M. PRINZO

Higher Education

HANG THE FACULTY

That was H.L. Mencken's best idea for saving higher education almost a century ago. That spirit has been resurrected by sensationalistic diatribes such as Charles Sykes's Profscam, *which asserts that undergraduate education is corrupt, and that the culprits have tenure.*

Is it possible? Could it be that an honored profession—composed by definition of intelligent, visionary individuals—has forgotten what it's about? Or, worse yet, can't be made to give a damn?

Well, yes and no.

"I go to Wayne State," says William Coplin, remembering his first faculty appointment, "where they're really into this academic culture. I get socialized and start publishing stuff there, and I do very well because I can play their game." He describes how his research publications endeared him to the dean and other peers who would decide his success as a professor.

"But then in 1966 I'd already published three or four books. I went to the dean of arts and sciences and said that I don't want to teach graduate students anymore. . . . I said, 'You've got this big freshman class, "Introduction to Social Science." I've always wanted to do something like that. I want to teach and run that course.'"

The dean resisted. "He said to me, 'You'll ruin your career. Don't do that. We need you to publish.'" The dean encouraged Coplin to concentrate on research, to enhance the prestige of Wayne State University, a school, in Coplin's opinion, that would never build a top reputation for research. So Coplin left, landing at Syracuse's Maxwell School, where, due in part to the credentials he had already established, he could concentrate on teaching. Coplin, now chairman of the public affairs department, still conducts research: He coauthors a series of annual guides on international investment risk. But he no longer submits articles to narrowly focused academic journals.

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BY RENÉE GEARHART LEVY AND DANA L. COOKE

Coplin is a professor who loves to teach undergraduates and who will risk his stature for the opportunity to do so. He makes his love for teaching known to students and colleagues alike, pressing for its constant improvement. He is the advisor of Undergraduates for a Better Education, a student organization that also urges good teaching.

Charles Sykes would tell you that Coplin's commitment to undergraduate teaching places him in the minority, and a small one at that. In 1988 Sykes wrote *Profscam*, a best-selling tract (some would say harangue) on the status of undergraduate education in America and the allegedly villainous role of the professoriate in undermining traditions of teaching. In *Profscam*, Sykes argued that academic research had acquired a self-feeding and grandiose intent irrelevant to education. He described systems of cozy log-rolling and back-scratching by which both teachers and students escape purpose. He portrayed a canon of credentialism that rewards only those faculty members who are most adept at pointless esoterica. Sykes's conclusions were relentlessly unsympathetic, and *Profscam* became a national sensation.

By the time *Profscam* came along, though, higher education had sounded its own alarms regarding research and teaching. Sykes's book was preceded, for example, by *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*, a report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (headed by former U.S. Commissioner of Education Ernest L. Boyer). The Carnegie Foundation found evidence that at many of the nation's most prestigious research universities, undergraduate education risked poor-relation treatment—that the delicate balance between teaching and research too often tilts toward the latter.

Since then other books, blue-ribbon panel reports, and media exposés of undergraduate teaching have appeared. Higher education in 1990 buzzes with concern for teaching. A broad new dialogue on such matters as faculty-reward systems, research applicability, scholarly peer review, and the like have overtaken the profession. University presidents speak of new paradigms for the American university, and at many prestigious universities (Syracuse among them), they have implemented tactics that lead toward such new models.

Few institutions have moved more dynamically to address their problems than higher education moves today. "There is a lot of talk today about improving collegiate education," Boyer said four years ago. "More than I've heard in 20 years."

Within the academic community, you'll find little disagreement with the most specific observations that *Profscam*, Page Smith's *Killing the Spirit*, and similar treatises make. Academicians will tell you that, yes, professors sometimes immerse themselves in research; that they pass teaching duties off to graduate assistants; that tenure committees are conditioned to overemphasize badges of research accomplishment.

But academicians differ with *Profscam* in two crucial regards. First, they insist the problems are not so universal as Sykes's monolithic assertions would suggest. Most faculty members enjoy teaching and, when unencumbered by competing priorities, they will pursue it. Teaching assistants are generally well-prepared and used appropriately. The ethos of the faculty is not detached from teaching. The unfortunate cases of abuse are rare enough to have nomi-

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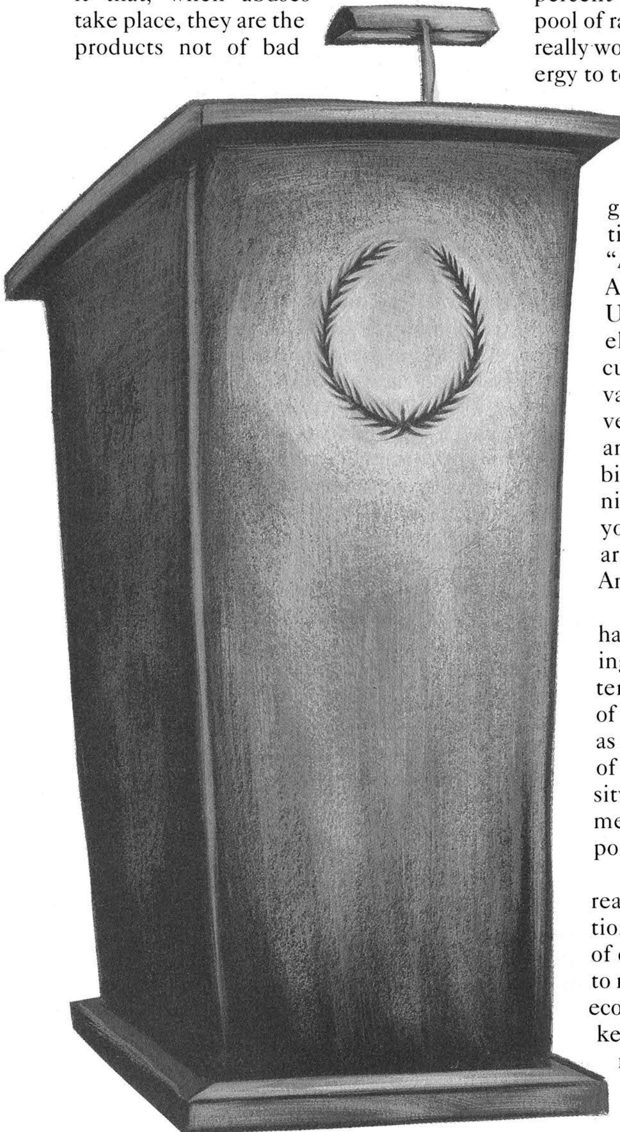
nal—though not negligible—effects on a student's education.

The second, even more widespread dissention lies with Sykes's assumption of cause—his portrayal of faculty slovenliness and deceit. In a community of observers who have spent their entire careers among the professoriate, no one accuses the faculty of deliberate subversion. Consensus has it that, when abuses take place, they are the products not of bad intentions, but of good intentions allowed to drift (or forced to drift by external forces).



This distinction is vitally important, because hope for remediation depends on the faith that professors want to teach and that they will respond enthusiastically when the system supports teaching. Even Coplin, who says he agrees with Sykes "about 95 percent of the way," says, "there's a large pool of rank-and-file faculty members who really would like to devote most of their energy to teaching. [They] feel frustrated by the trends of the past 10 years."

To understand the teaching-research issue, consider the history of America's large, prestigious "research universities," sometimes called "multiversities" or "AAU-type universities." (The AAU is the Association of American Universities, an organization of 59 elite universities. Along with Syracuse, AAU members include Harvard, Stanford, and Princeton universities, the universities of Chicago and Southern California, and other big-name institutions easily recognized as important for reasons beyond teaching. Their counterparts are the liberal-arts colleges, such as Amherst, Kenyon, and Swarthmore.)

For some universities, research has been a long-standing priority, dating back a century. But it was only after World War II that large numbers of universities began to view research as a valuable, even indispensable part of their missions. Today, no university and only a fraction of faculty members dismiss research as a component of their scholarly lives.

In no small part, this was a direct reaction to outside needs. "The nation has been asking more and more of our research universities, as a way to meet the needs of the nation in the economic arena and international marketplace, as well as the traditional domains of health and national security," says John C. Crowley, a 1967 and 1977 graduate of SU's Maxwell School who is vice president of the AAU. "Over the past 20 years or so there has been an effort to draw research universities into closer working relationships with industry in particular."

Theoretical research has always been seen as a natural companion to instruction. It's reasoned that a faculty member who is also a practicing explorer is better equipped to lead the next generation into the frontiers of knowledge. As time passed, the research accomplishments of faculty members became an important gauge of their overall worthiness. In many instances, research has become the predominant or sole gauge of worthiness. Seventy-five percent of the professors surveyed by the Carnegie Foundation reported that "it is very difficult to achieve tenure in their departments without publishing."

"Faculty members can only do so much at any one time," Crowley adds, "and the incentive systems that have arisen as a result of national and state policy objectives have rewarded research more than they have rewarded teaching."

Whole generations of scholars have come of age in this environment. Today many of the structures of higher education are inadvertently imbued with an overemphasis on research. Some younger faculty members learn to value research to the detriment of teaching. But, punch a hole in that cultural backdrop, it is reasoned, and the individuals—those faculty members—will follow naturally, gravitating back toward an appreciation of their teaching.

In the meantime, the cases of lost balance manifest themselves as various symptoms: the overuse of teaching assistants, the absence of professors from lower-division classes, overly large class sizes, and curricula shaped around the faculty's research specialties.

While many of the present reforms seek to address those symptoms, the most ambitious and far-reaching of them attempt to dismantle the deep-seated attitudes from which specific abuses spring. Together, the reforms hope to prove that, with imagination and initiative, it is possible to provide the highest quality undergraduate education at a research university.

"I think it would be going much too far to say there is a sense of crisis around this," Crowley concludes. ". . . There is a sense that institutions need to take a fresh look, a more sensitive look, perhaps a more nuanced look at their undergraduate programs and explore ways to further strengthen them."

"There is one best reason to attend a [research] university," says Ronald R. Cavanagh, vice president for undergraduate studies at SU, "and that is to get the best education you can get. This is an intentional community. It has a purpose that involves, as its key element, education."

Many of the reforms target symptoms and surface manifestations of teaching-research imbalance. These initiatives are concrete and their effects are intended to be immediate, or nearly so.

Universities are addressing, for example, the questions of teaching-assistant (TA) use. Many employ some approach to presemester training for TAs, supplemented by linguistic and cultural acclimation for TAs who are foreign citizens. The first university to offer a comprehensive TA training program—a program that by all indications remains the best of its kind—was, in fact, Syracuse. In 1986, SU conducted a national survey of TAs. Two years later, it created the TA Training Program, which runs for two weeks each August.

Universities have also instituted programs to encourage the presence of senior faculty members in lower-division courses. The University of California at Berkeley places senior faculty members in charge of developing new interdisciplinary, lower-division courses. Columbia University, like many schools, has established endowed professorships to reward eminence in teaching. Syracuse's program, the Gateway Program, funds materials and other resources for professors who teach introductory courses.

Many schools are experimenting with vehicles by which teachers and students encounter one another at the personal level. These seminars involve them in a nonacademic setting, where together they consider basic intellectual opportunities of university life and, in the process, learn to better appreciate one another. Says Nancy Malkiel, Princeton's dean of the College: "It's been a very successful way of having our most distinguished senior faculty members teaching small groups of freshmen. We have a new senior seminar program . . . that, again, brings senior faculty into small group settings, which we had not had before."

Many universities have provided teaching-support programs on their campuses, such as Syracuse's Center for Instructional Development, to lend expertise in pedagogic methods. Northwestern University recently created a committee to investigate opportunities to bolster teaching—"things we can do to help new faculty members and midcareer faculty members develop and improve their teaching skills," says Provost Robert Duncan. Stanford and the universities of Arizona and North Carolina established teaching centers to serve both TAs and regular faculty members.

Some schools, such as the University of Rochester, are creating internal undergraduate colleges. Others have established undergraduate affairs offices, similar in their intent to the creation of Ronald Cavanagh's position at Syracuse, which was the first of its kind. The existence of such offices is largely credited for the implementation of specific reforms.

Ultimately higher education will not address the teaching-research imbalance, most observers agree, until it redirects the ethos from which abuses spring—not a simple proposition. An inbred prejudice toward research exists, created by years of faculty-reward practices; that prejudice must be counteracted before a rich commitment to teaching by all can be achieved. Higher education faces the prospect of redirecting the most basic thinking of whole populations.

"Junior faculty [members] who show outstanding teaching ability fail the tenure line too often," Stanford President Donald Kennedy told his academic council last spring. ". . . It is time to reaffirm that education—that is, teaching in all its forms—is the primary task."

Momentum consistent with Kennedy's proclamation is already evident. The Carnegie Foundation is developing recommendations for a new faculty-reward system. Similarly, the AAU has convened a committee, representing 30 institutions, that will study issues in teaching at member universities. The National Endowment for the Humanities now funds endowed, well-compensated teaching chairs at qualified universities, to be filled on the basis of pedagogical merit

Many individual schools are making similar attempts—Syracuse among them. An October 15, 1990, article in *U.S. News & World Report* cited Syracuse specifically: "Syracuse has embarked on a program that ultimately could change the campus reward system itself by deliberately increasing the importance of teaching in salary and tenure decisions. . . . If it works, Syracuse's strategy may be key."

"What we're trying to do is educate people on tenure and promotion committees that, yes, you can evaluate teaching," says Robert M. Diamond, assistant vice chancellor for instructional development at SU. He says we must broaden the academy's sense of scholarship. "We found that quite often very creative and imaginative things related to teaching don't count. I can create a textbook. [Peers] wouldn't count it as creative work. I can totally restructure a course so that it is nationally innovative. It wouldn't count."

Substantial evidence suggests that professors themselves are frustrated with reward systems—a 1986 study at Rutgers University found numerous faculty complaints about the emphasis on research in promotion—and that faculty members will react positively to reform.

The same *U.S. News* article quotes D. Bruce Johnstone, chancellor of the State University of New York: "Giving tenure to a professor whose teaching is demonstrably superior but whose scholarship is only adequate sends signals in a way no amount of exhortation can."

Coplin puts it even more bluntly, judging the value of current reforms on this basis alone: "I'll know a lot better by May when we see who they decide to fire this year."

In the meantime, research goes on at multiversities. Scholars continue to view teaching and research as not only compatible, but inseparable, and list unique advantages to an undergraduate student who attends a research university.

"It's very different being taught by a teacher, versus being taught by a discoverer," says Ben Ware, SU's vice president for research, who describes a predisposition to insight that can only be imparted by a researcher. "The mode of inquiry of someone is really quite different. . . . We really want to develop students who, rather than just reciting the facts that we've given them, can look at a body of knowledge, see what's missing, and focus on what remains to be asked."

Another advantage of research universities, Ware explains, is the presence of the facilities they require. "Research laboratories, chemistry, physics, computer science—you simply can't sponsor those on a teaching budget," he says.

Research also attracts the best intellects. "There are schools that follow a different model . . . where teaching by far is the mission, with scholarship wedged in if possible. On campuses like that, you simply cannot attract many of the people we attract to Syracuse," Ware says.

"My own preference when I was in the chemistry department was to teach freshmen," he adds. "That was fun for me. In another semester I would teach one of my various specialties to graduate students, but I never wanted to get away from teaching that undergraduate course."

Syracuse's Cathryn Newton, an associate professor of geology, conducts influential research on patterns of mass extinction. She also teaches Geology 102, in which students from across the University enroll. "Sometimes when you see [course] evaluations you're delighted when 35 percent of them say, 'I don't like science but I enjoyed this course, and now I understand why other people like science.'

"I feel my life as a scientist wouldn't quite be complete if I didn't teach undergraduates," she says.

The positive effects of faculty eminence can be measured by the proportion of students who achieve eminence themselves—the protégé effect. Cornell University recently topped a survey of private

schools in the number of graduates who later earned Ph.D.s. "The level of accomplishment, I suspect, would be far lower were the faculty less distinguished or less directly involved in creative endeavors themselves," President Frank Rhodes stated in January.

At Berkeley, Vice Chancellor John Heilbron actually terms the teaching-research debate "overblown." He says, "The people who tend to be our distinguished teachers and who are most interested in improving undergraduate education also tend to have distinguished research records. So, although it would be idle to deny that some people might slight their teaching in order to comply with their research imperative, I do not believe that the two enterprises—research and teaching—are antithetical."

Speaking of her own discipline, Cathryn Newton agrees. "I don't know how to put this strongly enough," she says. "I honestly believe that one cannot teach science at the highest level of excellence unless one is doing vigorous research."

The key, naturally, is to ensure that the research remains linked to the teaching. "Research universities must always watch to see that the research that is a predominant part of their self-definition is available to undergraduates," says Jay Oliva, chancellor and executive vice president for academic affairs at New York University (and a 1957 and 1960 graduate of SU's Maxwell School).

In a recent conference with schools that included Johns Hopkins and Chicago, NYU investigated "strategies we can use to increase the availability of the research experience to our undergraduates," Oliva says. A recent AAU study listed roughly two dozen member-schools with undergraduate research initiatives, including Case Western Reserve University, which recently created an Office of Undergraduate Research. Syracuse's undergraduate research program began in 1984.

In sum, Ware, Oliva, and their colleagues will argue that, if its benefits are properly tapped, a research university offers the richest education. "Most research universities are much more diverse in their populations . . . than liberal-arts colleges," says Oliva. "You're likely to see the world as it is."

Despite his uneasiness with much of the substance of academic research, Coplin agrees. "I've always advocated large universities over small colleges, because small colleges are more removed from the real world," he says. ". . . Syracuse provides an opportunity for students to find out what they want to do in life."

"Colleges and universities had better make darn sure that they're doing an exceptional job at undergraduate education," says Northwestern Provost Robert Duncan. "Because I don't care if you are a research university. Undergraduate teaching is one of your main tasks and you better be good at it."

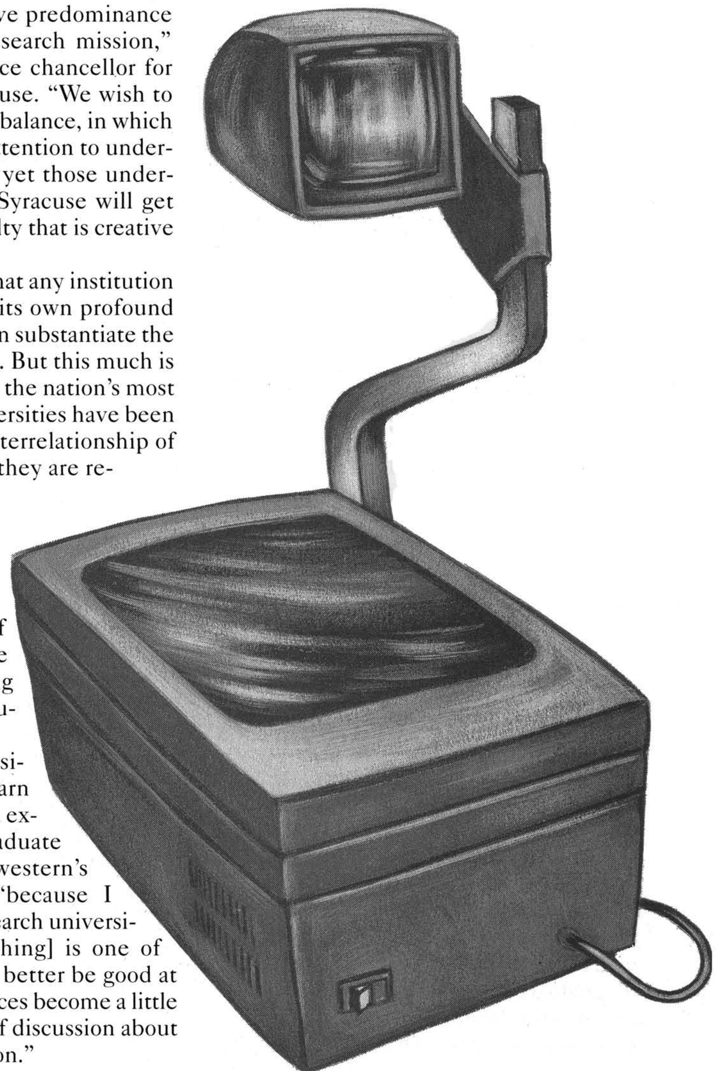
In September, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the leading weekly newspaper of academe, carried a cover story proclaiming that higher education stands on the threshold of a new era. The pressures of the marketplace—economic and cultural challenges not all of which pertain to the discussions above—will force American universities to find a new sense of purpose, the *Chronicle* claimed. The result, according to James J. Duderstadt, president of the University of Michigan, will be "totally different ways of looking at higher education. That happened in this country 100 years ago, and it will happen again in the 1990s."

"Many universities give predominance to their graduate and research mission," says Gershon Vincow, vice chancellor for academic affairs at Syracuse. "We wish to see a somewhat different balance, in which there will be a stronger attention to undergraduate education, and yet those undergraduates who come to Syracuse will get the full benefits of a faculty that is creative and productive."

In truth, it's unlikely that any institution can predict the onset of its own profound revolutions. Only time can substantiate the gravity of today's reforms. But this much is apparent: At a time when the nation's most prestigious research universities have been asked to fine-tune the interrelationship of their complex purposes, they are responding.

Coplin, whose own introduction to the faculty ethos left him skeptical, is guardedly encouraged. "There's a lot of pressure coming from the top now about improving the quality of undergraduate education," he says.

"Colleges and universities had better make darn sure that they're doing an exceptional job at undergraduate education," says Northwestern's Duncan in summary, "because I don't care if you are a research university. [Undergraduate teaching] is one of your main tasks and you better be good at it, especially when resources become a little scarce and there is a lot of discussion about the value of that education."



The outcome of this apparent revolution may not be known for five to 10 years, but in the meantime the fervor of change is invigorating. Only two years after Charles Sykes claimed that this is one of the worst times to attend an American research university, it is fast becoming one of the best. ■

Ten Helpful Hints to Ensure Great Teaching at Your University

We asked the experts, and here are their 10 best ways to support undergraduate teaching at a research university:

1. Appoint an administrator whose sole responsibility is undergraduate education. Allow this individual's concerns to cut across all parochial boundaries.

2. Establish an all-university service branch devoted to the development of good instruction. Through this office you'll undergird the methods and mechanics of good pedagogy, and gain the detailed understanding of faculty needs required for future innovations.

3. Convene faculty members to explore undergraduate teaching. If you are serious about your intentions, organizations such as the Sears Foundation selectively underwrite ventures in quality of teaching.

4. Create monetary incentives for faculty members who are devoted to improving their instruction. Grants that supplement a faculty member's salary or provide the new instructional materials show the faculty that your money is where your mouth is.

5. Stress quality of teaching in hiring, tenure, and promotion procedures. How are such decisions made now? Begin to augment faculty-assessment techniques with an appreciation of great teaching.

6. Provide incentives to bring senior faculty members into lower-division introductory classes. A fund to provide materials and other support to professors who teach such classes will help ensure that students encounter top-notch scholars from day one.

7. Get faculty members and students together outside of class. One good idea is freshman forums, at which new students meet with faculty members to discuss the intellectual environment of the university (and get acquainted in the process).

8. Teach your teaching assistants. Before the start of classes each fall, convene your first-time TAs to train them in the art of instruction.

9. Involve undergraduates in research. There is no better way to make high-powered research relevant to undergraduates than to allow them to participate.

10. Bring students into the processes of self-improvement. Students might create the sort of watchdog organization that helps you better understand the people whose lot you hope to improve.

This is, in fact, a list of initiatives underway at Syracuse University.

In recent months, national policy leaders have turned to Syracuse as a model for conducting undergraduate instruction within the confines of a research university. Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, frequently cites Syracuse. "I am particularly interested in [SU's] efforts to strengthen the quality of teaching at research universities," Boyer said recently. "Your making headway in that setting will have a significant impact throughout higher education."

Russell Edgerton, president of the American Association for Higher Education, shares this feeling. "Everywhere I turn, it seems, you folks are out in front," he recently wrote to SU.

That Syracuse would lead the renewed emphasis on teaching is a product of its history. Of all the research universities, none grew so directly out of a tradition of undergraduate instruction as Syracuse.

"Syracuse is not in the vanguard of everything," says Gershon Vincow, vice chancellor for academic affairs, "but we are in the vanguard of research universities at strengthening the undergraduate experience. This is going to be one of our signatures in the coming years."

—D.L.C./R.G.L.

About Syracuse and the Ten Helpful Hints

1. Syracuse's vice president for undergraduate studies is Ronald Cavanagh. When he was appointed to the position in 1986, it was the first of its kind.

2. The Center for Instructional Development (CID) has been around for 19 years. It spearheads many new initiatives in improved teaching. Recently, the Lilly Endowment made a $62,500 grant to CID to fund a nationwide study of the teaching-research balance.

3. In 1989, Syracuse received a grant from the Sears Foundation to enhance undergraduate education. One outgrowth was seminars for deans and department heads about increasing faculty commitment to teaching. In July, as a Sears project follow-up, Chancellor Melvin A. Eggers hosted a faculty-wide workshop on teaching.

4. Syracuse recently created the Faculty Instructional Grants Program to support projects that improve the quality of teaching at SU. Grants of up to $3,000 each fund materials and other costs incurred while revising or creating courses, improving advising, or improving curricula.

5. CID recently completed an analysis of tenure-committee dynamics and is implementing, with Cavanagh, reassessments of how those bodies work. Syracuse has received a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education to participate in a project to influence the current rewards system.

6. It's called the Gateway Program. Senior scholars receive financial subsidies for courses that provide an introduction to the University or to a major program of study.

7. Freshman Forums are new this fall. At present, roughly 250 freshmen in the College and Arts and Sciences participate, but the program is expected to expand. Fifteen students meet their faculty leaders two hours a week to enhance the students' sense of belonging to the intellectual community.

8. Syracuse's TA Training Program is in its fourth year. The first of its kind, it is still considered the national model by experts in higher education. It runs for two weeks, seeking to improve teaching skills, orient TAs to the University, and address language skills where needed.

9. Syracuse's Undergraduate Research Program was introduced in the natural sciences departments six years ago. Since then it has spread throughout the College of Arts and Sciences. Additionally, the Soling Project involves students in innovative "real-world" problem-solving exercises.

10. The student organization Undergraduates for a Better Education, founded two years ago, has sent representatives to University administrative groups and provides materials to students to help them improve their use of University resources.