education mission and the mission of the research universities. They have tried to do several things:
 - Start a service learning program that calls for more active participation by teachers.
 - Engage faculty through specific programs; use these faculty and programs to change the culture.
 - Work with individual departments to teach general education courses more creatively.

The hardest part of the job is convincing faculty to take part in these initiatives

NYU (Linda Mills)

- 1) Changing the culture at NYU. Under her leadership, NYU has successfully transformed the culture within Student Affairs, bringing faculty into the process and persuading them to embrace innovation. This year's task is to think about the academic side. This will require her to be both innovator and problem solver. The challenge is how to position the College to maximize the students' experience.
- 2) Focusing on mentoring and promoting it as a connection between undergrad education and the research university.

Emory

- 1) Trying to be innovative in terms of programs: What programmatic changes can we pursue? Emory is thinking of "general" innovations that cut across academic programs.
- 2) Capital campaign: Those leading the campaign need to be prodded to think about undergraduate education and to see undergraduate education as an essential and integral part of the university.

Northwestern

- 1) Coordinating accreditation. There is a heavy emphasis on outcome assessment. As UVP, Steve needs to start to develop mechanisms for assessment. This is sticky issue since research universities give little attention to educational outcomes. Focus on assessment should be embedded in general education criteria.
- 2) Trying to implement mandates that spring from the central administration; the difficulty is that these mandates need to be implemented in a very large number of units.

Stony Brook

- 1) Solidifying a system of undergraduate colleges
- 2) Raising the profile of undergraduate education, internally and externally

Ohio State

- 1) A review of general education curriculum; there are concerns here partly because of fears of assessment
- 2) The university is about to build on PeopleSoft for an integrative student system
- 3) UVP Garland now has oversight of student athletes

Utah

- 1) Assessment
- 2) Internationalization of the curriculum—an interest that came with a new President
- 3) Transfer students. Because of its large number of transfer students, the University is shifting requirements to upper level courses
- 4) The University is committed to reducing the numbers of students. At same time is committed to diversifying its undergraduate population

Houston

- 1) Dealing with mandates imposed by the Texas legislature
- 2) Retention and graduate rates. A large proportion of their students work full time. The average graduation rate is 50%

NYU (Matthew Santirocco)

- 1) Faculty access by students is “the most important” issue. The College of Arts and Sciences is hiring 25 faculty. The challenge is managing to scale to give student access to faculty in a) general education classes, b) departmental majors, c) advising and mentoring, and d) undergraduate research.
- 2) Linking academic and other student services and activities in the decision- making processes and in the experiences of students and faculty. NYU has become a residential university only in the past fifteen years.

Nebraska

- 1) Enrollment: The University of Nebraska has declining enrollment. Although it has better students than nearby Universities of Iowa and Minnesota, Iowa and Minnesota have fewer requirements. Within the University, individual colleges have established their own admission and course requirements, creating problems when students change colleges. This also creates problems in providing academic support.
- 2) The University needs to throw out its general education requirements. Faculty development should be at the core. How do you get faculty to buy into a changed conception of general education?

Duke

- 1) Establishing a culture of undergraduate research
- 2) Establishing a culture of evidence with regard to teaching and learning

Rutgers

- 1) The University is department based. It is in the midst of changing its undergraduate education. Faculty need to be in charge of the general education and honors curriculums, and they need to be brought into the curriculum process. At present

faculty or individual colleges make decisions about general education requirements. The faculty who make these decisions are not the faculty who are in departments.

- 2) The University is re-thinking the UVP position. The UVP must be part of the governing structure.

Viewing these responsibilities collectively, the main areas of interest --and areas that the network could address—appear to be:

- Raising the profile of undergraduate education
- Putting the UVP position in the governing structure
- General Education—revising the goals and curriculum, implementing the goals, working with departments to improve general education, work to bring faculty into the curricular reform process
- Maximizing the students' experience—i.e. by linking academic and student affairs, improving student information systems, providing services to more student, increasing access to faculty
- Establishing a culture of undergraduate research
- Establishing a culture of evidence
- Getting all units that offer undergraduate programs to cooperate
- General innovation: initiating and scaling up innovative academic programs
- Enrollment issues—increasing and/or reducing enrollment, increasing diversity, particularly in “high end” programs
- Retention and graduation rates
- Providing student services for more students
- Scaling up, institutionalizing effective programs
- Introducing service learning as a way to increase faculty involvement and change faculty practices
- Promoting mentoring at all levels—of undergraduates, of junior faculty
- Fund raising to support undergraduate education
- Dealing with assessment
- Responding to state bodies

The group indicated numerous ways in which a national network could help them. COFI could serve as a model. COFI has annual meetings that focus on specific topics determined by its members. The meetings consist of a presentation on the particular topic, followed by a roundtable discussion. Following the meeting a report on the session, with related documents, is circulated to members. The value of the group derives from the opportunities members have to share experience and ideas with colleagues from parallel institutions. In addition, the focused presentations usually lead to a product that members can use on their own campuses.

Having a group made up of members who all come from research universities has several advantages. A major one is that the research university itself shapes the flavor of the conversation as members hear from one another about common issues and experiences and share information. The discussions can also have a very practical focus: Here's what I tried, here's what failed, here's what appears to be working. Here's how I went about

formulating goals for. . . . Here's how I got faculty on board. Because of the similarities among institutions, these experiences have more meaning because members can readily translate them to their own environment.

The UVP network would likewise provide a forum for individuals from similar institutions to exchange information and benefit from one another's experiences. In addition, the group collectively could take positions, establish benchmarks and establish guidelines and engage in in-depth study of critical questions. The network could also facilitate activities, "get some circles going" on different subjects.

CIC Undergraduate Education Working Group

Steve Fisher and Martha Garland provided an informal overview of the structure and activities of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) Education Working Group, made up of the senior administrators responsible for undergraduate education at the big ten universities, Northwestern, the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois-Chicago Circle. The Working Group has been in existence for many years, and we could benefit from their experiences as we move forward.

The Education Working Group is one of 40 working groups established by the CIC. Other groups involve individuals who are in similar positions, such as head of libraries, or have similar responsibilities such as accreditation. The CIC Provosts typically set the overall agendas and join together for an annual project, which this past year focused on the universities' libraries. In addition, the CIC sponsors fellowships for faculty who want to go into leadership positions, make connections, etc.

The Undergraduate Group, which meets 2-3 times a year, determines its own agenda. Since the Boyer report, it has been focusing on undergraduate education as envisioned by the Boyer Commission. The Group works well in large part because it is relatively small. Most of the campuses are represented by one member, though since the position is configured differently on different campuses, some campuses send two people. The members know one another and one another's institutions well and they have a strong sense of camaraderie and commitment to the group. They also have a confidence in one another that is really helpful. As Martha Garland noted, another organization like the planned UVP network could not replace her affection for the CIC Group, though she can see the two groups reinforcing and complementing one another.

A big plus of the CIC Working Group is that all its members come from similar institutions; with the exceptions of Northwestern and the U of Chicago, the participating universities are all large, public institutions, and even for the representatives from Northwestern and the U of Chicago, the commonalities are far greater and more important than the differences. While a large national network would have considerable power, there is a lot of merit in having a small group in which everyone knows and relies on one another.

A primary function of the CIC Group is to exchange information and engage in candid discussions, both at the meeting and on an ongoing basis. It is not uncommon, for example, for a member to call a colleague at another institution to ask, “how do you design . . . ?” The Group members also use one another as benchmarks to assess and guide their own actions. Steve and Martha both emphasized the “real” value in talking with people facing the same problems; most of those present at the meeting do not have this opportunity.

The genuine sense of cooperation within the CIC Group is reinforced by the institutional cooperation fostered by the CIC organization, which sponsors some joint programs, such as summer fellowships and programs for teaching unusual languages. Further, since the Education Working Group members don’t compete for undergraduates, they can share strategies about recruitment and retention. As the network will be larger and its members have competing interests, we will have to figure out how to promote institutional cooperation. One approach is to identify and focus on issues that don’t involve competition. Using the example of COFI, Steve suggested that competing interests do not necessarily represent a problem. The institutions participating in COFI are extremely competitive, yet they frequently send out queries to one another and exchange information. The competition does not diminish the value of the group for him.

The UVP Network: Next Steps

The consensus seemed to be that the Reinvention Center take a two-pronged approach: Large national meetings of 1-2 day duration that take place every one or two years (and every second year coincides with the Reinvention Center national conference) and address issues at the intersection of research universities and undergraduate education, and smaller one-day meetings every semester that have specific topical foci. The location of the meetings should rotate among campuses and regions. Following the practice of COFI, the meetings should deliver a product (a report, data, a brochure or CD describing a program) that attendees can take away to share with colleagues at their own university.

In creating the agendas for the meetings, the network should identify a set of issues that are distinct from localized groups or interests and talk about “big ideas.” Several broad topics were proposed:

- The intersection of the greater expectations initiative with the Boyer report; this would be a good focus for a national meeting.
- Programs and activities at the intersection of the research university and undergraduate education, such as general education, undergraduate research, honors programs, scaling up, and communicating the value of a research-based undergraduate education to students and the external community.
- Establishing standards of success in different areas.
- Assessment of learning outcomes: Embedding assessment in the curriculum.
- Decentralization and the hegemony of departments and schools.
- Assessing what we do in order to achieve a better understanding and definition of the position of Dean or UVP for Undergraduate Education, taking into account the authorities and items (i.e. budget) it needs to function effectively. A good

outcome would be achieving understanding of what a fully developed position would look like. An examination of the position is particularly pertinent because of its evolving nature.

- Strategies in the general sense: Can we get further along by being more purposeful?
- Thinking creatively about the barriers that prevent us from getting to where we want to go or doing what we want to do. While many of the barriers are local to institutions, a significant number cut across all universities. Possible subjects for group discussion: Assuming things are not going to change, how do we deal with what we have; promotion and tenure; enlisting faculty for key functions such as mentoring, advising and positions like departmental director of undergraduate studies; effecting a paradigm shift in light of the changing world, moving away from persuasion as the primary means “to fix things;” establishing the UVP as a creditable position; articulating the goals of the university.

The Reinvention Center should establish a Planning Committee to develop the agenda for the national meeting and for topic-oriented small group meetings. In some instances, the two might be connected, with the national meeting initiating the conversation and serving as a catalyst for further deliberations and actions carried out within the context of small group meetings. The small group meetings should be held in different regions; all network members would be welcome to attend all meetings. One suggested format is for the meetings to focus on two questions; one involving a philosophical paradigm, and the other a substantive question that addresses a specific programmatic or topical issue. The large meetings should be organized so that there are both plenary sessions and smaller roundtable discussions.

The Reinvention Center will provide the occasion, venue and staff support for the meetings. In the meantime, the Center will develop a list serv of network members.