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Academic Matters

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Restructuring the Academy

Tom Flanagan
On today's liberal arts

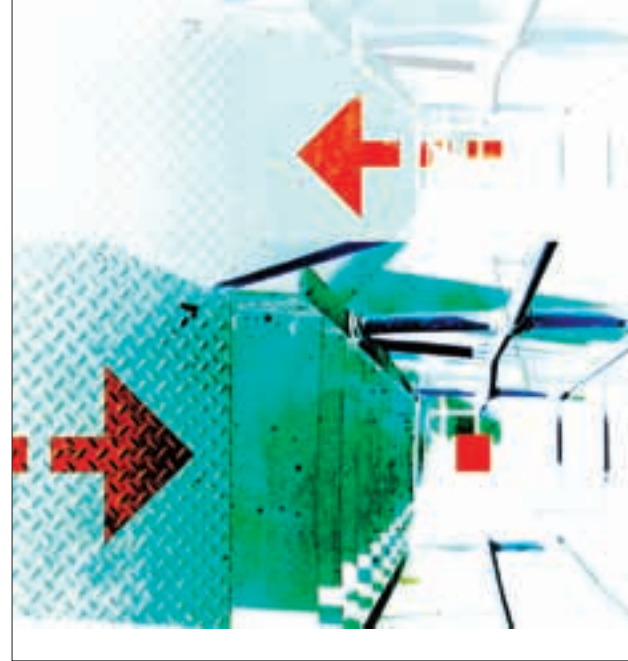
Janet Atkinson-Grosjean
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The restructuring of the academy

What is its impact on faculty, research, and equity?



Like a tectonic plate, the university is shifting under our feet, and it's not certain that its movement is benefiting students, faculty, or the search for knowledge. Faculty are dealing with the twinned challenges of burgeoning class sizes and less contact with students. When they do meet with students, the latter often seem infused with a functionalist, market-driven ethos about university. Their apprentices, the graduate students and new Ph.Ds, are often treated as expendable labour. Worse, unlike traditional apprentices, many face an uphill battle in finding secure employment and, as "roads scholars," are forced to cobble together disparate teaching assignments. Students are feeling the effects, too. They share overcrowded classrooms, are taught by a professoriate that's shrinking compared with their own increasing numbers, and face high tuition fees and debt loads as governments demand universal higher education without providing the needed resources to pay for the quality Canadians once took pretty much for granted—and need more than ever.

This issue of *Academic Matters* features articles by contributors who have been reflecting on the changing nature of academic work, the trends that underlie it, and its impact on three areas: faculty, research, and equity.

University of British Columbia ethicist Janet Atkinson-Grosjean examines the implications of the semi-privatization of research. She is particularly concerned about government eagerness to fund Big Science, those vast and expensive projects, such as the genome inquiry, that promise an economic pay off. If research

becomes commodified and the new, semi-private granting agencies are beyond both academic and public accountability, she asks, what is the fate of basic research? And what is the fate of its cornerstone, the university's commitment to academic freedom that allows—indeed *encourages*—free-ranging intellectual inquiry?

We then turn our focus to our second theme: the effects of restructuring on faculty. The University of Toronto's Glen Jones reviews five trends behind it: the rise of disciplines, the massification of higher educa-

Faculty, especially Canadian faculty, with their relatively high rate of unionization, can shape restructuring, provided they remember the public interest as well as their own

tion, faculty unionization, the introduction of new technology, and the market-driven ethos of the university. He outlines the challenges for faculty these trends pose and rues Canada's lack of research about workers in higher education.

Seton College's Martin Finkelstein argues that the restructured academy is not a temporary phenomenon caused by a downturn in the university business cycle. It's here to stay, he writes, but faculty, especially Canadian faculty with their relatively high rate of unionization, can shape restructuring, provided they remember the public interest as well as their own. Mark

Hammer, a former contract academic worker, bears witness, not just to the inadequacies of such work, but also to its costs.

Long-time equity researcher Helen Breslauer focuses on our third theme: the impact of restructuring on equity-seeking groups. She points out that contingent work, now the reality for many academics, was endured by members of these groups long before restructuring. Worse, restructuring holds little promise of improvement for them.

We aim to provide a variety of reading in these pages, and this issue is no exception. Catherine Connelly treats us to a wry but deadly serious exposition on academic information hoarding. In our Fiction Matters section, Margaret Christakos, an award-winning writer, describes a disturbing episode of maternal rage in an excerpt from her forthcoming novel, *Miss See-Through Girl*.

The University of Calgary's Tom Flanagan, a well-known conservative commentator and academic, has written a lively review of Michael Bérubé's *What's Liberal About the Liberal Arts?* Karen Dubinsky's review of Paul Stortz and Lisa Panayotidis's *Historical Identities: The Professoriate in Canada* is a look at the professorial image. McMaster University historian Robert Storey's review discusses management and union perspectives on academic restructuring.

As always, Steve Penfold has the last laugh, with his anguished, hilarious, and not-to-be-missed take on *ratemyprofessor.com*, while *Academic Matters* editor Mark Rosenfeld looks at the disconnect between the purported interest in higher education and the actual attention paid by the media and public policy practitioners. **AM**

La restructuration du milieu universitaire

Quelles seront les répercussions sur le corps professoral, la recherche et l'équité?



A l'exemple d'une plaque tectonique en plein tremblement de terre, le milieu universitaire fait l'objet d'une activité intense. Or, cette activité n'est nécessairement favorable ni aux étudiants, ni au corps professoral, ni à la recherche du savoir. D'une part, le corps professoral doit composer avec les difficultés connexes que posent la croissance du nombre d'étudiants dans les groupes et son rapport de moins en moins fréquent avec ces derniers. De fait, ces derniers semblent souvent plongés dans une conception fonctionnaliste et mercantile de l'université. En vertu de cette conception, les stagiaires, les diplômés et les nouveaux titulaires d'un grade de doctorat font souvent figure de main-d'œuvre consommable. Pour comble de malheur, contrairement au contexte qui prévalait par le passé, bon nombre de stagiaires doivent désormais livrer une âpre lutte afin d'obtenir un emploi stable, ce qui les contraint en tant qu'« universitaires par voies et par chemins » à supporter des affectations d'enseignement hétérogènes. D'autre part, les étudiants subissent également les retombées de cet état de choses. Ils se trouvent en nombre disproportionné dans les salles de cours, reçoivent l'enseignement d'un corps professoral en nombre décroissant (par rapport au nombre croissant des étudiants) et doivent composer avec une hausse des frais de scolarité et de l'endettement. En outre, ils évoluent dans un contexte où les gouvernements exigent des études supérieures sans assurer la prestation des ressources nécessaires à l'atteinte d'une qualité, tenue jadis pour acquise par les Canadiens et plus nécessaire que jamais.

Le présent numéro de *Academic Matters* présente des articles issus d'une réflexion sur le caractère changeant du travail à l'université, les tendances sous-jacentes à cette situation et les répercus-

sions dans trois domaines : le corps professoral, la recherche et l'équité.

Janet Atkinson-Grosjean, éthicienne à l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique, étudie les répercussions d'une privatisation partielle de la recherche. Mme Atkinson Grosjean pose les questions suivantes : Si la recherche devient un produit et que les nouveaux organismes subventionnaires partiellement privés se situent au dessus des responsabilités d'ordre universitaire et public, quel sort réserve-t-on à la recherche fondamentale? En outre, quel sort réserve-t-on à la liberté universitaire, pierre angulaire de la vie universitaire qui permet—voire favorise—la recherche intellectuelle en toute liberté?

Nous abordons ensuite notre deuxième thème : les effets de la restructuration sur le corps professoral. Glen Jones, de l'Université de Toronto passe en revue cinq tendances qui y sont sous-jacentes. Il décrit ensuite les difficultés que posent ces tendances pour le corps professoral, puis déplore le manque de recherche au Canada à propos de celles et ceux qui œuvrent aux études supérieures.

Martin Finkelstein, du Collège Seton, fait valoir que la restructuration de l'université ne constitue pas un phénomène temporaire causé par une régression au cycle d'activités universitaires. Toutefois, les effectifs du corps professoral—particulièrement au Canada, où leur taux de syndicalisation est élevé—peuvent contribuer à cette restructuration, dans la mesure où ils n'oublient pas de prendre en compte l'intérêt public au même titre que le leur. À titre d'ancien travailleur universitaire contractuel, Mark Hammer peut témoigner non seulement des insuffisances mais également des coûts à ce chapitre.

Notre troisième thème, soit les répercussions de la restructuration sur les groupes de

défense de l'équité, s'appuie sur les travaux de Helen Breslauer, chercheuse chevronnée en matière d'équité. Mme Breslauer souligne que bien avant la restructuration, des membres de groupes visés par l'équité devaient occuper un emploi atypique, ce qui constitue désormais la réalité de nombreux universitaires.

Par ailleurs, le présent numéro s'inscrit également dans notre objectif de diversité des sujets traités au fil des pages. Catherine Connelly nous fait un exposé sur l'accaparement universitaire, sur un ton léger mais qui témoigne bien de la gravité de la situation. À la rubrique Fiction, la rédactrice primée Margaret Christakos nous relate un troublant épisode de rage maternelle et de sévices à l'endroit d'enfants tiré de son prochain roman *Miss See Through Girl*.

Tom Flanagan, réputé commentateur et universitaire d'allégeance conservatrice de l'Université de Calgary, a rédigé un compte rendu vivant à propos de l'ouvrage *What's Liberal About the Liberal Arts?* de Michael Bérubé. Pour sa part, dans son compte rendu de l'ouvrage *Historical Identities: The Professoriate in Canada* de Paul Stortz et de Lisa Panayotidis, Karen Dubinsky dresse un constat ravissant et terre à terre à propos de l'image du corps professoral. Robert Storey, historien de l'Université McMaster, fait un compte rendu des perspectives patronales-syndicales en contexte de restructuration universitaire.

Comme d'habitude, le mot de la fin revient à Steve Penfold, dont il faut lire le point de vue angoissant mais hilarant au www.ratemyprofessor.com. Enfin, le rédacteur en chef d'*Academic Matters* Mark Rosenfeld constate l'abîme entre le soi-disant intérêt à l'endroit des études supérieures et l'attention réelle qu'y prêtent les médias et les politiques publiques. **AM**



Big Science, boundary organizations,

Selon Janet Atkinson-Grosjean, au nom de la science et de la démocratie, il faut réévaluer le modèle public-privé qui touche les grands projets scientifiques. Des études révèlent que ces grands projets scientifiques risquent d'entraver la confiance et la réciprocité nécessaires à la collaboration. Il est plus rentable d'investir dans des milliers de petits projets que dans quelques grands projets de forte envergure.

Scientific research has become so complicated and demands such enormous apparatus that only the State or immensely rich patrons can pay for it, which in practice means that a disinterested search for knowledge is cramped by the demand for results that will justify the expense.—*Robert Graves*

There is a tendency to view Big Science, and its associated problems, as a recent phenomenon. But my 40-year-old epigraph by novelist Robert Graves indicates how long such worries have dominated the academic horizon. Moreover, Graves, in this one paragraph, captures many of the issues that Big Science raises today: the loss of academic autonomy and objectivity, the increasing dominance over research by state and commercial sponsors and their steering of the research agenda, and the sacrifice of basic inquiry on the altar of “results.” Such continuity is both reassuring and disturbing. The contemporary models of Big Science deserve some examination, including the implications for

democracy about the way it is organized and funded.

States invest in Big Science for strategic purposes, whether to gain military or economic advantage, international prestige, or social benefits. Think, for example, of the big “hard science” projects of the past: the Manhattan project, supersonic flight, nuclear power, particle accelerators, and the space shuttle. Today, research in the life sciences—once the “soft” poor cousin—attracts a similar scale of financial, material, scientific, and human resources.

Traditionally, biological research took the form of small, grant-funded studies conducted by individual investigators. Large-scale projects are a recent phenomenon that began with the effort to map the human and other genomes. Like other countries, Canada now invests huge sums in large-scale biological research in the hope of deriving direct social and economic benefits. Investments in Big Biology are funded and governed through hybrid, public-private arrangements that stand outside



The public-private model of Big Science needs examination, for the sake of science—and democracy—writes Janet Atkinson-Grosjean

and the academy

conventional funding bodies and academic structures. These intermediaries include Networks of Centres of Excellence, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, as well as the national and regional centres of Genome Canada. The political scientist and science policy theorist, David Guston, calls such bodies “boundary organizations.”

These organizations act as agents of the state in enacting policy and adjudicating and allocating funding for research. As well as navigating the ambiguity of their corporate organizational form (are they public? private? in between?), they must also deal with the expectation that they will advance both public and private interests. The ambiguity is only partially resolved by a third form of engagement: that of “translational science,” a process that moves discoveries from the laboratory into the market, the clinic, or society at large.

Organizational and funding issues

Funding directed through these novel organizations carries stipulations that transgress traditional academic values. First-rate science is necessary but no longer sufficient; evidence of “due diligence” in non-scientific matters is also demanded. Among other details, research proposals must demonstrate that co-funding or matching funding has been secured; that partnerships with pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies are in place; that intel-

lectual property policies are in order; that social and economic benefits are delineated; and that a project management team is “taking care of business.” In the case of Genome Canada, for example, a project will not proceed to scientific peer review if it fails the “due diligence” phase. Readers might recall the furor this policy caused when proposals of internationally prominent scientists were rejected on non-scientific grounds, never having been reviewed for scientific merit.

Such stipulations are principled to the extent that they protect public investments in large-scale research and attempt to capture its socio-economic benefits for the public. But they are perceived to be at odds with the public interest to the extent they impede scientific advance through public mechanisms and institutions, measured against the standard of peer review. Many worry that, in directing large pools of research funding to strategic ends, the state promotes a particular type of science—one that can be readily commodified and marketized—over other science that produces non-market solutions or longer-term contributions to our knowledge and to research training.

The venerable Canadian Society of Biochemistry, Molecular and Cellular Biology, founded in 1957, for example, has expressed its “deep concern” about “the risk of compromising the rigor of Canadian research” if the new trends continue. In a 2005 policy document, the society argued that focused, investigator-

driven, basic science, funded and adjudicated by traditional research councils, is the scientific gold standard and, ultimately, socially and economically productive. In contrast, they said, new “discretionary” pools of funding directed to large research teams and to economic spin-offs are often wasted on premature commercialization efforts.

The novel mix of academic values, commercial values, and public policy expectations now at play in large-scale science invites a number of questions. We need to learn how these multi-centre, academy-industry partnerships actually work and to investigate the implications of mixing public and private inter-

or information. The general problem of delegation is captured in the terms “adverse selection” and “moral hazard.” The first term concerns the difficulty of selecting agents who share and will advance the principal’s interests. The second describes the problem of ensuring the principal’s goals are actually pursued. Simply put, agents always know more about the tasks delegated to them than principals do. How can principals be sure they are getting what they pay for, and how can agents provide that assurance?

Under the old social contract for science, the state delegated these problems to the “republic of science” itself. Science was understood as a self-governing institution functioning within a

powerful, normative structure. Under the new “market-driven” social contract for science, however, the principal’s goals now emphasize short-term social and economic utility in a way that often runs counter to traditional republic of science norms. So how should problems of delegation be handled in these circumstances?

One solution would be for the state to manage research performance directly, but that runs counter to the current managerial *zeitgeist*. The preference is for refined forms of “remote control” or state steering. To that end, new, purpose-built agencies—boundary organizations—are constructed on the border between science and policy. Boundary organizations stand outside the state apparatus yet

are funded from public sources to act as agents for the state in the realization of policy goals. In turn, scientists become agents of the boundary organization, which monitors their performance and ensures they are following the correct agenda. But while the state has effectively delegated the management of research, problems of information asymmetry, moral hazard, and adverse selection have not

been eliminated; they have simply shifted down a level to the new agent. With these principal-agent chains, we seem to encounter infinite regress as principals tend to be agents of higher-order principals, agents become principals in secondary relationships, and problems of accountability endure.

In the republic of science, accountability is established through peer review and reputation. Although they are increasingly made subordinate to non-scientific stipulations, these traditions are preserved in boundary organizations.

But political accountability is somewhat different. Here, we encounter two layers. The first is performance accountability, which runs from the boundary organization towards the state. The second is democratic accountability, which runs from the state down towards its citizens. To the extent that Guston’s theory of boundary organizations focuses on the first and neglects the second, it is incomplete. The notion of democratic accountability, I suggest, demands a normative dimension lacking in existing formulations.

Genome Canada

Charged with fast-tracking Canada’s late entry into genomics, Genome Canada and its five (now six) regional centres were established in 2000 with lump-sum, multi-year budgets. Industry Canada is the lead federal agency for genomics. As a result, the scale of public investments, and the scope of the research projects are in an order of magnitude larger than earlier programs. The



Investments in Big Biology are funded through boundary organizations, hybrid, private-public arrangements that stand outside conventional funding bodies and academic structures

ests. How are scientific, commercial, and social values reconciled and negotiated? What costs and benefits accrue to investments on this scale? A fundamental question concerns how these new bodies protect the public’s stake in the maintenance of a vibrant and growing base of public domain knowledge *as well as* the translation of basic research into useful applications. A second set of issues relates to the tensions between traditional research bodies (such as universities, academic hospitals, and research councils) and the new organizations set up to manage Big Science. What cultural and normative differences are at work between new and traditional bodies? How are these differences operationalized? What is the nature of their impact?

These questions illustrate the complex interplay of scientific, academic, commercial, and public interests at work in the re-scaling of the research enterprise. To fully understand their salience, however, we need to ask: What is the problem that boundary organizations were set up to solve? The answer lies in the social contract for science and what Guston describes as “the general problem of delegation.”

Principals and agents

A contract is an arrangement between principals and agents in which the former delegates performance of a task to the latter. Delegation occurs because the principals are unable to perform the task for themselves, usually due to a lack of technical competence

Genome Canada system manages more than a billion dollars in research funding, derived predominantly (89 per cent) from public sources. For a small country like Canada, the research investments are unprecedented. By any measure, genomics is Big Science.

At the same time, in establishing the Genome Canada system, Industry Canada created a form of governance that breaches conventional notions of accountability yet is entirely consistent with managerialism. Despite their research mandate and public funding, the genome organizations were incorporated as private, non-profit companies rather than as traditional research councils. *Neither truly private nor fully public, these companies stand outside conventional frameworks of governance and accountability.* Although they are private corporations, they answer to no shareholders or members. Moreover, citizens have no general rights to information about private companies. Although the genome organizations are publicly funded, they also escape normal mechanisms of public oversight. The auditor-general's mandate, for example, is confined to public departments and agencies, as is access to information legislation. There is no direct ministerial responsibility to Parliament and no obligation on the agency to report on its performance to the public. There are few mechanisms for external complaints and redress.

A final distinguishing feature of the way Genome Canada manages genomics is the institutionalization of claims to a form of moral governance, through funded programs of research in the broader social and ethical aspects of genomics. Such programs are again consistent with the underlying ideology; contributing to steering "from a distance." As French philosopher Michel Foucault argues, the most disciplined subjects are those who internalize the dominant ideology and discipline themselves. Through these programs, the genomics community internalizes critique and allows the state to detach from direct governance.

Discussion

Boundary organizations in research are complex corporate bodies charged with fulfilling (and managing conflicts between) social and economic mandates. Like any organization, they are sites of power and display multiple imbalances in power relations. In addition, they command significant public resources while lying in a "third space" outside conventional accountability structures. But, to me, public accountability seems to be a primary democratic requirement that the state cannot discharge by delegation. In the principal-agent chain, citizens are the primary principals. Holding decision-makers to account enhances the integrity and perceived legitimacy of public governance. London School of Economics philosopher Luc Bovens wrote in 2003, "Democracy means nothing if those in power cannot be held accountable, in public, for their acts and omissions, decisions, policies and expenditures."

We need to think through the broader implications of delegating implementation of the social contract for science to non-public institutions. In her book, *Systems of Survival*, urban theorist Jane Jacobs contrasted two moral syndromes—the commercial syndrome and the guardian syndrome. The former describes the value structures of commerce, the latter of public service. But what value structures shape the moral landscape of agencies that occupy the boundary *between* these arenas?

The emergence of large-scale research organizations sets up a number of questions that are ripe for empirical investigation. First, given the sums of money and interests involved, how do we ensure

adequate governance and accountability? A sub-question is: *to whom* is accountability owed, given that most of these organizations have no shareholders, no association membership, no citizen representation, no public service role, and so on. Second, specific to managerialist reforms, what are the constitutional safeguards when the state bypasses long-standing research institutions and mechanisms in favour of privatized agencies? Finally, how do we characterize the relationship between academic institutions and boundary organizations? Do the latter undermine academic autonomy? Are the former any better in terms of governance and accountability?

These are complex issues that we are only beginning to address. And while they concern scientific research, they are not "scientific questions." Rather, they demand humanistic debate engaging the liberal arts *and* sciences. Debates and inquiries are futile otherwise.

Conclusion: "On being the right size"

As British geneticist and evolutionary biologist J.B.S. Haldane argued long ago, nature makes animals the right size for their purpose. A large change in size inevitably carries with it a change in form. The same is true, Haldane suggested, for every human insti-

Research shows that Big Science can frustrate face-to-face community building and social capital elements of trust and reciprocity needed for effective collaboration

tution. There is an optimal limit beyond which animals and organizations ought not to grow.

Borrowing Haldane's principle, economist Leopold Kohr in 1957 formulated a theory of size, postulating that small organizations, cities, and states work better than their larger counterparts. Pointing to the law of diminishing productivity, he argued that "wherever something is wrong, something is too big," and advocated a return to the human scale. Jane Jacobs also follows Haldane, suggesting that "the costs of complication exact their own high price" when organizations become large and bureaucratic. These perspectives help illuminate what happens when the model of Big Science—developed for international prestige projects in high-energy physics and human genomics—is generalized. Large research networks and collaborations can generate diseconomies of scale. First, big investments in science need to be managed and coordinated by the new bodies, meaning big bureaucracies are required. Second, big investments in science need to be justified, meaning the mass production of publications, patents, and partnerships and often counter-productive levels of measurement and reporting.

Research shows that Big Science can frustrate face-to-face community building and social-capital elements of trust and reciprocity necessary for effective collaboration. Science is a human-scale enterprise, anchored in local communities of practice. It may be that hundreds of smaller projects, with access to shared technologies, are, ultimately, a better investment than a few large-scale projects that sprawl across multiple boundaries. But at present, how to test that claim empirically is quite beyond me. **AM**

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The academy as a

Glen Jones explores the forces changing the academic landscape—and their implications for faculty

Face aux changements qui touchent les travaux universitaires, il importe au plus haut point de comprendre pourquoi et comment ces changements ont lieu. Le présent document porte sur cinq facteurs qui contribuent à expliquer ces changements, soit : l'essor des disciplines; la transition au sein des études supérieures, allant de l'élite vers la masse; les nouvelles technologies, la syndicalisation; les politiques gouvernementales en changement dans le contexte d'une économie axée sur les connaissances. Le document permet également d'examiner les difficultés contemporaines éprouvées en milieu universitaire.

There have been dramatic changes in the nature of academic work because of certain pressures and trends that emerged in the last century. Together they present some very difficult challenges for academic work in the twenty-first century. They are not the only factors in play, but they are significant. They have shaped—and continue to shape—a new academic world for faculty and universities to navigate.

The rise of the disciplines

The academic disciplines became powerful forces in the evolution of higher education during the twentieth century. The disciplines organized themselves into societies, and the societies organized the conferences and published the journals that would come to play a central role in determining the standards of academic research.



The importance of the disciplines became even greater with the emergence of the department as the primary organizational unit in the modern university. Departments were organized by discipline, so it became the historians who worked together to determine what history courses would be offered, just as it was the broader community of historians who decided what works of history would be published in peer-reviewed journals or emerge from

the scholarly presses. In many respects academic work and identity became defined by the disciplines.

With the growth of new knowledge, the boundaries of the disciplines shifted and subunits emerged. Academic work became increasingly specialized, and the academic job market became an extremely complex matching exercise. More importantly, with the growth in knowledge and specialization in academic work, the professor of physics might have a closer professional relationship with a peer specialist in Germany than with the departmental colleague in the office next door.

By the mid-1960s, economist and University of California president Clark Kerr was writing about the “multiversity,” a loose collection of specialized units held together by a benevolent central administration and common concerns over parking. The professor of physics could now spend her entire professional life working in the physics building and sharing research findings with other peer specialists at major conferences. Other than through committee meetings, the physics professors might never meet the historians, economists, and chemists working elsewhere on campus.

Twenty years later Tony Becher, in his classic book, *Academic Tribes and Territories*, was pointing out that there were dramatic differences by discipline in terms of how academic work was understood. More recent research in this area suggests that there are differences by discipline in career patterns, definitions of research productivity, publication practices, and even assumptions about teaching and learning.

The disciplines are also innately conservative, and there has been marked resistance to certain types of change within the academy. New areas of research, such as the focus on gender in the social sciences, have not always been immediately accepted by those who play key roles in patrolling the boundaries of the discipline. Academic work that strays outside of the traditional territories or employs new methodological approaches may be regarded with suspicion by the discipline peers who control the societies and journals that have come to play such a central role within the professoriate.

work in progress

Massification

The expansion in enrolment in Canadian universities following the Second World War was the beginning of a complex series of changes in the role and function of higher education that J. A. Corry, the former principal of McGill, referred to as the shift in higher education from “private domain to public utility.” Canada’s small network of universities received little public support or attention until federal government policies opened the doors of higher education to the veterans, and then later provided the support to keep the doors open for a new generation of Canadians.



The role of universities in society evolved during what Martin Trow, the distinguished American scholar of education policy, called the “transition from elite to mass higher education.” Massification had an enormous impact on the nature of academic work. There were more students to teach and a need for more professors to teach them, though teaching loads generally increased as classrooms were filled to capacity. Mass higher education also led to changes in how universities were understood by the communities in which they were situated. Higher education was increasingly viewed as a right, and if universities were viewed as components of the broader public sector, then professors were part of the broader public service. It was as members of this category that professors enjoyed the “Rae Days” of Ontario and the “Filmon Fridays” of Manitoba.

The expansion of higher education systems led to an increase in institutional diversity and differentiation. During the 1960s the Canadian provinces created new forms of post-secondary colleges that were designed to be distinct from the provincially-supported universities. Academic work became differentiated by sector: college faculty focused on teaching, while academic work within the university sector included teaching, research, and service.

In the highly diverse American higher education system there is a stratification of institutions that relates directly to the bal-

ance of expectations within academic work. Academic work became increasingly differentiated according to the institution where the work took place. Faculty in U.S. community colleges, for example, generally have higher teaching loads than faculty in comprehensive state universities. Research plays a much greater role in the academic work of professors in research universities than in four-year institutions.

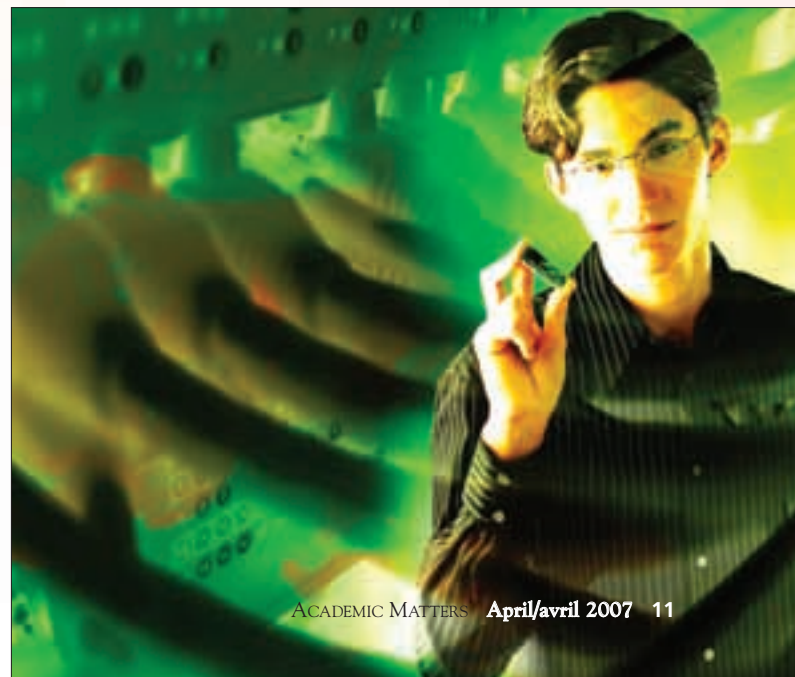
Massification also led to a division of labour within the academy, especially as governments expected participation rates in higher education to grow without increasing operating grants. As a result, the number of part-time contract faculty increased. At some institutions a parallel stream of teaching-only faculty was appointed. Contract positions also emerged on the research side of the equation, with the employment of both full- and part-time technicians and specialized research staff. The academic work of a department was now being accomplished by individuals with radically different employment contracts.

Institutional growth frequently also resulted in the creation of new specialized professional positions. Professors still provided students with program advice, but students might be more frequently directed towards specialized academic advisors and counselors.

Like a handful of other Western countries, Canada has moved well beyond mass, and is now approaching universal higher education. We continue to expand enrolment, and Canadian participation rates are, once again, on the rise.

The introduction of new technologies

Academic work has always been heavily affected by technology. The ways in which research is defined and understood have been influenced by advances in technology, including the rise of big science following the Second World War and the introduction of the handheld electronic calculator in the 1960s.



New communications and information technologies have changed academic work, just as they have transformed other forms of work and social interaction. The introduction of these technologies has had a dramatic impact on the organization of work within the university. The large cadre of support staff who oversaw the cumbersome manual process of student registration has been replaced by computer systems and a handful of skilled professionals with highly specialized skills. Professors type their own manuscripts. Academic librarians have revolutionized the how, what, and where of accessing knowledge.

The impact of new information and communication technologies on universities has already been the subject of a number of excellent articles in *Academic Matters* (see the Winter issue of 2006), but there are two particular issues that are directly relevant here. The first is the ways in which new technologies have affected the relationship between faculty and the university as a physical space. For faculty in some fields, the new technologies mean that academic work can take place anytime and anywhere, while for faculty in other fields technological advances have served to increase their dependency on the physical and technological facilities of the university.

The second is the ways in which new technologies have altered the relationship between faculty and students. Electronic communication has changed the ways students and faculty interact. A new, technology-savvy generation of students has high expectations of being able to contact faculty anytime, anywhere. The combination of new communication technologies, increasing student expectations, and increasing student-faculty ratios help intensify academic work.

Unionization

The global recession of the early 1970s forced Canada's federal and provincial governments to apply the brakes to what had been a speeding train of operating and capital expansion during the 1960s. Given that faculty salaries were by far the largest area of university expenditure, tensions between the university administration and the faculty association leadership on some campuses was exacerbated by the new realities of double-digit inflation and more modest government grants. Within a decade, the majority of Canadian university faculty were unionized.

Michiel Horn, in his *Academic Freedom in Canada: A History*, reminds us that decisions about tenure and promotion at many universities were left largely to the discretion of university administrators until formal procedures were adopted through collective bargaining. Even at institutions where faculty did not unionize, it became common for faculty associations and administrations to enter into voluntary agreements that protected academic freedom and specified the procedures for appointments, tenure, and promotion.

While collective agreements seldom defined academic work beyond references to teaching, research, and service, they established who was inside (and who was outside) of the faculty union, and these contracts established the procedures and criteria that

would guide almost all the major personnel decisions for the professorial ranks. The agreements established the conditions of employment for a specific category of academic workers.

These collective agreements also specified the role of academic administrators in key faculty personnel issues. The responsibilities of the department chairs and deans in tenure and promotion decisions are described. These agreements usually position the chair as a faculty colleague, who is a member of the union, while the dean is frequently positioned as a manager, who is outside the association. Collective agreements play a major role in structur-



ing academic work and defining administrative relationships.

Unionization did not end with the certification of full-time faculty. With the division of academic labour has come the fragmentation of academic workers into different categories now frequently represented by different associations. It is quite common for full-time faculty and librarians to be members of one bargaining unit, part-time faculty to be members of a second, and teach-

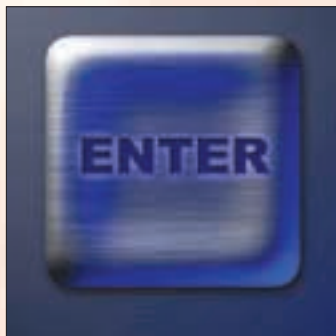
New communications technologies, student expectations, and increasing student-faculty ratios intensify academic work

ing assistants to be members of a third. All three units may represent individuals who teach different sections of the same course, but the academic work of each of these individuals is structured and remunerated in very different ways. Student development personnel and contract researchers may be mem-

bers of employment groups that are completely separate from associations representing full and part-time faculty. Academic work at Canadian universities is conducted by an increasingly compartmentalized and fragmented workforce.

Governments and the “new” economy

While the changes in the relationship between universities and government have been somewhat less dramatic in Canada than in many other countries, Canada’s federal and provincial governments have all undertaken initiatives designed to further development and innovation to meet the needs of the knowledge economy. They have taken steps to increase access to higher education,



on the assumption that the new economy requires larger numbers of highly skilled personnel. They have taken steps to reposition the university as a key instrument of economic development and university researchers as central components of a knowledge and innovation infrastructure.

In this new economic environment, knowledge is increasingly commodified. Given that the creation and dissemination of knowledge are what professors do, the repositioning of knowledge in the knowledge economy has dramatic implications for academic work. Intellectual property issues, for example, arise in discussions ranging from the development of course materials to the results of graduate student research.

Government policies also serve to reposition the university in relation to other economic actors. Research-funding policies encourage private-sector support and reward research partnerships and collaboration. Academic research in fields viewed as important to the market thus receive far greater financial support from both industry and the public purse than research in less “marketable” areas. This hierarchy of funding support is far from new—or at least it can be traced back through the relatively short history of government support of research—but the magnitude of investment and, therefore, the differences between the top and bottom of this hierarchy have never been greater. Recruiting new faculty in certain fields means competing in an extremely competitive, global labour market.

Paid consulting activities, once viewed as tolerated moonlighting, are now increasingly legitimized as contributions to industry relationships and technology transfer. The boundaries between what might once have been defined as “academic research” by the disciplines and research that might once have been defined as too applied or industrial to be a legitimate contribution to scholarship, are blurring. Some academic workers will increasingly have multiple employment relationships involving both universities and industry as a function of their research and consulting activities, just as sessional instructors may cobble together contracts with several universities and private colleges in order to put food on the table.

Contemporary challenges

Academic work has never been homogeneous, but whatever sense of wholeness and community one might have associated

with the professoriate have been transformed into an increasingly specialized, fragmented, and hierarchical series of activities performed by a highly differentiated labour force. It has become increasingly difficult to generalize about academic work given the differences between disciplines, the division of labour and multiple employment categories, and institution-based policies and conditions of employment. The situation becomes even more complex given differences in the experience of faculty because of gender, sex, race, and ethnicity.

The role of the disciplines is also changing, perhaps diminishing, as a function of the new research environment. Few real world problems or commercial products involve knowledge that fits neatly into the territorial boundaries of the discipline. Problem-based research initiatives may require expertise from a wide range of disciplines, and the level of support available to these initiatives may be enormous in comparison to the funds given to curiosity-driven research performed by colleagues in a traditional field. Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary degree programs and research centres are far from new, but they are increasing in number and importance.

While interdisciplinarity becomes increasingly valued within the university, the physicist who participates in interdisciplinary research activities may still be subject to the research, teaching, and publication norms of the traditional subspecialization. We may be applauding interdisciplinary work on the one hand, while assessing this work using processes and standards that do not reward interdisciplinary activity on the other.

There is a need for faculty to discuss issues of ethical practice that are far beyond the research training they received in their doctoral program

As academic work increasingly involves multiple employment contracts, research sponsorships, and partnership arrangements, fundamental questions emerge in terms of ethical practice. Questions of conflict emerge within an environment where the boundaries between of the publicly supported teacher and researcher and the research partner with industry and the private consultant blur. At many institutions, junior faculty are oriented to these complex ethical issues through a brief orientation and an expectation that they will read a long list of policy documents. There is a need for far more conversation: a space for faculty to discuss issues of ethical practice that are far beyond the research training they received in their doctoral program.

Finally, we have the challenge of understanding academic work in the absence of almost any systematic empirical study of academic workers. Aside from basic demographic and salary information, there is almost no national data on the Canadian professoriate. We know surprisingly little about how all of these changes and pressures are experienced by faculty, librarians, and other academic workers within the university. While there is a handful of Canadian scholars in this area, there is a tremendous need for further study of academic work in Canada. **AM**

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Negotiating the new academy

The academy is not just caught in the downswing of the academic business cycle, it's on the threshold of a new era, says Martin Finkelstein. But every faculty member is a knight who can champion a decent outcome

En Amérique du Nord, tandis que les effectifs du corps professoral à temps partiel augmentent, le nombre de professeurs permanent régresse. S'agit-il d'une régression temporaire ou de la première étape de reconceptualisation du travail à l'université? Le présent document fait valoir que les exigences de l'économie axée sur le savoir poussent les pays du monde entier à structurer de nouveau le milieu des études supérieures et – par la force des choses – le travail à l'université. Il ressort du présent document quelques principes fondamentaux qui aideront les effectifs du corps professoral à composer avec ces nouvelles réalités.

As universities “outsource” more teaching assignments and make fewer full-time, tenure-track appointments American and Canadian universities will have to consider—carefully—what this means, and how to respond to it.

As stewards of the two most highly decentralized systems of higher education on the planet—stewards of chaos as some have characterized it!—we cannot turn to one enlightened knight or a national minister to save the day. Everyone is a knight of a future academic order—by virtue of the small, critical, albeit independent, decisions we make daily about hiring, working conditions, and assignments. In Canada, faculty unions are a much more powerful force than in the United States, so may be in a stronger position to safeguard the interests of faculty.

While part-time faculty now account for nearly half the headcount appointments in the United States, the less visible but much more significant development has been the re-structuring of full-time faculty appointments. Beginning as a trickle in the 1980s, then gathering steam in the 1990s, full-time, term-limited, contract appointments outside the tenure stream have grown to nearly one-third of the full-time American faculty. When one isolates the data to focus only on *new* full-time faculty hires over the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century (the American federal government provides a biennial census of all faculty hires) the magnitude of the trend is at once stunningly dramatic and undeniable. Since 1991, more than half of all new full-time faculty hired by American colleges and universities has been off the tenure track. In effect, a parallel alternative to the tenure system has developed, under the radar screen of most academic leaders. Since 1970, the percentage of tenured American faculty has dropped from about two-thirds to just under one-half. If current rates of part-time faculty hiring continue and the present 50-50 split between tenureable and term appointments for newly hired full-timers continues, then (factoring in a four per cent annual retirement rate), only 30 per cent of the full-time faculty in the United States will be tenured or tenureable by 2020.

The situation is a bit more complex in Canada—owing to definitional and cultural differences. Like the United States, Canadian universities have responded to cost pressures by increasing their use of part-time and full-time, non-tenured faculty—although on a smaller scale. From 1990-1998, the number

of part-time faculty increased from 25,700 to 28,200, about 10 per cent. During this same time period, the number of newly-hired, full-time faculty *decreased* by eight per cent. By 2005, 31.7 per cent of university faculty were contract faculty, with 17.5 per cent working part-time.

A few nuances must, however, be introduced here. First, the situation varies by province, principally between Quebec and the anglophone provinces. Quebec, following the French system, relies heavily on part-time, including hourly faculty. Full-time non-tenure-track faculty are largely unknown there. Indeed, more than one-third of all part-time faculty in Canada are employed in Quebec universities. The use of full-time contract faculty at large, research oriented Canadian universities has increased substantially over the past decade, more than doubling at the University of Toronto, increasing 45 per cent at the University of Western Ontario and rising, albeit less dramatically, at the University of British Columbia. Moreover, the career prospects for full-time contract faculty in Canada appear to be no better (and may

indeed be worse) than those in the United States. While full-time contract faculty in Canada more closely resemble their tenured and tenureable colleagues in academic qualifications (indeed, about three in four hold doctorates compared to one in two in the United States), they do not appear to

have any more success at moving into tenured or tenureable positions.

The Canadian professoriate resembles its American counterpart in one other fateful respect: age distribution. Over the coming decade, insofar as some provinces have retained mandatory retirement policies for faculty, Canadian universities will be experiencing a significant spike in the retirement of primarily male, full-time faculty, especially in the humanities and social sciences. To what extent they will be replaced by tenure-track appointments or by contract appointments remains to be seen. Interestingly, many faculty who have been forced out of universities due to mandatory retirement policies are increasingly finding employment in the post-secondary sector as part-timers. Twenty-six per cent of college and university part-time faculty were over the age of 55 in 2005, up from 13 per cent in 1999. These developments will likely reshape the Canadian system, determining whether it will reach the “tipping point” that has already happened in the United States.

A parallel alternative to the tenure system has developed under the radar screens of most academic leaders

We are witnessing the dawning of a new era, not a downturn in the academic business cycle. We have reached an historical watershed not unlike the period more than a century ago when dramatic developments in science and the industrial revolution gave birth to the contemporary research university. New economic circumstances—the decline of the industrial economy, the rise of information technology, new political and cultural circumstances, the rise of global markets—are re-shaping contemporary higher education as profoundly as they are re-shaping all other sectors of the global economy as well as our political lives.

The economy restructured

As society moves from a goods-based to a service- and knowledge-based economy and as globalization expands the arena in which all businesses must compete, a greater premium will be placed on organizational efficiency, flexibility, and nimbleness. This has led in the larger global economy to a restructuring of work; namely, the end of secure, long-term employment for most workers (where there exists work at all) and the shift to non-standard employment, including more part-time work, leaner “core” staffing levels, and greater emphasis on self-employment and entrepreneurship. Indeed, observers describe the new organization of the workplace as three-pronged: a shrinking core of professionals whose skills reflect the organization’s core competencies; a growing

An increasing number of policy analysts surveying higher education are now viewing it as an industry or a business

corps of self-employed or freelance professionals and technicians who are hired on an *ad hoc* project basis; and an expanding corps of contingent workers who work by the hour—and who lack any discernible career track. These freelancers and contingents are not only clerical or blue-collar workers; they increasingly include lawyers, physicians, engineers, and, we argue, professors.

The university reconceptualized

An increasing number of policy analysts surveying higher education are now viewing it as an industry or a business—indeed as the core business of the new economy. Some have decried the uncritical application of the “higher-education-as-business” paradigm to the formulation of public policy, reminding us that, historically, higher education has been viewed by the larger society as a social institution, as a steward for a broad set of societal responsibilities, as preparation for young people in democratic citizenship, and for the expansion of knowledge for knowledge’s sake, at least in part. Increasingly, however, public policy debates view colleges and universities less as social institutions to be supported for the long-term good of the order than as businesses producing a product (skilled labour, new technologies), or a consumer service. Proponents of this reconceptualization choose to apply to them the same standards that they would apply to any other business: To what extent does this



entity add value, they demand to know. And at what cost? And can comparable value be added more efficiently by other means?

There has been a basic change in how government and the public generally have come to think about higher education and the academic profession. Their increasing focus on performance, accountability, value-added, and costs reflects a conception of the university as an enterprise and embraces a fundamental trade-off; that is, the reduction of social benefits to achieve the immediate, short-term satisfaction of economic growth. Higher education is seen as a private rather than a public benefit, and increasingly the sovereignty of the marketplace is seen to apply to it. These trends have given impetus to the “corporatization” and “privatization” of post-secondary education. In fact, higher education certifications and degrees are now included as commodities subject to free trade policies as part of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs. Furthermore, as the new conceptualization would have it, this sector of the economy should be responsible for paying an ever larger share of its own freight.

Information technology restructures

In meeting these new imperatives, the information technology revolution has provided new sets of analytical tools and laid bare the contingent character of previous economic and organizational arrangements for delivering higher education. The creation, presentation, dissemination, and preservation of knowledge are based on a set of familiar technologies (the book, the classroom) and traditional economic arrangements (the face-to-face course and the full-time, integrated faculty role). As technology and economic requirements change, so does the structure of institutions performing those functions.

Information technology makes it possible to disaggregate educational processes and thus reconfigure the landscape of the university. New providers may emerge who will target specific processes as sources of businesses. The pieces will be re-aggregated under arrangements that are different from the old. Consider the emergence of new kinds of organizations such as Blackboard and E-College that allow colleges to outsource their instructional platform. Or the outsourcing of student remedial and supplemental education services and counseling through reconfigured organizations such as Sylvan Learning Systems or Stanley Kaplan. At the core of previous economic and organizational arrangements—at least during the twentieth century—were the course and the credit as the standard units defining student academic performance. Most important was the full-time professor concurrently engaged in teaching, research, and institutional and professional service. Such a career has been, at least since World War II, the standard unit of academic labour—the prototypical American scholar. Since higher education has historically been a labour-intensive industry, characterized by high and fixed labour costs (the fixedness a function of traditional tenure systems), restructuring has focused on reducing the level and rigidity of labour costs. In the United States, Canada, and throughout Europe and Asia, this has meant widespread experimentation with entirely new models of delivery of instruction (the “open university” model), aided and abetted by new developments in information technology, most notably the advent of

the Internet, which allows for widespread access to content worldwide and thus savings through the unbundling of course design and development on the one hand, through course delivery and student interaction and assessment on the other.

In the United States, Europe, India, Australia, and Japan, this has also meant extensive tinkering at the edges of the traditional model of faculty work via a surge in the appointment of part-time faculty, whose role and compensation are limited to a particular course. Not only do they have a teaching-only role, but their teaching also constitutes piece work, where they are paid by course or, as in France, by the hour.

Less obvious (but no less widespread) have been attempts to functionally re-specialize the full-time faculty role; that is, to create full-time positions that do not follow the integrated (and costly) teaching-and-research model but a more functionally specialized model. Full-time faculty are now hired into teaching-only streams or, in the natural sciences and the professions, research- or clinical-only streams. Some are taken on even in primarily administrative roles, in program development and management.

Quo vadis?

If we are witnessing a structural reconfiguration of the system, then what ought to be the faculty response, especially in Canada, where unionization allows for a stronger *collective* response than in the United States?

While I cannot pretend to provide a blueprint here, what I can do is suggest some basic principles that ought to guide the faculty's collective response, if it is to advance the interest of the profession in the long term. The basic ones include:

- Welcoming change—selectively. The system is moving toward a new equilibrium and while it is unlikely that the basic direction of the movement can be stopped (nor should it), it can be shaped or managed by those with a larger vision.
- Separating the wheat from the chaff. Like any broad socio-economic and political movement, change is not uniformly good or bad, although it does

not appear on the whole promising in the near term for the academic profession's prospects, as we have come to know them over the past half century. Many faculty a century ago were denouncing (and resisting) the emergence of the research university as an abomination! What needs to happen is a thorough and honest thinking through of the costs and benefits of the new academic order—and some assessment of what costs are acceptable and what costs are not acceptable in the national (rather than parochial self) interest.

- Fighting for what is critical to the long-term health of the system and denouncing what is unhealthy with a clear articulation of the public's, as opposed to the faculty's, stake in the outcome.

While eras of transition are not comfortable, they are dynamic and exciting. The next 20 years will be anything but dull. Canadian faculty, with its tradition of unionization, may be better positioned to shape the transition than their less collectivized colleagues in the United States. **AM**

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Academic restructuring and equality



The traditional model worked better for some than others. Will the new model work any better?

Helen Breslauer looks at what university restructuring means for equity-seeking groups

How might the restructured academy affect women and other groups who have traditionally been under-represented in the higher echelons of academic institutions in Canadian society?

There are two answers to this question. One is that women and other equity-seeking groups may be better able to cope with the changing academy than others. After all, the “traditional academy” has not historically been kind to equity-seeking groups. As far as they are concerned, what is happening is merely more of what they have already endured, and they have long since developed strategies to survive in institutions where they have little or no power.

However, while their experience of being marginalized employees may soften the impact of restructuring for such groups, it does not address how their position in the academy can be improved. And that leads us to the second answer to our ques-

tion: the restructuring academy may make it even more difficult for their advancement in the academic ranks than was the traditional model in the past.

To some extent the answer depends of what aspect of restructuring one looks at.

Restructuring that changes the nature of academic careers

The model academic career once consisted of an unbroken progression from graduate school to a tenure-stream assistant professorship (post-doctorates are more common now), to tenure and associate professorship, and then to full professor. Such a model is less common today as sex roles, societal expectations, and con-

cerns about work-life balance have changed. The traditional model worked better for men than women, especially men who had spouses who worked in the home and assisted them with their careers. Since few women academics ever had access to the traditional model of an academic career, women are less likely to experience its weakening as a change.

Restructuring that changes the nature of academic appointments

The restructured academy is characterized by an increasing number of non-tenured, part-time, and contract appointments. As far as equity-seeking populations are concerned, this new labour market arrangement will change the reality of their lives far less than the lives of those whose expectation and sense of entitlement is for a full-time tenured or tenure-stream career position. But as for its impact on the academic enterprise, this aspect of restructuring will impoverish knowledge by denying equity-seeking groups the opportunity to enrich it.

For example, the fact that less than one per cent (0.7) of faculty in Canadian universities are Aboriginal and that there are few Aboriginal students in our universities has consequences above and beyond the hardship imposed on current and future Aboriginal students and faculty. Both pure and applied academic research on the environment does not incorporate Aboriginal knowledge about the relationship between human behaviour and the natural environment. The absence of purveyors of such knowledge from an institution devoted to seeking knowledge is lamentable. The view that such knowledge is available from non-Aboriginals risks bringing only Eurocentric or colonial thinking to bear on a question.

Restructuring that changes the nature of academic work

The restructured academy is said to bring with it a profound change in the nature of academic work, in particular a separation between teaching, research, and service that has been considered an almost sacrosanct trinity in the academy. The effect of this change will affect members of equity-seeking groups variably.

Those in equity-seeking groups who already have traditional academic careers will probably continue as before. Those who are beginning their academic careers, on the other hand, will face the difficulties many other members of equity-seeking groups encountered before the academy began to restructure. For example, part-time and contract academics often end up in teaching-only positions, either because that is what is expected of them or because they have no time apart from teaching to pursue their research. Since members of equity-seeking groups are found in this category in greater proportion than their numbers deserve, they may well experience this aspect of restructuring as a continuity more than a change.

Restructuring that commercializes the university

The restructured academy is said to be more corporatized, more privatized, more market-driven, more globalized, more commercial. Although commercialization may be found in any academic field, its consequences are often most visible in the sciences and applied sciences, where R&D concerns, technology transfer, and patents are a fact of daily life more than in the humanities and social sciences. We know that the number of women students and faculty are smallest in the sciences and applied sciences. The appalling lack of statistics about race and ethnicity in Canadian

universities makes it difficult to know whether this is the case with other equity-seeking groups. If the demands of the corporate world on the university favour those areas with the least representation of equity-seeking groups, then this would become another instance in which they are left out or left behind.

If all these restructuring trends lead to a differentiation of function among institutions in the academy, they could produce institutions where the major function is teaching and not research, and where the emphasis is less on the sciences and more on the liberal arts. Equity-seeking groups could well be “over-represented” on such faculties. To speculate further, this could lead to segregated institutions, such as the women’s colleges, black

In many respects the corporate world, which is seen as an agent of the commercialization of the university, is far ahead of the academy in recognizing the need for family-friendly policies


colleges, and institutions devoted to those with disabilities, which have existed in the United States for many years. In Canada, we have not taken that route, with the exception of the First Nations University in Saskatchewan. There is much mixed opinion as to the advantages and disadvantages of such segregation, just as there would be mixed opinion about the differentiation of institutions by function.

What can we do?

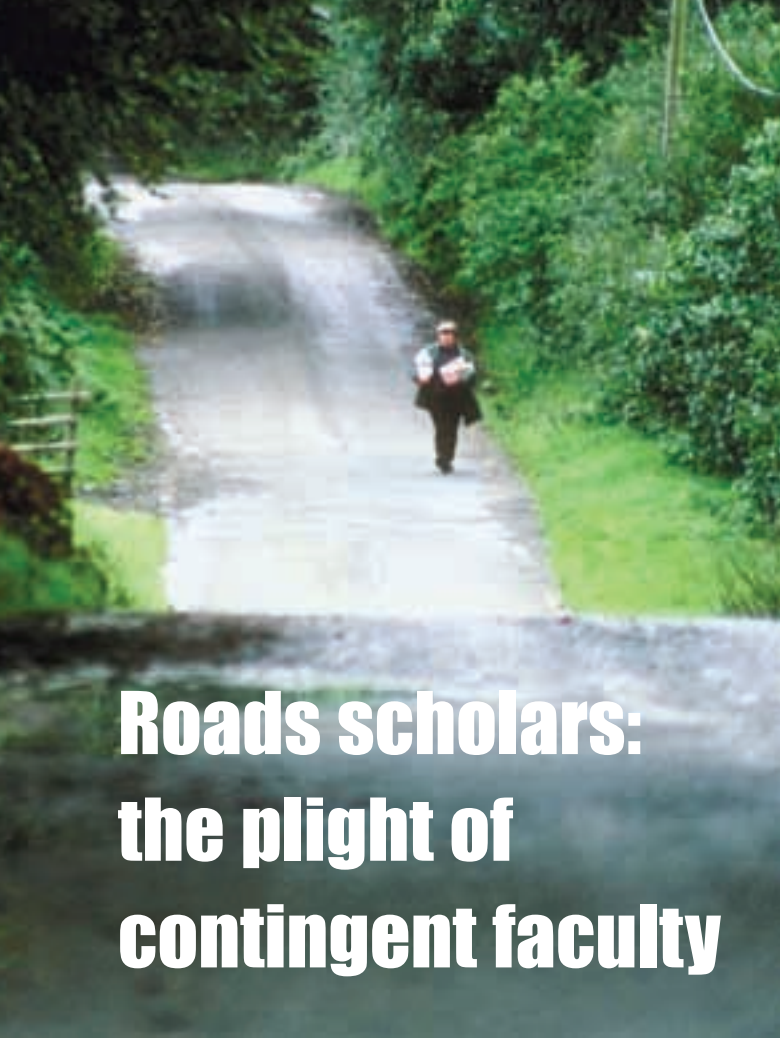
Canadian universities have been engaged in one form of equity program or another for more than 20 years, and the results are discouraging. For example, the numbers of women—students and faculty—in the university have increased dramatically in the last few decades, but women are still woefully underrepresented in its higher ranks. With the expected number of retirements possibly delayed by the recent abolition of mandatory retirement in Ontario, equity programs already in place need more than ever to be examined and overhauled.

We need to insist that our universities collect and report data on race, ethnicity, and disability to Statistics Canada for inclusion in its database on university faculty so that we can have quantitative evidence of the problem we know exists from simple observation. And Statistics Canada must be adequately funded to produce such data.

We need to ensure that universities have family-friendly policies in place and that faculty associations give priority to negotiating them. In many respects the corporate world, which is seen as an agent of the commercialization of the university, is far ahead of the academy in recognizing the need for such policies.

It is incumbent on the academy to address the needs of equity-seeking groups as it restructures. Otherwise, while members of equity-seeking groups may experience restructuring as a continuity at the individual level, restructuring will reduce even further their access to a well-rewarded, honourable, and respected profession. 

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Roads scholars: the plight of contingent faculty

Mark Hammer describes the unbearable weight of being taken lightly

Like many, my graduate education was oriented towards becoming an academic. Sadly, it was not to be, but my visceral connection to academic life was a hard thing to shake after graduation, so I continued as the sessional lecturer I had been during my doctoral studies. At first, I accepted sessional appointments simply to have employment and then, eventually, because I could not see myself *not* teaching, despite having full-time employment elsewhere.

Over some 15 years, I've taught across the country at a half-dozen Canadian universities of varying reputations, from seminars of eight to introductory classes of 1,100. What I saw troubles me. More and more, universities are relying on sessional lecturers to help balance the books. The reasons are simple. We sessionals often work for around 16 cents for every dollar paid to regular faculty. For a full-year class with 1,100 students, I was paid the princely sum of \$7,000 to replace someone who earned at least \$80,000 for the same work. The course brought in roughly a half-million dollars in revenue, after the costs of all the people associated with the course were factored in. For the university, it was a nice return on investment and one that in effect subsidized many relaxed, low-enrolment, upper-level seminars. It meant, however, that one in 20 students at the school was taking 20 per cent of that year's course load from someone who would not be there the next semester.

The use of sessionals is coupled with a just-in-time hiring philosophy that results in sessional lecturers being approached in a manner different from even when I started out. In the past, schools mounted multiple sections of a course, planned the num-

ber of instructors needed, and cancelled a section if registration was insufficient. Schools now seem to mount the smallest number of sections possible and then create additional sections at the last minute in response to registration overflow. As a result, many sessional instructors are not offered a course until just a few weeks before the course starts. Planning a coherent curriculum, selecting and ordering texts, and preparing course materials under those circumstances is difficult and haphazard. Sometimes schools get lucky and hire people who can pull it off, or who have taught the course before and can jump in at a moment's notice...and sometimes they don't. Students pay the same fees for a course from a sessional caught in the headlights as they pay for classes from tenured faculty who have taught the course many times over and have forged a vision for it.

Regrettably, more students are taking more of their courses from sessionals. A good friend once told me he wished, in his capacity as an academic vice-president, that he had a bigger budget for hiring sessionals, noting they brought a certain enthusiasm to their classes that some of the tenured "deadwood" did not. There's something to that view. At the same time, enthusiasm only takes you so far. Having to start from scratch each time a different course is handed to you, particularly at the eleventh hour, is unlikely to lead to the sort of teaching based on a firm command of the field and a clear sense of direction. Even the most enthusiastic will desperately cling to their textbooks like lifeboats, generating student comments of the type, "He's a lot of fun in class, but..." It is hard to sustain enthusiasm when one often ends up working for little more than minimum wage (when all the contact hours, grading, materials preparation, and other assorted obligations are factored in).

I'm more concerned for what the increased reliance on rented instructors is doing to students' academic experience. I've had many students come to me for letters of reference to graduate and professional programs. While happy to provide them, I would note to the student that I was a mere sessional, a nobody, and that they would be best served by seeking out a tenured prof who had some standing and reputation. To my dismay, I would hear replies like "Well, you're the only one of my profs who is still here." The turnover of part-time faculty limits students' opportunity to network professionally. That, in tandem with the increasing tendency for many program credits to be taken during the evening, where establishing collegial relationships with others is hard (park at 6:50PM, sit for 3 hrs., drive home at 10:00 PM) means that many students do not really "belong" to a university community, and neither does their instructor. Indeed, in 15 years I was rarely invited to participate in departmental meetings where the role of my course within the program was discussed, and pedagogical goals aligned.

I don't teach any more. A heart attack at the end of the year when I taught 1,110 and fielded 900 pieces of course-related e-mail put a stop to that. I tried it one more time because I love the work. There are few feelings as wonderful as looking at 50 young faces and watching the wheels turn in their heads all at once when they encounter a new idea the way explorers would reach new shores. But the toll it took on my family and health was simply not balanced by the incentives provided by the school. **AM**

Mark Hammer received his Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Victoria and works as a senior research analyst in human resource management with the Canadian government.

Mine, all mine!

Catherine Connelly's survivor's guide to information sharing in academia



“I really enjoyed your conference presentation. I am working on a similar project and would like to hear everything you know about the topic. Could you please send me your data and any working drafts that you have?”

If you were to receive a request like this from another faculty member, how would you react? What if the request came from a student? From your best friend from your graduate school days? Or from the most senior person in your field? If you are like most academics, you might think twice about your response, depending on who was asking, your relationship with this person, and how the request was made.

In the corporate world, many firms have introduced specialized initiatives to encourage the sharing of ideas and knowledge among staff. The central goal is to save employees some time by preventing them from reinventing the wheel. However, even in organizations where individuals are rewarded partly based on the success of their colleagues (for example, with profit sharing or stock options), these initiatives often fail to produce tangible results.

In academia, where scholars' reputations are generally forged on the basis of their intellectual contributions (rather than on their ability to be a team player), it is perhaps not surprising that most faculty members are, at one time or another, reluctant to share everything they know with rivals who have requested their assistance. One could argue that peer-reviewed publications are the traditional way to disseminate ideas; once a work has been accepted for publication most authors try to ensure that the scholarly work is read as widely as possible. However, requests for non-published scholarly work are often treated quite differently.

Depending on the situation, there are different strategies that can be employed to hide one's knowledge. For example, a common technique is to play dumb by pretending not to know the relevant information, or not to have access to it. If you were to ask someone for some specific information, they may actually know the answer but feign ignorance. Most academics, however, would hesitate to pursue this strategy; in fact, some people would go to great lengths to avoid ever uttering the words “I don't know.” These people would be more likely to employ a slightly different knowledge-hiding strategy.

In fact, the simplest way for someone to avoid answering a request for information is to simply ignore the request or to avoid the requestor. Colleagues who fail to answer their e-mails, who run when they see you in the faculty lounge, or who always keep their office doors closed, may be trying to avoid answering your questions. If you were to manage to corner such a colleague, however, he or she might answer your question by giving you an overly vague explanation, or by forwarding presentation slides without the relevant commentary, or by sending data that has been aggregated beyond the point of usefulness. If you were to press

them further, you might simply hear an explanation of why the requested information cannot be forthcoming.

Of course, there are times when hiding your knowledge is entirely justified. For example, you may need to be circumspect if someone asks for information that you need to keep private; perhaps you want to make sure that no one scoops your findings, or perhaps you are not quite sure whether your analysis is correct. In these cases, some tactful knowledge hiding is sometimes necessary. In that case, it would be more diplomatic to acknowledge that the request is reasonable and provide a time-frame for when the information can be provided. For example, telling someone “We're still working on that paper, but I'll send you a copy when we're ready to disseminate it” is far more believable than “I don't know” and far more diplomatic than “Stop trying to steal my research ideas!”

Clearly, some effort is necessary to keep information private while maintaining collegial relationships with other faculty members and students.

On one hand, your own lab, department, or discipline may have evolved a particular climate that either promotes or discourages knowledge hiding. Your senior colleagues, or your dissertation supervisor (if you are a student), may have set the tone about what constitutes an appropriate request or response. Various groups will have different standards for normal behaviour; these social norms will be affected by the actions of highly visible members as well as protocols for social interaction among members.

On the other hand, interpersonal trust may also be an issue. Because knowledge sharing is a reciprocal behaviour, you can take the lead by being willing to speak openly about your own work. People who refuse to share their ideas about research shouldn't be surprised when colleagues follow suit. **AM**

You know people are hiding knowledge from you when you ask colleagues for help, and they say:

- “I'm sorry. The paper isn't quite ready for dissemination yet.” Nothing. They ignore your request.
- “That isn't really my area of expertise. Maybe so-and-so can help you out.”
- “Sorry, I'm really busy right now... I'll have to get back to you on that”
- “My collaborators have insisted that I not divulge that kind of information”

Catherine Connelly is an assistant professor of human resources and management at the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University.

Maternal rage is the subject of this excerpt from Margaret Christakos's forthcoming novel, *Miss See-Through Girl*.

OOGA BOOGA



Art credit: Ava Lightbody

You would think there would be tapeloops of *Franklin*, not the gratuitous pessimism of CNN. *Chickadee* magazine instead of *ROB*. You would imagine the advisory committee would have had the basic sense to refuse Coke the license for at least this waiting room. Kids were already strung out on fear and fatigue and whatever singeing newness their particular accident had imported; they didn't need the psychic overstatement of the sick adult kind-of-day-it's-been.

Nini Pleides hadn't moved for about an hour. Her damp flannel top had meshed with Ms.. Pleides's shirtfront and Ms. Pleides crossed her legs to keep herself from pissing on the floor. If the kid's resolution to blame was this hardspun, so would be her own assertion of selflessness. She knew how to ascend. She knew this kid well enough to prepare a statement: I barely even held her hand. I noticed she was looking under the weather. She's never had great balance.

But Ms. Pleides calculated a second wave of questions aimed at their general relationship, her ongoing psychotherapy, the child's school status, relatives involved on a regular basis, provincial inoculation record, additional home context. She had all of the replies casually fixed. She would not use *yank* at any point in the conference. She would turn down prescribed painkillers on the grounds that she preferred a natural healing process, time, patience, gentleness, a

nurturing environment. She would mention books they had read together recently, incidents of pleasure between them, at a park, last summer swimming at the community centre. She would make reference to Nini's dance class. Yes, perhaps the whole thing happened there.

Nini was grey in the unnatural light of the waiting room; like all the whining, whimpering brats around them, she was greyed over but also she was cloaked, quiet, too silent. Her chest was flopped onto her mother's, the injured arm pressed between them like a turnip. Ms. Pleides realized her daughter's arm was about as big as a root vegetable, and limp as one left in the fridge too long, shoved away in the crisper where it lost all certitude. She imagined the child rotting. Herself getting the silver sheen of decomposition and them both sinking into the earth; sludge, fertilizer. Maybe it was all over for the present. She'd lost her harvest. Maybe they'd tell her she was finished and Nini would let them, out of her bitter all-seeing adherence to the real, the kid would go elsewhere and Ms. Pleides would stew rank and bilious on her own. Or perhaps Nini would sling her knees around her mother's waist and squeeze and archly shout that no one could remove her from the source of all goodness, of all protection, of all gravity.

Probably it would be somewhere in the middle, some less turgid space of grim looks and putting up with a doctor more efficient than observant, one looking for

something he's never seen before instead of a wound or nasty effect he's seen, what, weekly? Could anything about the two of them really be that particular? Ms. Pleides was obsessed with the prominence of her maternal faults; but what if she was merely not so good at any of it? Mediocre. Part of a demographic mean.

Her own mother had been that: average enough to never confront losing the right of ownership over her six kids, whom she queued from a young age to suck up a constant stream of household leakage. "Clean it up now!" she'd shout from the couch. "I said now!" All six of them would scurry in any direction and sponge, wipe, wash, sort, fold, and dry. None of them was ever taught any part of it; they knew it, they did it, with an outward compliance fueled by the sibling-wide internal refrain, spunkily hummed in several keys at once: Mom is such a *cow*.

Still, for all of the misuse of her children's creativity, they did not hate her. Ms. Pleides knew her mother would not have been standing quaking before any student doctor in a public hospital. She would have been clanging the bell on the receptionist's desk over and over and talking a wicked caveat; "But these are *my* children, and they will therefore be seen *now*, God damn it to hell—how much do you get paid anyhow? Get me a bloody four-star doctor or your administration will be sorry, and I never joke about these things, you can bet your beaver coattails your boss will



be hearing about this...," et cetera. She did not get faster service, but she filled the green hall with lurid action. She was not dull. She was not the thinking sort. She muled the children hacking from the rickety cot to the pharmacist's counter home to bed again and kick-aimed a steamer full of water and VapoRub at the bedroom corner and left the overflow it made slopping over for one of

the unsick children to soak up. Then the sick got better and resumed their duties, and the house skidded from day to day on its rubber-heeled hectoring righththeadness. No flies on any of them. No flies on *us*. She was a little league soccer coach too; she was a *civic-minded* cow when it suited, to advance her sons in the masculine ranks, to exercise her daughters' saddlebagged thighs—stride jumping G-O, G-O from the bench—to corset her status from the privacy of a well-run home to the naked quadrangle where youth climbed to centrestage and scrubbed the turf with a weaker team. "Get them!" was all she ever yelled, "Wipe 'em out!"

Ms. Pleides could see her own despondence as passivity or as something better, something along the line of a regard for the equal importance of every other compromised child in the waiting room. Some were wailing or chiding their mother for bringing them to this boring, stupid place, some were keeled over on a sallow cushion, their cheeks moping floorward. Some had the complexion of raw poultry and a vague sensibility of decay just wrong in a four year old. Nini's crumpled stillness was somewhere in the middle of this frightening spectrum. If they crept out of line, she might slip to the urgent side, to join the group who once absorbed into the hospital's off-colour gullet didn't go home that night or the next or the next. Or maybe she'd simply brighten and forget the trouble of discomfort; perhaps it was a mind

game. Perhaps her daughter liked the deep trembling in her mother's breast, the corruption of space separating them. Ms. Pleides rifled past every available story. She knew she had to stay, and show off the injured arm, and be judged.

When the doctor rotated the elbow and nudged the joint right again, Nini's back straightened and—like a creature leaving a cave, or someone half-drowned reviving with a wet cough—her shoulders wiggled. She let out a sigh, "Nope, doesn't hurt at all."

"Happens to lots of kids until the age of six. Then we never see it. Keep an eye on her for bruising." He hadn't laid a glance on Ms. Pleides. The chart was flipped for her signing-off. His broad white backside was already moving to the next curtain. "Have a good night, ladies."

"Thanks doctor. Nini, say thank you."

Nini stared after the man. "It was like a monkey came and peeled the hurt away, like a banana. Ooga booga. Do you think he likes bananas, Mommy?"

Framed in a doorway across the corridor, a small set of slipped feet stuck out from under a pink sheet, one foot vibrating nervously. The E.R. desk staff was chattering around a coffee thermos, ribbing each other like any staff on break at any office. No one was watching Ms. Pleides, but also, no one was tending distress; a stained curtain blocked another moaning child from view. "They'll be all right," Ms. Pleides said to Nini, who strained from the muffled sounds to their probable meaning as if playing 3-D Connect the Dots.

As she shifted her daughter from her torso into the cab, where she was still resolute about clinging, about claiming, Ms. Pleides delivered a small push to the girl's rejuvenated arm and fastened her to her own side of the seat. She had wanted to dash the girl against a wall. In the moment of assault, there was no inhibition. Well, there was in fact, for she hadn't, she had simply held her daughter by the forearm and pulled her up a set of stairs and told her to brush her teeth now or else she would get thrown down again. The girl had examined her mother's hurricaning eyes as the tiny implement agitated the paste on her front teeth; a gathering wind pushed the surface of a harbour into small whitecaps. She masticated the peppermint froth and, almost as if she simply could not resist the sensation of the stuff turning to bubbled foam, spewed out a gob of it at her mother's thigh. Nini giggled and white

gravy ran down her chin and clotted on her pyjama top.

Ms. Pleides felt the ensuing shatteredness of light in the bathroom. Perhaps she'd smashed the mirror by reflex. Her own mother shrieked in the black funnel of her memory about nerve, what *nerve* the kid had to treat a parent like that, what despicable insolence. She was surfed in shame. She couldn't adapt the child's behaviour, was too passive, too wishy-washy, not seriously taken by the child, was a joke; and, screaming "That is *not* funny!," Ms. Pleides accosted the girl by the same forearm (for consistency's sake, as the therapist said) and wholeheartedly flung her, like a killer fishing lure gleaming on a line, down the stairs.

In the middle of the arc, however, Nini had screamed as if she'd been ruptured. The fisherwoman hung on and pulled her back onto the dock, the boat, the shore, saw that attached to the end of her line was a dull and battered anchor, not a warrior-tuna, not a leaping ray, but an inert remnant of some lost sailby. A pathetic artifact, a weeping child. Clearly she could have murdered her, but the prospect that she'd actually ripped one of her child's limbs from its socket horrified her to such a depth that she began to hyperventilate the chant, "Holy mother of God, Holy fuck, Holy Jesus Christ, Holy shit, Holy..." until Nini reshaped her retched-forth sobs to a macabre shadow-song of Santa Claus's arrival, heaving "ho-ho-ho-ho ho-ho," then paling quickly to silence. By the time they'd checked into Middle Western Hospital she was conserving her words not unlike an old person, sinking.

In the cab home, the adult woman and gem-eyed daughter were swaying with the carnivalesque tableau of the city by night. As if a veil had been pulled up off her face, Nini looked awestruck that so many people were awake and walking about. Her mother leaned back, appreciating the tug of the seatbelt clearly delineating the end of her lap from the child's limber sprawl on the seat beside. Ms. Pleides felt her wrists and the insides of her elbows pulse against air instead of moist cloth; she breathed. They were back on land together. The doctor hadn't fingered her. The receptionist must not have added an asterisk to the file. The other harried parents in the waiting room and their damaged kids had seen nothing out of the ordinary. The storm could have been much worse. **AM**

A conservative look at the liberal arts

As far back as I can remember—about 50 years—American universities have been more visibly involved in the political process than their Canadian counterparts. The 1950s saw struggles over radical professors, Communist sympathizers, and loyalty oaths. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, American campuses became hotbeds of opposition to the war in Vietnam. As time went on, the New Left graduated from the student body to the professoriate, lending an increasingly left-wing complexion to faculties of humanities and social sciences even as the Republicans were establishing themselves as the majority party in the country at large.

Initially, conservatives concentrated on establishing think tanks and advocacy groups to generate the ideas they were not finding in the universities. More recently, however, they have gone on the attack against campus liberalism. Signs of the times are organizations such as Campus Watch; the recent book by David Horowitz, *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*; and campus “bills of rights,” proposed (but not passed) in several state legislatures. Like much of American public life, it’s immensely entertaining but not directly relevant to the less boisterous political culture of Canada, where conservatives have not organized any effort to monitor universities and push them in a direction more to their liking. (Disclosure: I sit on the board of directors of an organization called the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship, which criticizes affirmative action on meritocratic grounds; but we have no overt political orientation; and we try to defend the academic freedom of any professor who gets himself in trouble, whether he has offended the right or the left.)

Michel Bérubé, a professor of American literature at Pennsylvania State

University, has for years been trading darts with Horowitz, who named Bérubé as one of the “101 most dangerous academics in America.” This book is the latest installment of their ongoing feud.

Indeed, Bérubé has some strong points to make. Not all the stories cited by Horowitz and other critics of American campus liberalism are accurate in every detail. Prominent American conservatives send their children to the same universities, such as Harvard and Stanford, that they love to criticize. And there certainly is no organized plan to staff faculties of humanities and social sciences with left-wing professors; it is largely a matter of who chooses to go into these fields and thus becomes available for employment. Conservatives,

who have trenchantly criticized affirmative-action administrators for interpreting statistical disparities as evidence of discrimination, may make the same mistake when they criticize universities for hiring so many lefties.

Bérubé is rather comical on this issue. He toys with arguing that universities hire liberals because university professors have to be smart and liberals are smarter than conservatives, but he won’t go so far as to agree with John Stuart Mill that conservatives are the “stupid party.” He thus ends by saying that conservatives tend to follow the money into consulting practices, law firms, and brokerage houses; whereas idealistic

liberals, unable or unwilling to succeed in such competitive arenas, settle for poorly paid jobs in the universities. Though he offers no systematic data, there may well be some truth in this line of argument.

However, the reason for the statistical disparities is not the only point at issue. A university is not a sports franchise trying to field the best team in order to win championships, entertain fans, and make money. As long as the team wins, it doesn’t really matter if all the players on the basketball team are black and all the players on the hockey team are white. But it does matter if all, or almost all, the professors in departments such as English or political science come from one part of the political spectrum, because the mission of the university is not entertainment but education, which degenerates easily into indoctrination. In spite of best attempts at being open-minded in the classroom (and I take Bérubé at his word in his book’s dedication, “For my students—all of them”), political convictions

Like much of American public life, it’s immensely entertaining but not directly relevant to the less boisterous political culture of Canada, where conservatives have not organized any effort to monitor universities and push them in a direction more to their liking.

are bound to affect the way one teaches.

Bérubé provides an example of this in the course of discussing an alleged case of liberal indoctrination in the classroom. A political science professor at Foothill College (Los Altos Hills, California, in case you’ve never heard of it) had asked this question on an exam: “Dye and Zeigler...contend that the constitution of the United States was not ‘ordained and established’ by ‘the people’ as we have so often been led to believe....Analyze the U.S. constitution (original document) and show how its formulation excluded [the] majority of the people living in America at that time, and how it was dominated by

WHAT'S LIBERAL ABOUT the LIBERAL ARTS?

CLASSROOM POLITICS AND "BIAS"
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

MICHAEL BÉRUBÉ



Reviewed by Tom Flanagan

Michael Bérubé, *What's Liberal About the Liberal Arts? Classroom Politics and "Bias" in Higher Education* (W.W. Norton, 2006), 344 pp.

private universities, both religious and secular, to challenge the reigning orthodoxies and practices of public institutions.

Within universities, I think the situation is not bad, at least within the traditional disciplines. If I may invoke my own experience, those of us in the so-called "Calgary School" are known as conservative thinkers, and we naturally attract some conservatively minded graduate students. When they graduate, those students have never found a problem in getting hired in Canadian universities. I think Canadian conservatives can do just fine in the traditional disciplines, in which there are objective standards of accomplishment.

More private universities, both religious and secular, would challenge the reigning orthodoxies and practices of public institutions

I am not so sanguine, however, about faux disciplines such as women's studies, native studies, queer studies, and cultural studies, which have been invented to get around the objective standards of the traditional disciplines. Practitioners in these fields generally practice advocacy scholarship in support of social movements and tend to create a monolithic rather than pluralistic intellectual climate. To the extent that such departments proliferate, they create "no go" zones for conservatives, both students and faculty. I would not, however, ask governments to intervene to restructure the universities, as the cure would be worse than the disease. University administrations will have to deal with the problems they themselves have created. **AM**

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America's elite interest." The question is a transparent exercise in indoctrination; it tells students what the right answer is while directing them to fill in a few blanks. But Bérubé accepts the question as valid, arguing that a student whose cause conservatives had taken up deserved to fail because his answer was poorly written. Indeed, the answer (as printed in Bérubé's book) was poor, and the student probably did deserve to fail, but the professor should also have been chastised for abusing his classroom prerogatives.

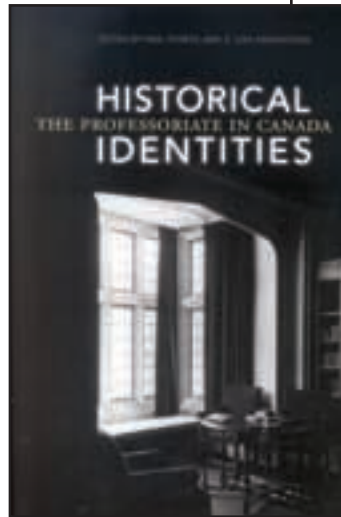
Ultimately, Bérubé sees no problem in the fact that 90 per cent of instructors in American faculties of humanities and social sciences are liberal Democrats. Conservative students should just suck it up and be grateful that they can pay big

bucks to have their beliefs challenged.

I beg to differ. I believe that a system of advanced education should strive for genuine pluralism, in which competing worldviews can obtain more than token representation. Pluralism ought to exist at several levels: individual instructors should strive for fairness in the classroom, while acknowledging that no one can be perfect at this. Departments should seek balance in their hiring processes; and the system should make it possible for minorities who feel excluded to create their own institutions.

The biggest problem in Canada is the systemic one. We used to have a healthier balance of public and private institutions, but the private ones were mostly gobbled up in the great public expansion of the 1960s. I think we would benefit from having more

The professor as a category of analysis



Paul Stortz and E. Lisa Panayotidis, eds., *Historical Identities: The Professoriate in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2006), 450 pp.

Watch out. This is a review, by a professor, for a journal read by professors, of a book by two professors, about the history of professors. As the old joke goes: “Enough about me. What do *you* think about me?”

What saves this exercise from being completely indulgent is that, despite a (well-deserved) reputation for long-windedness, professorial self-reflection has actually been rare. This anthology, the first of its kind in Canada, explores the political and social lives of Canadian professors, their working conditions, identities, and why people (mostly their students), have found them such great targets for caricature.

Anthologies are almost always uneven, and while a few contributions reinforce exactly the combination of irrelevance and pomposity the book seeks to deconstruct, this is a worthwhile collection on the whole. There are some especially acute readings of the politics of professordom, including Cameron Duder’s tale of same-sex partners flying under the academic radar, Steve Hewitt’s chilling account of faculty as RCMP informants (and informed-upon) during the Cold War, and Alison Prentice’s tale—chilling in a whole other way—of the strained lives of faculty wives. Donald Fisher’s account of how the expansion of the university system in the 1960s changed university culture, particularly faculty lives and working conditions, uses Bishop’s University as a fascinating case study. And Lisa Panayotidis’s study of how faculty were caricatured in University of Toronto student yearbooks provides some good insight into popular understandings of professors and why, historical-

ly, we seem to inspire an odd mixture of awe and contempt.

So who are we? Despite several oft-repeated but unsubstantiated assertions that universities and professors are “conservative,” this collection as a whole makes a good case for the polyglot nature of faculty life. Michiel Horn’s study of faculty involvement in electoral politics reveals a mixed record: plenty of “rabbits” afraid to challenge even the imagined authority of a dean, but also plenty of examples of faculty extending themselves for unpopular causes—like running for the CCF, for example (which they seemed to do a lot). Similarly, administrators indeed earned their reputation for bloodlessness, running feudal kingdoms rather than complex universities. But even places like Queen’s University could occasionally stand up for mavericks. O.D. Skelton’s support for the anti-conscription Liberals in 1917 could have cost him his political science job; however, the university principal resisted pressure from wealthy alumnae and kept him on staff.

Perhaps the most perceptive stories emerge from the articles that probe the world of social relationships. It is here that the monocultural, feudal world of Great White Men, for whom wives and students exist solely to serve tea and reflect greatness back, is revealed, in all its dismal loneliness. Cartoon images of early twentieth-century professors—no doubt many of these reproductions will shortly make their ironic way to faculty office doors—reveal them to be detached, aloof, their nose permanently in a book, looking imperiously down their noses at students.

What did the expansion and democratization of the university system since the 1960s do to these stereotypes? What have more recent battles to expand the category of “knowers” to all races and sexes done to popular and self-perceptions? How have neo-liberal changes to public post-secondary education forced a rethinking of the lone man in the ivory tower?

When we “look into a professor’s soul” (as one title asks us to consider) it’s not such a pretty sight. Yet it’s striking that the popular narratives of professors—and this collection only scratches the surface here—cast us more as bumblers than menaces. With a few exceptions—Professor Moriarty and the whole Mad Scientist genre—professors are rarely evil.

But maybe we are funny. I don’t think I’ve read anything more insightful on the professoriate than David Lodge’s series of campus novels from the 1970s and 1980s. Lodge’s brilliance was to capture the absurdity of academic politics and rivalries, the frail male psyches of faculty super-heroes, and the absolute privilege of a life that allows one to spend long days sitting at home in a bathrobe reading a book. (Or writing a book review.) At a reading in London in 1995, when his non-campus novel, *Therapy*, had just come out, I asked Professor Lodge why he stopped writing about professors. “Because universities aren’t funny any more,” he responded. This seemed about as devastating a comment on post-Thatcher England as one could imagine. **AM**

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How strongly do you feel about the sociology department?

Reviewed by Robert Storey



James R. Coffman, *Work and Peace in Academe: Leveraging Time, Money, and Intellectual Energy Through Managing Conflict* (Anker Publishing, 2005), 240 pp.



Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt, *Office Hours: Activism and Change in the Academy* (Routledge, 2004), 223 pp.

At one point in 1981 Gary Trudeau's *Donesbury* was concerned with the funding crisis at fictitious Walden College. In one episode, Walden President Kingman is seated at his desk with an assistant standing at his side as they discuss where to cut the budget. They are perplexed. Cuts to administrative salaries are summarily rejected as the two agree that they have sacrificed enough. Fifteen percent cuts across all faculties are cast aside as that would precipitate an open revolt. Desperate, Kingman asks his assistant: "How strongly do you feel about the Sociology Department?"

Trudeau penned the strip in 1981, thus giving us a rough historical benchmark for the start of the various fiscal and political crises that were about to beset post-secondary education systems in the United States and elsewhere.

Twenty-five years later the groups that inhabit universities—students, staff, faculty, administrators, and governments—remain locked in tough negotiations that often flare into open conflict over the structure, content, and direction of post secondary education.

In *Work and Peace in Academe*, James R. Coffman offers both a "framework for understanding conflict in an academic environment" and methods for its resolution.

Coffman's book is essentially a management consultant how-to book: how to minimize unproductive conflict and how to maximum productive conflict. There are some important insights in its pages, particularly when he writes about recognizing that people of colour and women confront complications in achieving tenure and promotion.

The central difficulty with the book lies in Coffman's prescriptions for managing these problems. Essentially he calls for administrators to listen more closely to their colleagues and subordinates and to incorporate their useful ideas. What is missing here, however, is the critical recognition that while being an understanding and accessible administrator/boss is preferable to one who is neither, this individual orientation has little or no long-term impact if the overall social relations of the organization (e.g., decision-making rationales and hierarchies, and the actual conditions of work) do not undergo fundamental change.

In their timely and important book, Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt argue that it is such failings on the part of university administrators that have lead university faculty to engage in various forms of collective action over the last 20 years. Indeed, the principle contention of *Office Hours* is that it is the rampant and pervasive deterioration of the workplace, particularly in the form of "higher education's increasing reliance on contingent labor," that has soured collegiality while dividing faculty from administration.

Why have Nelson and Watt placed so much emphasis on the increased use of "contingent labor"? First, their growing numbers and utter vulnerability of contingent faculty make them an extremely flexible (and largely invisible) workforce for employer's intent on restructuring with an eye on the bottom line; that is, they are readily available, come extremely cheap, and can be sacrificed at a moments notice. Secondly, their here-this-term-gone-the-next status creates alienated workers with little or no connection to their workplaces,

separates them from the core, tenured faculty, and leads inexorably to pedagogical and ideological servitude as part-timers become afraid to teach and write about politically controversial issues. Importantly, as Nelson and Watt argue, such timidity has spilled over into the ranks of the full-time faculty.

For Nelson and Watt, the only solution to these ills is collective action. They recount how campaigns to unionize graduate students have lead to the forging of a collective identity among disparate sectors of this workforce. At the same time, union campaigns and strikes among full-time faculty have created affinities among colleagues in different departments. Faculty at York University still talk about how they came to know and become friends with faculty from other departments by spending time together on the picket line. Likewise, the strike of support staff at McMaster University brought more than 2,000 workers together gave faculty members a clear idea of the crucial roles support staff has in the functioning of the university.

However, one group of academic workers is rarely successful in beating back a confident, neo-liberal, corporate-driven tide. An example of productive conflict would offer an alternative to the divide-and-rule chase for funds that administrations set before faculty; that challenges academic entrepreneurialism; that refuses to accept intensification of labour; and that gives full value to all labours that make a university work. A formidable set of tasks, to be sure. But what is the alternative? **AM**

Robert Storey is a professor in the sociology and labour studies department at McMaster University.

Embrace Your Outer Cabbage

I can think of nothing more disturbing than teaching at a university where almost one-third of professors are considered HOT. That's right: of the 3,008 University of Toronto professors assessed on RateMyProfessor.com (RMP), fully 809 of them have received the coveted tamale, indicating that at least one student thinks they are attractive. That's pretty much the sum total of what I learned from eight hours exploring RMP, an excruciatingly painful task foisted on me by the malevolent editor of this magazine.

Do I even need to say that RMP runs against the historic mission of universities? I don't mean it cheapens higher learning or encourages superficial judgements about teachers. RMP does that, to be sure, ratcheting up the consumerist language to a comically superficial level. Most of the comments on the site wouldn't qualify as mediocre movie reviews, and I doubt even Jerry Springer would be much impressed by the level of expression. "She sux" is a common retort, followed closely by "He's so-o-o-o-o-o boring." Spicy stuff.

But accusing RMP of superficial consumerism is like shooting fish in a barrel. Any D-level undergraduate could come up with that slag. The consumerism of RMP is just "so-o-o-o-o-o-o, blatant, and the controls on content so sadly lacking that I sometimes find it hard to work up genuine moral outrage. Besides, we grade undergraduates, holding at least one important aspect of their lives in our hands, so if they want to insult our fashion sense on-line, then oh well, whatever, never mind.

Still, even if the site is mainly "stu-u-u-u-u-pid," it is a lot like this purported "humour" column: something I hope never ends up in my tenure file. The ratings can be embarrassing, cruel, and even creepy, and I'd hate to think they would ever be put to real use. Despite the superficial resemblance, these are not student evaluations,

which at least are somewhat systematic and occasionally helpful. Student evaluations may not have fulfilled their original democratic purpose, and they have attracted controversy, but I always learn something from them. RMP, however, is less an extension of student evaluations than student gossip. This, sadly, is one of the key themes of the Internet: four billion opinions, but so few of them useful or important.

Still, at my seventh painful hour on RMP, I started worrying about those tamales and the historic mission of universities. In the initial nineteenth-century wave of university-building, most were founded by religious dominations anxious to inculcate Christian values in the young. This religious mission soon floundered. Christ was widely praised as a teacher (earning 12 much-coveted "sandals" on RateMyMessiah.com), but most of his publications were written by research assistants, and he was denied tenure by his host institution.

Over time, then, the central mission of universities changed, eventually settling on its fundamental present-day purpose: to provide a refuge for the socially awkward and physically unattractive. Oh, sure, we came up with some good propaganda to justify our existence: the socialization of the middle class; nodes of innovative research; nexus of critical thinking; spaces of interstitial empowerment; sites of collective memory; all that jazz. But these were never more than clever sound bites for the consumption of the cooler people who ran corporations and governments—those Alpha per-

sonality types who were probably popular in high school. Any honest professor will admit that her career path pretty much constituted falling off the bottom of the global ladder of cool and landing on campus with a happy-sounding thud.

And there's the rub. I don't know a tamale from a cabbage, but I guess in the comparatively sparse aesthetic geography of academia, one-third of University of Toronto professors may *actually be* HOT. It's like my Uncle Ralph used to say: "A corpse is like caviar to a buzzard." It's all relative. But we spent two centuries creating our Garden of Geekish Paradise, so the last thing we need is the future generation running about the place planting tamales.

All things considered, I'd rather be a

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cabbage. It's not an attractive vegetable, but it has lots of layers and delivers a healthy amount of fibre. Put this on RMP: "With Professor Penfold, you can really make some good cole slaw. *Très cruciferous.*" Bring tamales into the Garden, though, and the cabbages won't stand a chance. Pretty soon we're all going to be dressing fashionably, building athletic bodies, and taking regular showers. And that just ain't the job that I signed up for. **AM**

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Attention Deficit Disorders

Visitors to Canada could be excused for thinking there is little interest in higher education. They might be impressed by the comparatively high level of educational attainment in the country, the proportion of young people who attend a university or college, and government expenditures on post-secondary education.

Moreover, statements by government officials, leading politicians, economists, and the corporate sector about the fundamental importance of higher education to our “knowledge-based economy” could lead one to believe our universities are indeed taken most seriously.

There is a fundamental disconnect, however, between what is asserted about higher education’s value and how it is viewed in the public sphere, particularly the media.

The resources the media devote to higher education are telling. There are only a few education reporters at the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *CanWest*, and *Sun* media chains and at some local papers. Most are expected to cover the entire education system, not higher education specifically. Education reporters in the electronic media are even fewer.

Coverage of higher education is episodic. The annual university issues of *Maclean’s* and the *Globe and Mail* receive considerable attention, and major government announcements, student demonstrations, controversial academics, research breakthroughs, and human interest stories get a day or two of attention. Aside from this, there is no sustained coverage of any one concern.

It might be argued there is nothing unusual about this since all media coverage is episodic and generally focuses on conflict and controversy. True enough. But why do media in other countries devote far more coverage to higher education than media in Canada?

In the United States, there are numerous media publications dedicated to higher education. One of the most prominent, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* is published daily on the web and weekly in hard copy. The web-based *Inside Higher Education* is a daily. There are no equiva-

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lents in Canada. Higher education coverage in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* is much broader than anything found in the leading Canadian dailies.

In the United Kingdom, the story is similar. The *Times* puts out a weekly *Higher Education Supplement*, and the *Guardian* publishes weekly and daily sections of news on universities and colleges.

One could argue the greater coverage in the United States and Britain is the result of those countries having more higher education institutions, students, and research activity than Canada.

Perhaps. But how does one explain Australia, with a population and a higher education sector significantly smaller than Canada’s? The national paper, the *Australian*, publishes a weekly tertiary education supplement, and the *Campus Review* also comes out weekly. Even New Zealand, with a population one-eighth of Canada’s, produces a weekly newspaper about education.

This lack of attention in the Canadian media might be less worrisome if it were not paralleled by the limited amount of research done on universities in Canada. Perhaps the Canadian media is mirroring, and perpetuating, the message that universities are not that important.

There is indeed a profound disconnect between the pervasive economic, social, cultural, and economic influence of higher education on the lives of Canadians and what we actually know about our universities. As others observe in this issue, the absence of any systematic study of academic staff or national data on faculty—except for very basic demographic information—means we know little about those who teach in universities or the changing nature of their work and how it affects research and teaching.

Until the data is collected and the analysis is done, we will have no detailed understanding of the career paths of graduates who go into academia, the changing mix of tenure and non-tenure track faculty and the classes they teach, or meaningful and consistent measures of class size and student-faculty ratios. Nor will we have a detailed understanding of the number and career paths of visible minority faculty or those with disabilities.

Ultimately, what we know, or do not know, about higher education is a public policy concern. Good public policy decisions on higher education cannot be made unless the data is collected and the analysis done allowing for informed choices. Public affirmations about the importance of higher education to the “knowledge economy” are no substitute for informed research that allows us to understand the various and complex ways universities and their communities shape our economy and society.

The funding and scope for higher education data collection at Statistics Canada pales in comparison to that of the U.S. National Centre for Education Statistics, or even the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training. Unless there is a public policy commitment to understanding better the institutions of higher learning deemed essential to our future prosperity, then, like the Canadian media, our approach will continue to be episodic and limited, at best. **AM**

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