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Final Word

Rosalind E. Andreas

The Editorial Board of *The Vermont Connection* asked that I reflect on the changes I have seen in my now nearly 30 years of experience on college campuses in the student affairs and academic affairs areas. After setting experiential context, I highlight three areas of significant change, and conclude with four principles that serve well in leading amid and for change.

I began work in universities in 1973 as a Director of Commuter Services and was asked by my Dean to “put us on the map because we are responding in interesting ways to the needs of students who commute to campus.” I had to learn the institution quickly—mission, history, priorities, students and their issues, and faculty and their hopes. The knowledge I gained informed decisions about where I ate lunch, what I read, committees that would help me understand campus issues, and questions I needed to raise with students, faculty, staff, and alums. Students, the Director of Institutional Research, the Associate Provost, and an Associate Professor in sociology all became very important colleagues in helping me understand the university, as well as current student and academic issues. Then in its 12th year, Oakland University was a predominantly commuter institution whose mission was to bring high quality liberal arts education to the sons and daughters of autoworkers (Reisman, Gusfield, & Gamson, 1970).

My early experience in understanding the history and context of institutions helped shape my work over the years. I served as Dean of Students at the University of Arizona, a 100-year-old flagship land grant American Association of Universities (AAU) research university with a very large international population, and a growing presence of Latina/o and Native American students. My current position, Associate Dean for the College of Education and Social Services, is at The University of Vermont, a 212-year-old flagship land grant comprehensive research university that has broken ground in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) areas. My service on boards of small, private, religious, residential, liberal arts colleges reinforced the power of mission, history, tradition, and culture in decision-making and institutional life. My membership on a research team looking at the integration of in-class and out-of-class experiences for students at 14 campuses of different institutional types and missions and in different regions of the country deepened my understanding as well (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, et al, 1991).

With these lenses, I have reflected briefly on three broad areas of important change. Resource challenges continue to exist for institutions and lead to changes within student affairs, including commodification and reliance on business models. Resource challenges aside, change in the Academy occurs because of demographics, mission emphasis, and student affairs vision, three areas I will consider in greater detail.

Changing Demographics

Demographic change varies by institutional type, mission, and location. Oakland University attracted students diverse in age, race, ethnic background, and class partly as a result of mission, history, and location. The outreach to first-generation college students coupled with the location in a suburb of an urban area, made the university accessible to students. Institutional leaders built both curricular and co-curricular programs mindful of demographics. For example, recognizing the educational needs of non-traditionally-aged students, Oakland supported a continuing education center for women and opened an evening degree program. Residential Life staff built a program grounded in creating diverse living-learning communities. Student Life scholarships attracted student leaders from metropolitan areas and state high schools to live in the residence halls. Those students were encouraged to exercise leadership in their areas of academic interest and to enrich campus life on the predominantly commuter campus.

In efforts to support students and create community as a result of changing demographics, many campuses responded with both curricular and co-curricular changes. Ethnic and Women Studies Programs, and on some campuses, Gay and Lesbian Studies as well as Religious Studies, enriched curriculum, scholarship, and conversations, helping build a more diverse faculty and student body. Journals began to report studies using a wider range of research methodologies, including ethnographic and other qualitative approaches, to develop

research themes and questions emerging from the presence of more student, faculty, and staff voices. Many campuses created advising support programs—with African American, Asian American, Latina/o American, Native American, GLBT, women, international, deaf, and disabled staff to assist students and to advocate for changes in campus climate and practices. Similarly, racial, ethnic, religious, and gender-related student groups and campus cultural centers emerged, creating a sense of community, heightened campus awareness, cross-cultural interaction, and confrontation of issues in curriculum and climate. In 1991, Arthur Levine noted that much of the leadership on “issues of diversity” emanated from student affairs areas and called on institutions to define diversity, establish priorities, and develop institutional plans. Accreditation agencies, in their review of institutions and professions, heightened their examination of performance against diversity standards, not only in staffing patterns, but also in curriculum, student interactions, and learning.

Faculty, staff, and institutional leader demographics have changed as well. Thirty years ago few women or people of color served as college presidents. When in that capacity, they served in women’s colleges, historically black colleges, and non-traditional institutions. Within student affairs, people of color and women have become increasingly visible, holding more senior leadership positions. While more women and faculty of color are advancing through academic ranks, progress varies greatly by academic discipline. Progress has been slow, differs by institutional type and mission, and will require creative thinking and action on the part of all in the Academy if enrichment of the curriculum, scholarship, and climate for learning on our campuses is the goal. The current challenges to affirmative action policies require institutional leaders to continually assess progress and means of achieving institutional hopes for equity, within humane and just campus communities. Even with these changes, the struggle to recognize and confront institutional and other forms of racism, prejudice, and oppression endures.

Changing Focus on the Mission of Learning

In the early 1990s, Harvard President Derek Bok called on the Academy to view student learning as central among the traditional missions of higher education (teaching, research, and service), if higher education was to regain the public trust (1992). His statement generated national reports and studies and began a series of dialogues on institutional renewal. The work of Parker Palmer and others in the 1990s began to shift faculty development discussions from what we are teaching to how we are teaching so that we engage students in learning (1998). Higher education conferences from the mid-1990s to the present have emphasized cooperative learning, collaborative learning, service learning, relational and other styles of learning, and assessment of learning outcomes, as examples. In addition, faculty and academic leaders reexamined scholarship in the same period, and offered new perspectives on the scholarship of teaching and service.

With the rapid changes in information technology, and the belief that it could help reduce resource challenges, the integration of technology into teaching, and campus support systems has dominated administrative planning, creating challenges for many faculty and staff. Thirty years ago, few offices had personal computers. I recall when The Vermont Connection editorial board first offered this journal online in the mid-1990s. Students, often more knowledgeable than faculty in many areas of the curriculum, have influenced initiatives for faculty and staff development in the use and integration of technology into teaching, curriculum, co-curriculum, and administrative units in colleges and universities.

Changes in Student Affairs Vision

In the past, student affairs focused on services and programs to challenge and support students. Thirty years ago, it seemed to me that much of the conversation in student affairs circles centered on how best to organize student affairs functions to be able to assist students and help the rest of the institution challenge and support “the whole student.” Now, the profession has evolved to an increasing emphasis on work which enhances student learning. Then, as well as now, the profession focused on bridging and spanning organizational boundaries, both within student affairs and across other functional areas of the campus. To me, however, the end appeared to focus more on power dynamics than on collaboration over issues central to students’ learning. As I entered the field, the focus of the profession was on student development. Two decades later the conversation was evolving into the role of student affairs people in collaboration with faculty to advance student learning. The emphasis also encouraged conversation across the two cultures- faculty and student

affairs- in the interests of encouraging a culture of learning in all areas of the campus. Campuses have renewed their focus on developing students as leaders both in curricular and co-curricular areas.

A Final Thought

I cannot conclude without thanking current HESA students and alums for your fine work on behalf of students and institutions. You work in times of great change and I offer for your consideration four principles that have grounded my work in leading amidst and for change:

1. Know yourself. Reflect on your story, perspectives, disciplinary lenses, and skills you bring to your work. Continue to study, learn, reflect on what you are learning, and what you need to learn.
2. Know your institution: its mission; its history, culture and traditions; the keepers of its vision; and its priorities, as this will prepare you to lead for change.
3. Know your students: their academic program/s; why they come; why they stay; who influences them; who gets in their way; and who helps them make connections among all facets of their academic, personal, and social lives; as well as their vision for themselves.
4. Take what you learn from them; reach across organizational and other barriers to engage with faculty and other colleagues on students' issues in learning to lead for change that enhances learning for all students.

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