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Overview of the 84th Annual UCEA Conference: Blurring the Boundaries of the Academy

*Karen Berthold, David Grossman, Paul Hamlin,
Sue Maes, James Narduzzi, and Thomas Shostak*

TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEXT CENTURY, continuing higher education is recreating itself to assume a position of campus-wide leadership. Traditional continuing education units that were simply the university's off-campus course providers are using their organizational flexibility to take on innovative and expanded roles that include for-profit distance learning centers, international educational partnerships, welfare-to-work initiatives, and post-baccalaureate programs for the changing workforce. While maintaining the academy's high standards of scholarship and research, continuing education is also being asked to become a lead voice in conceiving the new academy and in linking the university to the demands of society. These new roles and initiatives are resulting in unprecedented growth and a reconfiguration of the academy's traditional relationships.

In recognition of changes taking place within academic institutions and the marketplace, the University Continuing Education Association (UCEA) organized its 84th annual conference around the theme, "Blurring the Boundaries

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of the Academy.” The conference, held April 9–12, 1999 in Washington, DC, highlighted the following four sub-themes: new forms of teaching and learning, emerging roles for continuing education, integrating learning and work, and replacing old boundaries with new opportunities. In each area, presenters and Association members had the opportunity to articulate their vision of continuing education in a demanding and exciting environment.

Sessions were devoted to hearing from other parts of higher education, and their perceptions of the perils, pitfalls, and opportunities posed by the brave new world of technology.

NEW FORMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

For the past decade Association members have been particularly alert to the advantages of applying technology to extend the reach of higher education—particularly in adapting computing and the Internet to instruction, both on and off the nation’s campuses. In past years, the sessions on instruction and technology for distance education have usually focused on the potential of technology and the problems of funding and securing acceptance. They also provided a forum for discussion and the opportunity to showcase experiments in innovative programming and delivery. This year, the sessions on New Forms of Teaching and Learning took a slightly different tack. Two of the three sessions were devoted to hearing from other parts of higher education, and their perceptions of the perils, pitfalls, and opportunities posed by the brave new world of technology.

In a lively discussion of “Educational Technology: A Discussion of Past and Future Ideas,” the Association heard from Ernst Benjamin, Deputy Director of the American Association of University Professors, and Gary Miller, Associate Vice President for Distance Education at the Pennsylvania State University. Benjamin identified certain areas of concern of the nation’s professoriate, carefully distinguishing his views from the official policies of the AAUP. Among the concerns were:

- The impact of distance and technology-enhanced learning on the status of the profession. That is, the potential for technology to

increase the number of part-time faculty, thereby diminishing the influence, power, and status of tenure-line faculty in their own institution, in particular, and in higher education in general.

- The irresolution of intellectual property rights for participating faculty.
- The role of faculty in the creation of instruction.

Far from being a Luddite, Benjamin welcomed the application of computing to technology, acknowledging that significant changes would be underway. But he cautioned that change must necessarily involve the faculty in decision making and allocating resources, faculty status and academic freedom must be sustained, and higher education should not adopt a corporate model that would change the role of faculty to that of an employee.

Miller, though agreeing with some of the points and cautions posed by Benjamin, chose instead to concentrate on the potential of technology to provide access to the distant learner and to improve teaching and learning wherever they occur. Conversant with developments in teaching and learning both nationally and internationally, Miller was optimistic about the transforming effects of these new modes on collegiate instruction.

At a session titled “Two Exemplary Programs: A Discussion of Design and Accreditation,” Dean Helen Connors (School of Nursing, University of Kansas Medical Center) and Dean Joy Rhodes (School of Social Work, Portland State University) discussed issues of accreditation of post-baccalaureate degree programs. Both institutions offer professional master’s degrees using technology—Kansas by Internet, Portland State by instructional television (ITV).

Representatives of the professional accreditation agencies in their respective fields also presented their views. Contrary to what is normally assumed—that accredi-

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tation boards are fundamentally conservative and resistant to innovation, educational or otherwise—both agencies welcomed the applications of technology for both degree and certification programs. In nursing, where continuing education is an absolute necessity for practitioners, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education welcomed technological delivery of courses because it increases access to professional education. Though both accreditation representatives shared their personal concerns and those of their organizations about the issues raised by distance delivery, they were excited about the potential and possibilities of the Internet and ITV.

As the academy explores new forms of teaching and learning, with new audiences and expectations, how can quality be assured and maintained? In a session on “Assuring Quality in New Forms of Teaching and Learning,” Morris Keeton, Mary Ellen Hrutka, and Joan Krejci talked about the University of Maryland University College, where faculty and administrators have taken on the task of assessing the learning outcomes that result from the new learning strategies. If the traditional learning environments are to accept the more nontraditional formats, quality must be assured. In response to demands for adequate and effective assessment, institutions must develop a long-term strategic plan for evaluation.

- The plan must involve all the stakeholders and be integral to the teaching/learning process.
- The methods used for evaluation must be valid and reliable, and information about the process must be communicated appropriately to all concerned.
- The plan must begin with a decision about the learning outcomes to assess and an understanding of the range of outcomes to be examined.
- Several methods should be tried, and a determination of when and how to assess the various learning formats must be made.
- The assessment process must include the students’ review of faculty, technology, and themselves, as well as an evaluation by faculty and administration.

Full documentation of student achievements, gained from reliable assessment methods, and the broadest communication of results will smooth the way for integrating the new learning formats.

EMERGING ROLES FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

More and more, continuing education units are assuming new roles within the academy. As a result, continuing education leaders must possess new skills to successfully manage evolving roles and responsibilities. Not surprisingly, the sessions in this sub-theme concentrated on organizational models and the challenges inherent when assuming a new deanship. Another session, on copyright considerations for distance education, underscored the complexity of the issues continuing education professionals will have to understand when dealing with new forms of educational delivery.

Structure of continuing education was the core of the session "Alternative Organizational Models for Continuing Higher Education: Why Context is All-Important." Five presenters, Peter Warren (University of Denver), Roger Whitaker (George Washington University), Carolyn Dahl (Eastern Michigan University), Mark Novak (San Jose State University), and Patricia Book (Penn State University) provided overviews of the organizational models at their institutions. Major forces accounting for the diversity of models included current leadership of the institution, the mission and goals of the institution, and the institution's historic role within the community and state.

Commonalities exist among the represented institutions. They include the role of continuing education in responding to the needs of constituents within the university and the community, its inclusion within the university's strategic goals, and the ways in which it complements and enhances the mission of the institution. The session's wide range of organizational models for continuing education units showed that no right model exists.

Three deans with fewer than 18 months of experience in their positions spoke about their particular challenges, the goals they sought to accomplish during their first months on the job, and their keys to getting off to a successful start. Anita McDonald (University of Arizona), Richard Marksbury (Tulane

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University), and Anne Colgan (University of Colorado-Boulder) shared the following tips in “Making the Most of the Honeymoon Period—Some Strategic Goals and Decisions of ‘New’ Deans”:

- Request an internal financial audit to get a clear understanding of the unit’s financial situation.
- Prepare a strategic plan that includes participation by staff.
 - Reorganize as necessary to meet the goals of the unit.
 - Strengthen relationships within the unit as well as on campus.
 - Meet with staff individually to discuss current position, aspirations, and recommendations.
 - Call other institutions to network, seek advice, and benchmark.

Although there has been significant discussion about copyright restrictions, no final legislation that defines parameters for using copyright materials in teaching at a distance has been forthcoming.

Teaching and learning through electronic means is fast becoming the norm rather than the exception. As a result, challenging questions are being posed regarding copyright compliance in delivering distance education. In her presentation, “Copyright Laws: New Rules You Must Follow in a Digital Age,” Laura Gasaway (University of North Carolina) explained current copyright legislation and intellectual property rights.

Ms. Gasaway noted that while copyright statutes exempt face-to-face classroom teaching in nonprofit educational institutions (if copies have been lawfully made), distance education is not included in the exemption. Although there has been significant discussion about copyright restrictions, no final legislation that defines parameters for using copyright materials in teaching at a distance has been

forthcoming. Teachers desire consistency in presentation materials used for on-campus and distance students; however, content providers fear widespread theft of their intellectual property because of the ease of downloading and distributing copies of materials over the Internet. A second issue—who owns

the intellectual property of distance learning courses—is also an emerging challenge for continuing education professionals. Gasaway suggested the use of shared arrangements between faculty and the institution, which allows flexibility and fairness.

INTEGRATING LEARNING AND WORK

Two sessions were held on efforts to meet workforce education demands, one by a traditional graduate school serving a unique market niche, and the other by a for-profit university attempting to compete through curricular and scheduling flexibility.

Michael Sheahan, associate director of the Krannert Executive Education Program (Krannert Graduate School of Management, Purdue University), led a session entitled “Providing Education to Those Who Must Solve Today’s and Tomorrow’s Problems.” Frequently in the world of business and industry, those who succeed as laboratory researchers, sales representatives, or computer programmers are given the chance to move into management positions. While they have the scientific or technical skills that made them successful in their area of specialization, they often lack an understanding of the basic business principles required of their new position. As an alternative to learning on the job, programs such as Purdue’s give them the experience they need to succeed as managers.

Sheahan feels his Applied Management Principles Program provides a mini-MBA program that can help new managers function effectively in their new roles, combining intensive in-class instruction with real-life examples of management problems and situations. The unique combination of a Big Ten academic setting, an instructor with extensive knowledge of the problems new managers face, and the practical application of basic business principles is an innovative continuing education model that effectively brings together the world of work and the realm of traditional learning.

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Paul Hamlin led a session on “A Learning Model for the Twenty-First Century from a Private Sector For-Profit University.” American InterContinental University (AIU) is a for-profit institution offering working professionals an opportunity to receive their undergraduate or graduate degree in a business-related area, while maintaining their present work schedule. With campuses in Atlanta, Miami, Washington DC, London, and Dubai, AIU is developing and delivering a curriculum that meets the needs of those in the business community who want to complete their program in a practical and timely manner.

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In response to these needs, the programs at AIU are project-based, relevant to the experiences of the students in their jobs, and can be completed in as short a period of time as one year of intensive study. The learning is experiential, combining in-class academic instruction with online networking and information gathering. The settings encourage teamwork, group projects are common, and student portfolios are developed in the active learning settings. Because students hope to attain their degree quickly, the school emphasizes completion, and the faculty works closely with the students to combine their professional work with their classroom experiences. With programs in international business and information technology, AIU's objective is to bring a student's work experiences and goals into a more formal educational setting.

REPLACING OLD BOUNDARIES WITH NEW OPPORTUNITIES

A final theme of the conference explored the rich possibilities of replacing old boundaries with new relationships and partnerships.

“Clear Vision and Blurred Boundaries: Partnerships as a Defining Institutional Strategy” explored alliance-building approaches in two different institutional settings. Thomas Edison State College (TESC) has developed many partnerships as part of its institutional strategy. Sonya Eveslage of TESC described the partnerships that are committed to shared success as “a continual courtship relationship.” Pat Sparks, also from TESC, warned that as in any relationship, one could not merely set up an agreement in the hope that it would work. The key is to “communicate, communicate, communicate.”

Sandra Clark of the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) noted the many benefits that resulted from UCSC's successful partnerships with business and industry in addressing Silicon Valley's workforce training needs. Some of the benefits were not foreseen. In fact, Dr. Clark thought one should "think of partnerships as an opportunity without knowing where it is going to lead."

Janet Lewis (University of South Dakota) presided over a diverse session titled "Distance Education Initiatives between the Americas." The Information Training Center at San Diego State University (SDSU) offers a monthly series of interactive video conferences via satellite in English, Spanish, and Portuguese to 300 sites, mostly in the Americas. SDSU's Paula Kelly noted that the number of sites is increasing and that participants see the real value as "sharing and learning with other people in the network." Walter Uegama (University of British Columbia) described how his Canadian institution has teamed with the Monterey Institute of Technology in Mexico to develop five asynchronous graduate online courses.

Shelly Weinstein of the National Education Telecommunications Organization/Education Satellite (NETO/EDSAT) presented a passionate argument for the project's promise in improving educational access in the Americas. A project in the making, NETO/EDSAT is a not-for-profit collaboration among North American, Caribbean, and Latin America institutions intent on developing the satellite infrastructure to deliver distance education and healthcare programs. Claire Alicia Nelson noted that her organization, the Inter-American Development Bank, would continue to be a supporter of such projects.

In a session on "Synchronous Distance Learning," Stanley Gabor of The Johns Hopkins University gave an update on Hopkins's partnership with Caliber Learning Systems, an affiliate of Sylvan Learning. The partnership delivered a Hopkins graduate certificate program in "The Business of Medicine" to physicians at Caliber sites in 22 states. As head of the program at Hopkins, Betsy Mayotte has worked closely with Middle States and the regulatory institu-

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tions in each state to seek approval where the program is offered. In some states Hopkins is still held back by some of the regulatory issues. Chris Nguyen, the CEO of Caliber, noted it is seeking partnerships with universities like Hopkins that can deliver high quality programs. Nguyen said, “we can also learn from the universities” in developing the pedagogy of the highly interactive synchronous delivery of the Caliber satellite network, and noted that the plan for Caliber calls for eventually making money. “We are all about building scale, and we are prepared to invest with our partners.”

Lorilee Sandmann and Annette Abrams, both from Michigan State University (MSU), led a session titled “Promise and Pitfalls of Making Partnerships Work: A Model of Outreach Scholarship.” The session examined several university-community partnerships at MSU and discussed both the conceptual and operational models guiding their creation and dissolution. At MSU, the conceptual model is faculty-driven and aimed at creating research opportunities for university faculty. The operational model includes elaborate tools used to initiate and evaluate partnerships. The session concluded with a lively discussion of the main challenges and unique opportunities that partnerships provide.

CONCLUSION: RIDING THE WAVE

The 84th Annual UCEA Conference began to document a new era in higher education, one in which concepts of lifelong learning and continuous education have moved to center stage on campuses across America and the world. Many sessions confirmed that continuing educators are uniquely positioned to lead their campuses toward new ways of teaching and learning, and toward new structures to achieve critical institutional outcomes. In San Diego in 2000, the 85th Annual UCEA Conference, “Strategies for the New Futures of Higher Education—Riding the Wave,” will examine how well we have capitalized on these unique leadership opportunities and challenges. 