

RECOGNIZING THE LEARNING-LIVING GAP

Daniel L. Kegan

ABSTRACT: Many residence hall staff have attempted to align the academic subculture of the faculty with the opposing extracurricular subculture of students by moving closer to the academic sector. Studies at Harvard University and at Hampshire College are summarized to indicate the failure of traditional house systems or residence hall programming to successfully bridge the gap between the academic and living subcultures. It is suggested that student personnel staff should focus on their unique contribution in higher education: the facilitation of students' personal development and interpersonal communication skills.

The opposition between the academic subculture of the faculty and the extracurricular subculture of students has a long history (Bidwell, 1965; Newcomb, 1962). Not only is there traditionally a separation between academic learning and residential living, there is a parallel difference in the organizational salience and power of the two sectors: the academic side has more of each (Burton & Youn, 1976; Gross & Grambach, 1968; Shoemer & Snapp, 1977).

There are several bases of power (Bachman, Bowers, & Marcus, 1968), but for student personnel staff the importance of power lies in the extent to which they can pursue and promote the programs they believe to be effective. Thus power within the college can be reflected by its priorities. One way of measuring priorities is through the budget, and most colleges spend much more for faculty salaries and academic programming than for residence hall and counselling staff and programming (Halstead, 1974, pp. 756-779). Another way of viewing the college's priorities is through the concerns of its presidents. Again, academic and faculty concerns dominate quality of student life and residence hall issues (Cohen & March, 1974).

Daniel L. Kegan, Ph.D., is Senior Partner with Elan Associates, 7 Captain Drive, Suite 503, Emeryville, CA 94608.

Alternative Higher Education, Vol. 5(3), Spring 1981
0361-6851/81/1300-0183\$00.95

©1981 Human Sciences Press

Yet this internal dominance of the academic sector presents a curious contradiction. Research on the impact of college on students finds that intellectual and academic changes are less salient than changes in values, attitudes, and identity (Chickering, 1969; Heath, 1976; cf. Hyman, Wright, & Reed, 1975). Feldman & Newcomb (1969, p.330) conclude that "college faculties do not appear to be responsible for campus-wide impact except in settings where the influence of student peers and of faculty complement and reinforce one another."

The nature of student-to-student interaction during college is a critical influence on what students will take away from their collegiate years, yet there is relatively little proper attention paid to such processes, either in terms of satisfactory research (Whiteley, Burkhart, Harway-Herman & Whiteley, 1975) or in terms of low power, status, and ability to marshal resources of student services and residences.

Some college student personnel staff have adapted to this situation by moving closer to the academic sector. In attempts to improve the learning students obtain from faculty teaching and to further the developmental objectives many student personnel staff hold, residence halls have become increasingly involved in academic teaching (DeCoster & Mable, 1974). Classes have been held in residence halls, students with common majors have been housed together, students housed together have had common classes, faculty have been associated with residence halls, academic credit has been given for residence hall courses. Much has been done by residence hall staff and concerned others, and both teaching and learning have often improved.

The modern concern in higher education for aligning the two potentially competing subcultures of faculty and students may be said to have first occurred at Harvard in 1930, when President Lawrence Lowell established the Harvard House system (Jenks & Riesman, 1962; Whitley & Pinck, 1974). Although many at Harvard and many outside Harvard believed their House system to be a great success, no systematic research to test this assumption had been done before the Harvard Student Study of the class of 1964 (Vreeland, 1970). That study found that differing house structures and programs had no effect on student changes. Also, although the House system was designed to give students informal contact with faculty, it was found that the academic departments had greater socializing potency than the houses. Vreeland identifies several strains in the houses working against their socializing effect, including the demands of their academic departments upon tutors, high turnover among students and house staff, and professionalization of house activities (for example, theater productions) so that most students remain spectators rather than participants.

Harvard's experience is not unusual. Student contact outside the classroom with faculty is rare. In their integrative summary of the impact of college on students, Feldman and Newcomb (1970, p.249) summarize the research literature: "With the exception of certain smaller schools, students in general do not indicate very much or very close contact with faculty outside the classroom. Between one-third and two-thirds of the students, depending on the college, say that their contact with faculty is quite infrequent." A 1973 study of faculty-student relations at Stanford University found that "the amount of interaction overall is very low, but that students who report higher levels of interaction are apt to be more satisfied than those who do not" (Appel, Peterson, & Schoenau, 1973, p. 6). Wilson and Gaff (1975, p. 151) conclude that "relationships that faculty and students develop outside the classroom may well be the part of teaching which has the greatest impact on students." Even experimental programs at traditional universities had difficulty improving student-faculty relations, as shown in a study of the Pilot Program of the University of Michigan in the late 1960's (Blackburn, 1968). The Pilot Program was a residential house program in which students lived together within dormitories during their first two college years and enrolled in sections of regular University courses reserved for Pilot Program students. Second-term freshmen were interviewed for about one hour for seven consecutive days. The interviews showed that students were concerned with themselves, with their own personal and social development, and with survival—which depended heavily upon grades and parental sanction. There was little influence of the academic environment on the students, and no meaningful contacts with the faculty were recorded.

The Harvard study highlights some of the difficulties for residence hall and student personnel staff in effectively influencing student-faculty interactions or effectively contributing to the planned education of students. From the research literature and from the research studies at Hampshire College, summarized below, one may conclude that this movement of student personnel staff into academic areas is an ineffective path for them and for the overall improvement of students' educational experience.

HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE

Hampshire College was designed as an experimenting college, and matriculated its first students in September 1970 (Patterson & Longworth, 1966). It now has a student body of 1250

actively enrolled students, 400 students on field study or leave of absence, and a full time equivalent faculty of 90, grouped in four interdisciplinary schools. At Hampshire, the sole measure of a student's academic good standing is his/her progress on six Divisional examinations—student initiated and designed learning contracts which are approved by a faculty member. The Divisional framework, which replaces the conventional freshman-senior sequence, was designed to accommodate individual patterns of learning and growth, while helping the student move steadily toward greater independence in study. Division I exams (of which there are four, one in each interdisciplinary school) demonstrate the student's independent ability to pursue advanced work—competence in a "mode of inquiry." At the Division II level the student, with the help of a faculty adviser, designs and completes studies in the chosen area of concentration, often multidisciplinary. For Division III the student completes an independent project and participates in an integrative activity. Because of the central role of Divisional examinations, various learning activities in addition to courses are used by students to further their education.

One of the prime features of nontraditional education, such as that at Hampshire College, is that students have much more of the responsibility for deciding what to study and how much to study. This shift from the traditional allocation of responsibility has often engendered controversy and question. Critics of nontraditional education and the educationally curious have wondered whether under a nontraditional system students do choose to study and how such work compares with that of traditional education. An exploratory study at Hampshire investigated how its students spend their time and the nature of their educational activities—especially their relations with faculty (Kegan, 1976).

The study found that under the system of elective choice at Hampshire, students will spend about the same amount of time studying as do students under a more traditional system of prescriptive requirements (see Table 1). A 1961 study from the University of California at Davis found students averaged 38 hours per week of academic work, 15 hours in classes and 23 hours in study (Bolton & Kammeyer, 1967). A 1955-56 study at Amherst College found students average 47.8 hours per week of academic work, 17.8 hours in classes and 30.0 hours in study (Birney, Coplin, & Grose, n.d.). A comprehensive study at Vassar College in 1955 found students reported spending 43.5 hours per week in academic and allied pursuits (Bushnell, 1962, p.499). A national survey during the summer of 1962

Table 1
Reported Time Students Spend in Academic Work
In Hours Per Week

College	Total	Classes	Study	Noncourse	Reference
USA Freshpersons-low, 1962	28.5	12.7	15.8		Astin, 1968
U Calif-Davis, 1961	38	15	23		Bolton & Kammeyer, 1967
Hampshire Settings, 1974-75	43.3	10.4	15.8		Kegan, 1976
Vassar, 1955	43.5				Bushnell, 1962
Amherst College, 1955-56	47.8	17.8	30.0		Birney, Coplin & Grose, 1960
USA Freshpersons-median, 1962	49.5	21.5	28.0		Astin, 1968
USA Freshpersons-high, 1962	71.1	32.5	38.6		Astin, 1968
U Mass Cycles, Spring 1975	38.9	33.5		5.4	Kegan, Benedict & Grose, 1975
Hampshire Cycles, Spring 1975	45.2	28.0		17.2	Kegan, Benedict & Grose, 1975
Amherst Cycles, Spring 1975	50.1	43.1		7.0	Kegan, Benedict & Grose, 1975

of students who had completed their first year of college found that at the median colleges, students averaged 49.5 hours per week of academic effort, 21.5 hours of classes, and 28.0 hours of study (Astin, 1968, p.159). At the lowest institutions students averaged 28.5 hours per week of academic effort, 12.7 hours of classes, and 15.8 hours of study; at the highest institutions students averaged 71.1 hours per week of academic effort, 32.5 hours of classes and 38.6 hours of study. This Settings study found Hampshire students report spending a total of 43.3 hours in educational activities, 10.4 hours in classes, 15.8 hours studying, and the remainder in other educational activities (see Table 2).

In Spring 1975, Cycles surveys were conducted at Hampshire, Amherst College, and the University of Massachusetts (Kegan, Benedict, & Grose, 1975). The Hampshire and UMass surveys were conducted in late April, but the Amherst survey was delayed until May and the pre-final examination study period. The total academic effort in hours per week reported at each college was 42.5 Hampshire, 50.0 Amherst, and 37.8 UMass. Noncourse academic effort was reported as 17.2 Hampshire, 6.9 Amherst, 5.4 UMass; course academic effort was reported as 28.0 Hampshire, 43.3 Amherst, 33.5 UMass. Under both traditional and nontraditional systems there are similar wide variations around the average study time. However, under the elective system students benefit by more interaction with faculty.

As discussed above, in traditional colleges most student-faculty contact is in the classroom, a setting largely defined and controlled by the teacher. At Hampshire half the student-faculty contacts occur outside of classes (see Table 2). The Divisional examination system provides

Table 2
Distribution of Educational Effort By The "Average" Hampshire Student
In Hours Per Week

<u>Hours</u>	<u>Activity</u>
15.8	Studying
10.4	In Classes
3.9	On Miscellaneous Education Activities
3.5	On Divisional Examination Work
3.0	On Educational Writing
1.3	In Academic Conferences
1.2	In Bureaucratic Activities
3.4	In Arts Activities
9.1	With Hampshire Faculty

an opportunity for students to meet and interact with faculty with an agenda largely defined by the student. Through the exam system, students become known to some faculty through the student's unique interests, abilities, and progress. The Divisional examination system provides the kind of personal student-faculty contact that many other educational structures, including house programs, have attempted with much less success.

But the very success of the Divisional examination system created problems for the House system. Few faculty actively participated in House life, and many courses offered by the Houses seemed to suffer in comparison with courses offered by the academic schools. However, the mechanisms of faculty participation and House courses were initially designed to achieve a goal, and that goal is being achieved largely through the academic structure itself. In fact, some may feel that Hampshire's students are, on the whole, too concerned with their academic progress, and have merged too completely the notions of academic learning and living.

What role is left then for the Houses beyond their custodial, dormitory one? Arthur Chickering has described the role of college as contributing to the education and identity of students. Hampshire's four Schools and its Divisional examination system deal with the academic education of students. However, the processes of identity formation are left too much to the happenstance of peer interactions and good faculty advising. Moreover, some basic skills in interpersonal relations, conflict negotiation and participatory citizenship are rarely learned well in our society, yet are critically needed. Student personnel and residence staff are responsible for areas where opportunities for such learnings abound and where such learnings can be valued.

RESIDENCE HALLS OPPORTUNITY

Residence halls cannot successfully compete with the academic sector of the college in terms of the traditionally defined goals of intellectual achievement. The centrality of faculty instruction insures much of the power of the academic sector (Hall, 1970, p.50). But the influence and effectiveness of student personnel staff and programs can be markedly increased. What Joseph Katz (1968, p.441) says of colleges is also true of major units within the college: "Since colleges cannot focus on all aspects of a student's development, they ought to identify areas in which attention is particularly strategic." Facilitating the development of integrated identities and improved

interpersonal communication skills is an educational task demanding attention. Moreover, both resident and commuting students could benefit from increased attention to their personal development needs (Chickering, 1974).

It would certainly seem that education in the area of interpersonal skills should be accepted as being as important as many other standard components of public education. For instance, . . . at Penn State all students must demonstrate competency in swimming before they are permitted to earn a baccalaureate degree. They may be absolutely destructive in their interaction with the people they are closest to, but this is apparently acceptable so long as they don't drown in the process (Peterman, 1972 p.81).

The teaching, learning, assessment, and crediting of interpersonal skills is achieving some legitimacy (Cross, 1976). Some competency based colleges have recognized the importance of personal development and interpersonal communication and have included such competencies as graduation requirements (Alverno College, 1973a, 1973b; Mars Hill College, 1976). Moreover, the broadly based Cooperative Assessment of Experimental Learning has developed guidelines for the learning and assessment of interpersonal skills (Breen, Donlon, & Whitaker, 1975a, 1975b).

CONCLUSION

In their attempt to bridge the gap between the traditional faculty academic subculture and the student extracurricular subculture, student personnel staff have often attempted to emulate the academic faculty. From a concern for student development and education, residence halls have tried to implement various living-learning programs. Yet such programs, such as those reviewed at Harvard and at Hampshire, seem fated to fall short of full success.

Facilitating the development of integrated identities and improved interpersonal communication skills is an educational task demanding attention. These are tasks for which student personnel staff tend to be well qualified—by their professional training and often also by their personal orientation (cf. Campbell, 1974). Whether graduation requirements are modified or this critically needed service is offered, student personnel staff are well suited to help improve higher education and students' college experience, and thus in some part to contribute to improving the quality of our society (cf. Gibb, 1978).

REFERENCES

- Alverno College. Competence assessment program: Manual for level 1. Milwaukee, WI, 1973a.
- Alverno College. Competence assessment program: Specification of developmental levels. Milwaukee, WI, 1973b.
- Appel, B., Peterson V., & Schoenau J. (Eds.). *The other Stanford: A report on the relationship of professors and undergraduate students at Stanford University*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Workshops on Political and Social Issues, 1973.
- Astin, A. W. *The college environment*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 1968.
- Bachman, J. G., Bowers D. G., & Marcus P. M. Bases of supervisory power: A comparative study in five organizational settings. In A. S. Tannenbaum (Ed.) *Control in organizations*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968.
- Bidwell, C. E. The school as a formal organization. In J. G. March (Ed.) *Handbook of organizations*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965.
- Birney, R. C., Coplin H. R., & Grose R. Patterns of college life: The class of '59 at Amherst College. Amherst, MA: Department of Psychology, n.d.
- Blackburn, R. T. Live and learn? A look at students in their settings. Memo to the Faculty from the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. The University of Michigan, Number 32, December 1968.
- Bolton, C. D. & Kammeyer K.C.W. *The university student: A study of student behavior and values*. New Haven: College & University Press, 1967.
- Breen, P., Donlon, T. & Whitaker U. The learning and assessment of interpersonal skills: Guidelines for administrators and faculty. Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning, Working Paper No. 4. Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1975a.
- Breen, P. Donlon T., & Whitaker U. The learning and assessment of interpersonal skills: Guidelines for students. Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning, Working Paper No. 5. Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1975b.
- Burton, R. C. & Youn T.I.K. *Academic power in the United States*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education, ERIC/Higher Education Research Report Number 3, 1976.
- Bushnell, J. H. Student culture at Vassar. In N. Sanford (Ed.) *The American college*. New York: Wiley, 1962.
- Campbell, D. P. *Manual for the Strong-Campbell interest inventory*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974.
- Chickering, A. W. *Communing versus resident students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974.
- Chickering, A. W. *Education and identity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969.
- Cohen, M. D. & March J. G. *Leadership and ambiguity: The American college president*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974.
- Cross, K. P. *Accent on learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976.
- DeCoster, D. A. & Mable P. (Eds.). *Student development and education in college residence halls*. Washington, DC: American College Personnel Association, 1974.
- Feldman, K. A. & Newcomb T. M. *The impact of college on students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969.
- Gibb, J. R. *Trust: A new view of personal and organizational development*. Los Angeles: Guild of Tutors Press, 1978.