Distance Education

British Open University sets the standard worldwide

By Jon Marcus
Melton Keynes, England

The flagship campus of the largest university in Britain looks much like any other school. Groups of faculty, deep in discussion, stroll across manicured grass quadrangles between buildings of contrasting architectural styles. There are dining halls, a busy library, athletic fields, tennis courts and bulletin boards announcing special academic rates for magazine subscriptions. Exhaust pipes and chemical storage tanks sprout from modern science buildings. There’s no place to park.

Just one thing, really, sets this peaceful place apart from more conventional university campuses: There aren’t any students here. With the exception of a few doctoral candidates, the 215,000 students of Britain’s Open University study at home or at work in one of the most successful models of distance education in the world. Only faculty who develop the courses, and an army of administrators, occupy this main campus in the sleepy town of Milton Keynes, about an hour north of London.

These days, there’s a spring in the step of the people who traverse the quad at Milton Keynes. Open University is branching out, aggressively expanding overseas and working to reverse a recruitment slump at home, the fault in part of government budget cuts tying funding to enrollment at a time of increased competition from established schools that once derided the idea of distance education.

To meet this first goal of exporting its curriculum, OU is looking for university partners all over the world, offering the proven concept it calls “supported open learning,” which marries correspondence courses with in-person human tutoring and oversight. At the same time, to meet the second goal of beefing up recruitment, the university appears to be relaxing those successful but demanding principles where they have threatened to discourage students from enrolling. It is just a means of meeting popular demand and treating students as consumers, OU administrators say in their defense.

All of this puts Open University “right in the middle of the academic debate about higher education,” said Bob Masterton, director of the school’s entrepreneurial arm, Open University Worldwide. “The Open University is at a crossroads. It has the opportunity to be a global player. The question is, does it have the will? My answer is, yes, it should, and we should get on with it.”

The Open University colossus now contriving to straddle the globe began in its own small corner of the planet as a revolutionary notion: a means of offering a higher education to the domestic masses in an era when the British university system was particularly imbued and elitist. It was originally proposed by Harold Wilson, a member of Parliament from the Labour party at the time, who raised the idea for the first time in a speech in Glasgow in 1963. But its roots were in America, where Wilson had come to lecture at the University of Chicago and where he first en-

A New British Invasion?

Open University struggles in the United States

By William Troumbly
Senior Editor
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The British Open University, widely praised for expanding postsecondary educational opportunity in Great Britain and some other countries, is finding it hard to gain a foothold in the United States.

Some of the reasons can be found at Florida State University, the 31,000-student football power whose campus stands within a political shout from the state capitol.

Five years ago, when Florida State President Talbot (Sandy) D’Alemberte and Sir John Daniel, vice chancellor of the British Open University, exchanged visits, hopes were high that the two institutions would work closely together to fashion distance learning programs for Florida.

Indeed, the official seals for both institutions are mounted side by side at the entrance to the Center for Academic Support and Distance Learning, on the FSU campus.

But five years later, Florida State has decided to go its own way, for the most part, as it expands distance learning opportunities for both undergraduates and graduate students. Some Open University procedures have been adopted but almost no British course materials are finding their way into the new programs.

“There was some expectation early on that we might be able to take advantage of their work,” Alan Mabe, dean of graduate studies and point man for Florida State’s distance learning efforts, said in an interview. “But we decided it was just as easy to start from scratch and put together our own programs.”

Open University dealings with the 22-campus California State University system have followed roughly the same pattern. Cal State officials were looking for a way to speed up the credentialing process for the 14,000 California elementary school teachers who now have only emergency permits. Cal State Chancellor Charles B. Reed and Sir John Daniel thought the Open University’s teacher certification approach might be the way to do it.

But the program that has evolved, “CalStateTEACH,” which starts this fall, continued on page 14

In This Issue

The British Open University, with an enrollment of more than 215,000 students in the United Kingdom and in other countries, is the most successful distance learning program in the world. Sir John Daniel, the university’s vice chancellor, discusses this non-traditional approach to higher education, and the Open University’s expansion plans, in a Q&A on page 2.

Florida State University has adopted some of the British Open University’s distance learning methods but has purchased few OU course materials.
Sir John Daniel is vice chancellor of the Open University of Great Britain and a president of the United States Open University. This interview was conducted by Carl Irving, a frequent contributor to National CrossTalk.

Carl Irving: How has the Open University managed to achieve such extraordinary national academic rankings in so short a time?
Sir John Daniel: It began with very strong political support, and that translated in the 1970s into relatively good resources from government. It was set up as an autonomous institution, and the original faculty were good, imaginative academics, rather than people steeped in some educational technology from the start, the basic commitment to academic values—including research—were there.

The first class totaled 25,000 students, which had the virtue of making it politically unstoppable. These first students were real fanatics; they had waited all their lives for this. In those days they had no other opportunity, so they went for it. You could make big investments in course materials, and do effective things.

Carl Irving: Was there opposition, spoken or unspoken, from among the traditional universities?
Sir John Daniel: There wasn’t so much hostility, as deep skepticism and even ridicule. They frankly didn’t see this as a threat because the other universities had no interest in part-time or adult students. They thought this was a big Mickey Mouse and kind of fun. Yet the first community to be converted, other than the students, were the academics—quite opposite of what is happening today, with the new things like Phoenix University, where the corporate community gets on side very deep, and remaining suspicious.

We have a rule to this day: to have a senior professor from another university on all our exam boards. What really changed it was that the universities had no interest in part-time or adult students. They thought all this was a big Mickey Mouse kind of fun. Yet the first community to be converted, other than the students, were the academics—quite opposite of what is happening today, with the new things like Phoenix University, where the corporate community gets on side very deep, and remaining suspicious.

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Carl Irving: What is the reaction from the academic world?
Sir John Daniel: No one is saying that’s not fair. Twenty-five years ago we established our bona fides in the academic world. Some of the universities hate this quality assessment system, no question about that. But at the end of the day, the people making these assessments are peers.

Carl Irving: Do the people at Oxford and Cambridge recognize them as peers?
Sir John Daniel: Oh, yes. They’re taking part in it.

Carl Irving: How do these high rankings affect attracting faculty and students?
Sir John Daniel: There’s absolutely no question that we are getting very high quality faculty applying to work with us. It’s seen as an exciting place, a springboard to very top appointments. Somebody was telling me today that we’ve got three professors, formerly at the OU, now at the London School of Economics. I’ve got Oxford trying to raid me from time to time. So we’ve definitely seen in that network of old universities. But I think the fact we’ve won a televised challenge quiz between universities—we’re one of six universities that have won it twice, victories seen by audiences in the millions—has had a big effect (on enrollment).

Carl Irving: Is twenty percent of faculty time given to research—as at established universities?
Sir John Daniel: Absolutely. I wouldn’t be holding the faculty if they didn’t have research opportunities equivalent to those elsewhere. I would guess that we require rather more of our staff in terms of teaching, simply because of the way they teach. Developing course material takes more time than lecturing.

Carl Irving: Does that become a barrier to getting good faculty?
Sir John Daniel: No, because a lot of them enjoy that form of teaching. Paralleling the teaching assessment scheme, there’s a research assessment scheme out of which we rank 30th among 100-plus. So we’re lower down, but we’re still in the top third, and rising. The main European place where people are doing research on the life on Mars issue is the Open University. And we have a Planetary Science Research Institute which is absolutely up there with the best world-class laboratories and many other areas of research and international excellence.

We don’t cover the same waterfront as Oxford or Cambridge. We would be defined as trying to be top-rated research in a single field. But every faculty contains internationally recognized researchers and there is very much of a research culture around the place.

Carl Irving: How do student costs compare?
Sir John Daniel: Until last year, all full-time students got higher education free. They did not have to pay tuition and in many cases they did not have to pay board and lodging. However, part-time students always have had to pay fees. Last year they started to require that full-time students have to pay about $1,600 a year, no matter what they’re doing. At the Open University, where all students are part-time (we don’t like people to study more than half-time equivalent), it will cost around $6,000, spread over about six years, to achieve a bachelor’s degree.

Carl Irving: Even though these costs aren’t formidable, are you forced to exclude any promising students because they can’t afford to enroll?
Sir John Daniel: We like to think we’re not, because we recycle about $5 million a year, waiving fees for people who are unemployed or on what you would call welfare. The government now gives us extra money so that we can do that for all students on welfare. Previously we had to ration that.

Carl Irving: How successful is the OU with regard to its professed ideal of maintaining a tutorial, one-on-one faculty-student approach, in contrast to the teacher-group approach which predominates in the United States?
Sir John Daniel: One of the reasons that the OU has been accepted here is because the ideal that people aspire to in higher education goes back to the Oxford tutorial one-on-one. For a long time that was only effective at Oxford and Cambridge. We’ve moved to classroom lecturing at most universities. Nevertheless, that was the ideal. Our system is a combination of independent studies with the materials we provide.

Carl Irving: How does that work at the OU?
Sir John Daniel: We call it a multimedia distance teaching system with strong support. The students get a package of stuff and they study a lot of it at home, but they also get the opportunity for group meetings with their tutor. Most importantly, the tutor’s main purpose is to help a student through that course by calling them to their written assignments, being available to help and by holding these group meetings. But the group meetings, it’s important to stress, are optional. The student does not have to attend those. About a third would never miss them, a third don’t go too much at all, and a third are somewhere in the middle.

Carl Irving: Does it make much difference in the outcome?
Sir John Daniel: No. It’s the students gravitating to what they need to help them get through the course. But the students uniformly say that they find the tutors extremely helpful. Even if they don’t actually meet the tutors, the fact is that the tutor is ready to discuss their work on the phone.

Carl Irving: So, many students never actually see their tutor.
Sir John Daniel: For many students, that would be the case. We place enormous emphasis on using the commentary on the student’s work as a teaching tool. We monitor that. When the tutor has marked an assignment, it comes back to headquarters. Full-time faculty review these marked assignments on a sampling basis, paying particular attention to the work of the newer tutors. They try and comment constructively to the tutor on their marking and commentary.

Carl Irving: Do you also get student feedback?
Sir John Daniel: Yes, because we’re constantly surveying students. The two most constant results are that they find the printed material the most helpful part of the course, and also find the tutors extraordinarily helpful.
Do you have any concern that you miss something important in not having every student directly meeting with tutors at one of the several hundred centers that are spread through the UK?

We have never made any particular pitch to younger students. The vast majority are over 25, and the socializing function in higher education isn’t something we have to worry about, particularly. We don’t think that classroom teaching is very effective anyway, and we’re quite happy that the students should make up their own minds as to whether to attend these group meetings.

Aside from socializing, isn’t there another dimension if the student and tutor are meeting in person, versus talking over the phone?

No. We think that’s exaggerated or at least not a one-size-fits-all solution. Having said that, we invest a lot of effort and money in training our tutors to make those face-to-face sessions high-quality—not to stand there and lecture but to draw out the students to react, create situations where people learn from each other. The residential schools, which some courses have on their campuses a week or so, are the most intensive, effective sort of group work, for some, but others will never go near that. We believe adults should make up their own minds (about whether to attend).

Do you see any substantial difference in terms of outcome?

I was a student at Oxford. So I went through the whole tutorial system. I thought it was for the birds in the subject. I didn’t think it added any value. What did have value was being told to write an essay every week, which forced me into the library. But the actual feedback I got on that was much less than if I’d been an Open University student. I was in a scientific discipline. I think in disciplines like history or politics, it may have some more effect, because there’s more cut and thrust of discussion.

Does that show up in your enrollments? Are there far more students in the sciences than the social sciences?

No. Slightly less than 50 percent are in science, math, technology, engineering and computing.

How does that compare with other British universities?

We do more science-based courses. The standard ratio would be 30 percent science, engineering and math.

Does that indicate that you’re more effective in these areas than in others?

We’ve always got to trade off. We’re trying to provide a convenient form of education. Anything we require the student to do at a particular time and place we have to be really convinced that adds value. Frankly, we think most seminar discussions in most universities are not run very effectively anywhere, because the faculty aren’t well trained to run them—spending a lot of time on questions from the least well-read student and so on.

The irony is that most students who transfer to us from other universities say, to their surprise, that they are getting more personal support from the Open University than they got on their old campus.

Have you had substantial influence on learning at conventional campuses?

No question. Open University material will be the most well-used material at any British university library. You’ll find such materials falling apart from intensive use. You’ll find many British university teachers drawing heavily, with or without attribution, on our materials. When British university presidents get upset, they sometimes do, at the idea that many of their staff are moonlighting for the Open University, and therefore working for the competition, they never end up doing anything about it, because when they go and examine it in detail, they find that their staff are getting more training from us in how to do the job of a higher education professor than they are in their own place. So we’re absolutely certain we are delivering what we do.

Will everyone be like the Open University in another 20 years?

I don’t think so. Bruce Johnstone, former SUNY (State University of New York) chancellor and now at SUNY-Buffalo, says that the death of the classroom is grossly exaggerated. I think there will always be a tremendous role for campuses, particularly for young students.

I don’t think we’re going to rob the campuses at all. But I do think a lot of the face-to-face sessions valuable—not people learning from each other. The traditional differences in course work, beginning with differences in the length of academic terms—your 32-week courses compared with ten weeks at many U.S. campuses?

A lot of Americans have said, look you do not have to do a cookie cutter imitation of what’s already on offer. Many people would like to study during a longer term spread over more of the year with more flexibility. And our U.S. 해커 says what you guys bring is internationalism, with a curriculum which is already studied outside Britain. It would be stupid if you take your business courses and make them exactly like Americans’ business courses.

But I think it will be a tough sell. Because I think America is such a huge place and, although it is easy for us outside to say how parochial it is, it is a very big parochial box quite difficult for Americans to think outside that box. But again, we believe there will be enough who will actually find that to be quite interesting. We also look forward to two-way traffic, with courses coming back from the States being very good for us.

Some in the U.S. question your courses because of cultural differences.

The courses we’ve chosen for adaptation, for starters, are courses we think will travel. We’ve taken Pacific studies, America in the 20th century, rather than the governing of Britain or things that have been British based. We will find out whether courses in Renaissance art or in 20th-century literature travel or not. But just as Americans like to go abroad in junior years, we think there will be a market for people who will like to study these subjects at home.

You’re aware of all the squabbles that have been going on for years in the States about the study of civilization.

One of the virtues of our course team approach is that they have to come to terms with these issues in an explicit way. Also, we are very conscious of the cultural baggage our courses carry. And there is always somebody on our team who is an equal opportunities watchdog, whose job is to try and see that the course is not prepared in such a way that it’s making assumptions about students’ backgrounds. That’s extraordinarily difficult to do. It doesn’t attempt to give equal time to Asia, Africa, Europe and so on; it does nevertheless allow students to get under the different cultural issues.

Looking ahead at your effort in the U.S., what do you foresee?

I think whatever we do, we will contribute something useful. The nice thing about it is we don’t have to achieve huge numbers to consider this a success, because we’re starting off with a lot of the intellectual capital already somewhat developed. We have to adapt it, that is true, but it does allow us the luxury of operating across a fairly broad curriculum.

So, unlike places like the University of Phoenix, we don’t have to go just for the low-hanging students. We are going to obvious vocational subjects like business studies and computing and so on. We will be seeking very much to spread ourselves across a wide curriculum to be an authentic university.

I’m sure we’ll get some things wrong but I believe we’ve set things up so we can adjust and make course corrections. I think that our approach to associate faculty will have an impact in the long term on the way adjunct faculty are treated in American universities.

I hope our course team approach will provide a kind of quality benchmark for distance learning, and will help reduce some of the worries of people like the American Association of University Professors, who are digging themselves into a position of really very serious hostility to anything to do with distance learning. I think that’s silly because in Britain the equivalent of the AAUP is actually run by people from the Open University. So there they obviously are very comfortable with it.

I have a serious worry: 40 years ago distance learning was a way of making up for correspondence education, and it had a poor reputation, which was well deserved in many cases, because a lot of people used it as a quick way to make money by enrolling students, not giving them much support, and by the time the students had dropped out, they were far away with the money in the bank.

I think the Open University really began the process of changing all that. And over 30 years, through its own efforts and through the efforts of other institutions that began to copy it and were inspired by it, the Open University has brought distance learning to a position of reasonably solid credibility. However I don’t think it’s cemented in place. And I think that with the sort of rush to electronic education, online education, particularly for-profit online education, you could very easily see it all fall to pieces again.

So we would like to do anything we can do to create a constituency for quality in this arena. That is part of the fundamental motivation. It’s not to go in there and make a quick buck and enroll lots of students; it is to try and make that the form of education has a lot to contribute.
"Academic Audits"
American educators examine European practices

Christian Thune described Danish efforts to assure quality in undergraduate instruction through academic audits.

Agenda of professionalism in teaching, not just research.”

Williams was one of several speakers who described the academic audit procedures that have developed in Great Britain and a handful of other countries in recent years but are little known in the United States.

“Nobody in the U.S. is doing this—no state agency, no accrediting agency,” said David Dill, professor of public policy analysis and education at the University of North Carolina and organizer of the meeting. “That’s why we decided to do this, to show people in this country how audits are done elsewhere.”

The conference was attended by experts who have conducted academic audits in the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands and elsewhere, as well as officials of state coordinating agencies and regional accreditation bodies in the U.S.

Dill has described the audits as “external reviews of the internal processes by which an academic institution assures itself of the quality of its teaching and student learning.”

― DAVID D. DILL

Educators attending a conference at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, were urged to consider “academic audits” as a means of improving teaching and learning.

In Hong Kong, where academic audits, called Teaching and Learning Quality Process Reviews, were instituted recently, poor ratings on the teaching and learning scale can have direct consequences. William Massy, professor emeritus at Stanford University and a member of the University Grants Committee in Hong Kong, told the conference. Negative findings about undergraduate instruction at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology led to cuts in that university’s graduate enrollment last year.

Several conferees questioned the wisdom of making public the academic audit reports. “Isn’t this ‘gotcha!’ approach threatening to faculty?” one asked.

“It’s easy to slip into ‘gotcha!’ mode,” Peter Williams conceded. “We urge our auditors to avoid that. The process is not about ‘gotcha!’, it’s about testing claims and assertions. We try not to make any assertions without strong evidence to support them.”

But Williams and others acknowledged that faculty resistance can be a major obstacle to an effective audit. “It has to be collegial,” David Dill said. “If the faculty doesn’t buy in, it won’t happen.”

Denmark follows similar procedures as Great Britain and Hong Kong but does not make the audit results public, according to Christian Thune, director of the Danish Center for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education.

Thune said Danish audit teams have found student meetings helpful. “We have often found much disagreement between what students thought they were going to be doing and what the education program actually is,” he said.

He also suggested that informal dinners at the start of a site visit can break the ice between auditors and their wary hosts. At one such dinner, he recalled, administrators became quite drunk and revealed more flaws in the university’s procedures than the audit team ever could have found on its own.

Several conferees asked for ways to determine if the claims for effective teaching and learning that have been described in the institution’s own documents have a basis in reality.

The team then huddles to write a report, which is made public. “We try to get a coherent report that is written in one voice,” Williams said, “but we seldom get that, so we go a lot of rewriting.”

The final report is shown to the university before publication, so errors can be corrected, “but we have the right to ignore all of that,” Williams said.

Unfavorable audits do not lead to budget cuts or to other dire consequences, but their publication, in printed form and on the agency’s Web site, usually receives press attention of the kind most colleges and universities seek to avoid. The “teaching and learning” reports apparently have caused enrollments to rise or fall at several British institutions.

― D. DILL

― WILLIAM TRUMBLEY

Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the accreditation body for California and Hawaii, “We are trying to shift our focus from overall accreditation to a more intense concern for teaching and learning.”

Dill pronounced himself pleased with the conference results. “I had fairly modest expectations,” he said after the meetings. “I was hoping to stir the pot a bit, get people in this country thinking a bit about these ideas... I think that did happen.”

― WILLIAM TRUMBLEY
ALTHOUGH HIGHER education is enjoying prosperous times, they are not likely to last, Harold A. Hovey, president of State Policy Research, Inc., warns in a paper recently published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

“The last five years have been about as good as it gets in state funding of higher education,” Hovey writes in a report titled “State Spending for Higher Education in the Next Decade.”

State appropriations have increased more than the inflation rate; tuition has been frozen in some states and reduced in others; new campuses have been built or planned and new state scholarship programs have been started.

But “the national budget projections suggest that this environment will not continue,” Hovey says. Simply to maintain the current level of services, “state support needs to increase by nearly six percent a year in baseline projections.”

For most states, this would mean either raising taxes substantially or favoring higher education over competing public service demands, such as elementary and secondary education, health, welfare and prisons. Hovey does not believe either of these possibilities is likely.

“If extraordinarily good times were followed by normal times, it might be possible for states to make fiscal adjustments in less than a crisis environment,” Hovey writes. “However, extraordinarily good times are usually followed by corrections in the private economy called recessions.”

And when that happens, higher education is vulnerable because it is the largest discretionary spending item in most state budgets.

Higher education’s share of state spending has been declining in recent years, Hovey says, in part because governors and state legislatures tend to think that public colleges and universities have more fiscal flexibility than most state agencies. For instance, in most states they can raise tuition to soften the impact of budget cuts.

Sharp increases in the cost of Medicaid and state corrections systems in the late 1980s and early ‘90s also have cut into higher education spending. “Their gains had to come at the expense of other programs,” the paper states.

“The currently relatively generous increases in state support of higher education do not reflect changes in patterns and practices of state budgeting,” Hovey concludes. “They only reflect the standard response to extraordinarily strong fiscal conditions. They will disappear when those fiscal conditions disappear. Both will disappear soon.”

In a second paper published this summer—“All One System: A Second Look”—Harold L. Hodgkinson examines the relationships between higher education and the public schools.

When Hodgkinson, who is director of Teachers College, Columbia University, examined state budgeting, he found that “people in one segment of the educational system existed in almost total disregard of the efforts of all the other segments.”

Fourteen years later, “things are beginning to shift slightly,” Hodgkinson writes in the introduction to his “second look.”

There is a lot more discussion about the need for cooperation between elementary and secondary schools on the one hand and colleges and universities on the other, he finds, but few specific steps have been taken to bring about that collaboration.

The Hodgkinson paper is the first in a series of K–16 publications co-sponsored by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the Institute for Educational Leadership.

A second paper, written by P. Michael Timpane, senior advisor for educational policy at RAND and former president of Teachers College, Columbia University, will be published this fall.

The Center also recently published a report on higher education policy in the state of South Dakota, the first in a planned series of state case studies. The report was written by Mario Martinez, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Management and Development at New Mexico State University.

The Hovey paper and the Martinez report on South Dakota are available on the World Wide Web (http://www.highereducation.org) or by fax from the San Jose office of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, (408) 271-2697. The Hodgkinson publication is available for $15 per copy and can be ordered by sending e-mail, fax or a letter to The Institute for Educational Leadership, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 310, Washington, D.C., 20036. Telephone: (202) 822-8405; fax: (202) 872-4050; e-mail:ied@iel.org.
CROSTALK

British Invasion
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borrows some Open University ideas but uses none of its course materials. The Open University was paid a $750,000, one-time consulting fee but has no ongoing contractual relationship with Cal State.

In both California and Florida, there was objection to the length of Open University courses, which typically run the entire academic year and are not divided into the three- and four-credit-unit segments that are common in this country. There also were complaints that the course materials rest too much on exam-

Some Open University procedures have been adopted but almost no British course materials are finding their way into the new Florida State programs.

In addition, faculty reluctance to use courses developed by anyone other than themselves has proved to be an important barrier in both Florida and California, as it is likely to be elsewhere.

“The not invented here syndrome is very real,” said Jennifer Preece, who is developing a distance learning master’s degree program in information studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. “Faculty are normally quite protective of their courses. They tend to be independent and often quite egotistical.”

The Open University’s search for U.S. partners is not fueled entirely by a desire to spread the good word about non-traditional, off-campus instruction. A 1993 change in the way the British government finances higher education led to sharp cuts in the Open University’s budget, creating a need to generate new revenues outside the United Kingdom.

The large English-speaking, college-going population in the United States seemed an obvious target, but productive partnerships have been elusive. Last November, the Western Governors University, a largely electronic “virtual university” that operates in 18 states, announced formation of a joint venture with the Open University. Called the Governors Open University System, it was

Teaching Teachers to Teach
CalstateTEACH program borrows from British Open University model

The Open University concept has been adopted at Cal State Hayward and Cal State Fullerton, which were among the first to participate in the CalstateTEACH program, which was designed to create a curriculum for the British Open University.

Teaching Teachers to Teach
CalstateTEACH program borrows from British Open University model

The course of study they devised is daunting—38 semester hours, in four phases, over a period of 18 months. The materials include 14 textbooks, audio and video tapes, CD-ROMs and a lot of information that will be transmitted through the program’s Web site. The cost will be $1,142 for each of the four phases.

Students will be expected to do nine to 12 hours of work on their own each week, in addition to their regular classroom duties. “My biggest fear is attrition,” Barnes said. “This is a very rigorous program that requires a lot of personal drive.”

The plan is to enroll 550 students this fall but as many as 1,000 could be accommodated if the demand is heavy.

Although Open University course materials have been rejected, many other features of the British approach have been adopted.

Cal state Chancellor Charles B. Reed, who was a member of the group that reviewed the Open University curriculum, “We would be sending the message to teachers that this approach would work only with whites.”

Nor did the materials meet California standards for teaching English and mathematics, Barnes added, and “they were not at all high tech,” which was a problem because CalstateTEACH plans on heavy use of the Internet to communicate with students.

“[Chancellor Reed’s] initial expectation was that we would be able to use a lot of the British Open University materials, and he was annoyed that the faculty did not agree,” Barnes said. “He kept after us and finally I said, ‘Charlie, the British have a very different interpretation of the Revolutionary War than we do.’”

Other sources said Cal State faculty members resisted using materials developed by others—the same “not invented here” syndrome that the Open University encountered when it tried to sell course materials to Florida State University. Whatever the reason, the Open University curriculum was discarded and a group of about 30 Cal State faculty members, divided into four teams, designed a set of new courses.

Most participants came from the system’s educational leadership, including tutors, intensive course planning by teams of specialists, and a student-centered approach. California faces a severe shortage of teachers in the primary grades (first, second and third) because of an aging teacher population, rapidly rising enrollments and class size reductions that were initiated by former Governor Pete Wilson and have been continued by the state’s current governor, Gray Davis.

The shortage is especially acute in the low-income neighborhoods of the state’s largest cities. About 4,600 teachers in the huge Los Angeles Unified School District alone are teaching with emergency credentials, which means they hold bachelor’s degrees and have passed a teacher literacy test but probably have had little or no classroom experience. Some are excellent teachers but others, one Cal State education professor said, “haven’t a clue what they’re doing.”

One Los Angeles school is staffed entirely by teachers holding emergency credentials.

Cal State officials thought part of the problem could be solved by transplanting the Open University’s teacher certification program, which has trained about ten percent of Great Britain’s teachers, to California.

Cal State Chancellor Charles B. Reed asked former Governor Pete Wilson for $5 million to implement the program over a three-year period. Wilson agreed but insisted that it be done in one year, so planning began at a furious pace last summer.

The plan is to enroll 550 students this fall but as many as 1,000 could be accommodated if the demand is heavy.

Although Open University course materials have been rejected, many other features of the British approach have been adopted.

All students will have tutors, called “Learning Support Faculty” (LSF)—one for every 18 to 20 students. The LSFs will monitor student progress, making sure they take required tests and turn in papers. They also will be checking on the student’s performance with his or her pupils in the classroom.

The LSFs will be the front line,” Charles Lindahl said. “They are there to do whatever it takes to move that student along, whether face to face or through the Internet.”

Thousands of California teachers now have only emergency authorizations to teach.

The hope is that the Learning Support Faculty will be full-time Cal State professors, but that probably won’t be the case, at least initially.

“I think it’s really important to hire CSU faculty for these jobs,” said Jodi Servatius, a professor of educational leadership at Cal State Hayward and director of CalstateTEACH. “We want the CSU imprimatur on this product.” But realistically, Servatius added, “we probably will have to fill in with retired principals or master teachers.”

Some faculty members predicted the program will fail, because well qualified professors will be unwilling to join an untested program that requires a two-year commitment.

So far, only ten or 12 LSFs have been hired because Cal State officials do not expect to know how many students have signed up for CalstateTEACH until the first week in September, when schools learn how many teachers with emergency credentials will be on their staff. However, Servatius said those hired so far are “very well qualified.”

There also will be “adjunct site faculty”—experienced teachers at the schools where those enrolled in CalstateTEACH are working, to help the student-teachers with day-to-day problems.

Twenty Cal State campuses (all are participating except San Diego State and the California Maritime Academy) have been divided into five regional centers, on the British model. The director of each center will supervise the LSFs and adjunct site faculty in that region.

“The Open University concept has been very important,” Jodi Servatius said. “The large ideas survived but most of the details did not.”

—William Troublesh
described in a news release as “an unprecedented new distance learning initiative for students throughout the U.S. and its territories.”

However, the announcement was premature. Negotiations broke down and no agreement was reached. “We’re still the best of friends but we haven’t set up housekeeping together,” said Richard Lewis, interim chancellor of the United States Open University, which is what the British Open University is calling its American effort.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County's master's degree in information systems might be offered jointly with the

Faculty reluctance to use courses developed by anyone other than themselves has proved to be an important barrier to the use of Open University course materials in both Florida and California.

Open University, but Jennifer Preece said, “We’re still in the negotiating phase.”

Lewis and other Open University officials are talking to community college districts and to individual two-year colleges in Arizona, California, Florida and Texas about possible “two plus two” programs, in which students would take lower division work from a two-year college, then complete a baccalaureate with the Open University.

Plans appear to be most advanced at the ten-campus Maricopa Community College District in Phoenix, Arizona, whose Vice Chancellor for Student and Educational Development Alfredo de los Santos, Jr. said, “We intend to work with the Open University to provide a ‘two plus two’ option for our students.”

The degrees are most likely to be offered through Rio Salado, a “college without walls” within the Maricopa district, which already has “two plus two” agreements with several four-year institutions.

“I feel I have a moral responsibility that my students have opportunities for affordability, flexible ways of getting a bachelor’s degree,” said Rio Salado President Linda Thor. “And I’m impressed by the very high quality of standards and the very student-centered approach of the British Open University.”

Before the United States Open University can offer baccalaureate degrees, however, it must be accredited. Toward that end, the institution has been incorporated in the State of Delaware, and has applied for accreditation through the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

While awaiting accreditation, the Open University will offer its first undergraduate courses in this country this fall—in European studies, international studies, computing and combined studies—as well as the first courses leading to a master’s degree in business administration or computing.

Like their British counterparts, American students who enroll in Open University courses will receive many boxes of materials—textbooks, audio and video tapes, CD-ROMs and more.

Each group of about 20 students will have a tutor, most of whom will be faculty members at U.S. colleges and universities who will “moonlight” one course for the Open University. There will be one important difference, however. Most of the tutoring will be done by e-mail or telephone, not face to face, as is generally done in the United Kingdom.

Since personal contact between tutors and students is seen as an important reason for the success of the British Open University, some question whether electronic tutoring can be as effective.

Asked how many undergraduate students are expected to enroll in this first year, Lewis, the interim chancellor, replied, “We’re being very cautious…we’re talking about hundreds of students.”

Lewis is more hopeful about the popularity of the MBA program, which will be offered through corporations as well as universities. He said the Open University is the largest provider of MBAs in Europe and the United Kingdom but acknowledged that competition will be fierce in the United States, where a great many traditional and non-traditional institutions already offer the degree.

Lewis said Open University will continue to try to develop partnerships with American colleges and universities but is pinning most of its hopes on developing the United States Open University as a separate entity.

“The other things are important,” he said, “but our main objective is to create a new university, starting with upper division and graduate students.”

Experiences like the one at Florida State probably have led Lewis and other Open University planners to follow this path.

Open University had hoped to be a major supplier of course materials for the State’s distance education programs Florida State is planning. These include master’s degrees in distance learning and in criminology as well as “two plus two” ventures with 18 Florida community colleges, in which students will take their first two years at a community college, then complete the baccalaureate with upper division distance learning courses from Florida State.

Faculty members and administrators from the two institutions exchanged visits, and boxes of Open University materials were shipped to Tallahassee.

“Originally, we thought we would take the course work and adapt it for our purposes,” said Susan Felz, an administrator at the Center for Academic Support and Distance Learning at Florida State.

But faculty members complained that the materials were, as one said, “too British—they even used examples from cricket. How many Americans are familiar with cricket?”

Some believed Florida State was more advanced than Open University in the use of technology. “They’re very print and audio-oriented,” said Alan Mabe, the dean of graduate studies. “There’s not enough use of the Internet.”

Although President D’Alemberte was enthusiastic about engaging in joint ventures with the British institution, some other Florida State administrators were not, according to several faculty members who have been working on the project. “They seemed to see these as glorified correspondence courses,” one said.

And there was some faculty resistance to using materials that had been developed by others.

So far, only three Open University courses have been converted for use—all in the master’s degree program in distance learning. None have made their way into the new “two plus two” undergraduate offerings.

“We were impressed by their course development approach and we thought we could save both time and money” by using Open University materials, said Owen Gaede, former acting director of the Learning Systems Institute at Florida State, but, unfortunately, the faculty’s ‘not invented here’ syndrome overcame such considerations.

Negotiations between the two institutions also were marked by “contractual problems” and “philosophical differences,” Gaede added. “Some people in the Open University’s worldwide division were not very pleased with us…they thought we would be a cash cow.”

Earl Morrogh, former assistant director of the Center for Academic Support and Distance Learning, said, “I think they saw us as a client and we saw them as a partner.”

However, Florida State has adopted many of the British Open University’s distance learning procedures and attitudes, even though few materials have been purchased.

New courses are being developed by curriculum teams, as they are in Great Britain. Tutors, called “mentors” at FSU, will be available to guide students through the material, although most of the contact will be electronic. The community colleges that are taking part in the “two plus two” program will serve as regional centers, providing student services and proctoring exams.

Most important, said Jamie Murphy, a research associate at the Center for Academic Support and Distance Learning, “We have absorbed the Open University concept that we’re here to service the students; the students aren’t here to feed our egos.”

Florida State expects to continue its relationship with Open University. OU faculty members visit the Tallahassee campus frequently and one of them, David Hawkridge, was named the campus’ first (and so far only) “MCI Eminent Scholar in Distance Learning.”

Future courses might be developed jointly by FSU and Open University faculty.

“Logically, we feel there must be a way to work together to develop courses that will work for both of us,” Owen Gaede said, “What didn’t work was trying to convert their courses for our use.”

“I believe there is still some sense of collegial feeling between us,” President D’Alemberte said, “but there has been a shift in the relationship, partly, I think, because the Open University people are struggling with just what their role should be in the United States.”

Owen Gaede, a distance learning professor, communes with his laptop computer in the Florida State University football stadium.
“California Virtual University”
Highly touted experiment falls short of expectations

By Carl Irving
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

California’s entry into the electronic university sweepstakes—the California Virtual University—began with high hopes and great expectations a little more than two years ago, but the venture has collapsed in the face of indifference, if not hostility, on the part of legislators, educators and the state’s business community.

In 1997, former Governor Pete Wilson declined to join the Western Governors University, the distance learning venture that was started by two governors—Republican Mike Leavitt of Utah and Democrat Roy Romer of Colorado—and now includes 18 member states in the west and midwest.

Instead, Wilson opted for a California-only approach that he hoped would combine quality learning with the latest in high technology in a private, non-profit, self-sustaining foundation that would both alleviate demands for new California campuses and also attract out-of-state students.

Wilson also thought a successful California Virtual University might boost his possible bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 2000, participants in the project recalled. But neither Wilson’s candidacy, nor the virtual university, got off the ground.

The idea was that California’s higher education institutions—the University of California, the California State University, the California Community Colleges and the private colleges and universities—would cooperate in creating an online university that would enable students to select courses from many different institutions.

For instance, a student at Humboldt State, one of the 22 Cal State campuses, could search an electronic course catalogue and sign up for an online course that was not available at Humboldt but was offered by the University of Southern California, a private school, if both campuses agreed.

Unlike Western Governors University, however, the California Virtual University (CVU) did not plan to offer degrees or certificates.

Wilson, a Republican, hoped for start-up funds from a Democratic legislature because the governor thought he had the support of the state’s higher education leaders, both public and private. The governor also was assured that matching funds would flow from the state’s cluster of high tech firms, sources close to the project said.

Later, growing demand from students would enable CVU to become self-sufficient, Wilson and others thought.

At first, there was great enthusiasm for the idea. A CVU spokesman said, “We’re aiming to be the Amazon.com of technology-mediated education in California, so that as a student you just have to go to one Web site.”

“We’ll have a global audience,” proclaimed Diane Vines, a former Cal State administrator who helped design and plan the virtual university.

Official letters in support of state funding for CVU poured into the office of former Assemblyman Brooks Firestone, a moderate Republican who, early in 1998, introduced legislation establishing the California Virtual University and requesting $9 million over three years to support CVU and other distance learning activities.

James Highsmith, a Cal State Fresno professor who was then chairman of the Cal State statewide Academic Senate, praised the bill as an “important step...to develop California’s human capital.”

However, some legislators now say they detected early signs of a lack of enthusiasm among higher education and business leaders for financing this coordinated distance learning effort. Without pressure from these sources, the Democratic legislative leadership felt little compulsion to support the Republican governor’s initiative.

Only the California Community Colleges, with more than 1.4 million students on 106 campuses—at least one in almost every legislator’s district—received state funding for distance learning last year. Nothing went to the University of California or to Cal State and neither system contributed any of its own money to CVU.

Corporate contributions also fell short of expectations. Five “founding partners” (there were to have been ten)—Oracle, Sun Microsystems, Cisco Systems, Pacific Bell and International Thomson Publishing—each gave $75,000. Another $250,000 came from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

But little attention was paid to these danger signals and planning for CVU proceeded at a brisk pace.

A 22-member task force, using gubernatorial office space and equipment, had been established, with Joe Rodota, a former Wilson deputy chief of staff, as coordinator. The task force included delegates from the four segments of California higher education—UC, Cal State, the community colleges and the private campuses.

Within eight months, participants had glued together an online catalogue that ultimately listed more than 2,500 courses from more than 100 campuses.

Historian Stanley Chodorow agreed to run the California Virtual University but the venture collapsed for political and financial reasons.

Former Governor Pete Wilson thought a successful California Virtual University might boost his possible bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 2000.

Governor Wilson predicted, “[CVU] is going to provide access to quality higher education to a larger percentage of our population—how much larger, only time will tell. Those who, simply for reasons of their own work schedule, or their physical remoteness from a residential campus, will now be able to at any time and literally at any place, access the kind of higher educational opportunities they need for their own advancement professionally.”

Three days later, Wilson ended most staff support for CVU, including use of computers, on the assumption that the campuses and business sponsors would take it from there. But that never happened.

Stanley Chodorow, former provost at the University of Pennsylvania, was hired as CVU’s chief executive officer. Chodorow, who took over last September, is a medieval historian who has won a wide range of honors for scholarship and teaching. After four years at Penn, he was returning to California, where he had been a faculty member and administrator at UC San Diego for 26 years. He received an enthusiastic welcome.

“His energy and thorough understanding of education will be valuable in using telecommunications and technology to expand access to improve the quality of higher education,” said Cal State Chancellor Charles B. Reed.

But shortly after his arrival, Chodorow detected worrisome uncertainties.

The proposal for start-up financing had been “caught up in the tussle between the Legislature and the governor (during the 1998 state budget battle), and the governor sacrificed it,” Chodorow said in a recent interview.

But a former Wilson Administration official offered a more charitable view.

“There was a sense among the Democrats that this was a Wilson priority for bargaining,” this source said. “But Wilson did not feel this was an item to be leveraged. He said in effect, ‘It’s up to you guys; we’re pulling out.’ He didn’t want it politicized.”

Funding last fall was “way short of what had been expected,” Chodorow said. With the Wilson era ending, it became clear that prospects for sufficient outside aid had evaporated, along with the governor’s influence. “The governor had talked directly with the companies who were supportive or interested in being supportive,” Chodorow said, “and when he withdrew, their interest declined.”

“At the same time, the governor had not demanded that any of the higher education institutions make contributions,” he added. “That had been the original idea—that the institutions needn’t make a commitment.”

When Democrat Gray Davis, who replaced Wilson as governor last January, submitted his first budget, it contained no state money for the California Virtual University.

Most private foundations were unwilling to support CVU if the state were not
Going to invest some of its own money. Immediately after taking office, Chodorow asked, “What were the beneficiaries (the campuses) putting up? The answer was ‘nothing’ and the response from the foundations was ‘why, then, should we?’”

“This kind of enterprise should have had state support,” said Larry Toy, president of the California Community Colleges Foundation. “All other states with similar ventures had state support.”

Unlike Western Governors University, the California Virtual University did not plan to offer degrees or certificates.

But the Firestone bill, providing millions in start-up money, went nowhere. Hearings on the legislation never were held.

“We were under the impression that outside, private grants would fund (CVU), similar ventures had state support.”

Tidal Wave 2,” the expected rapid growth along with a self-supporting catalogue, had state support,” said Larry Toy, president of the California Community Colleges Foundation. “All other states with similar ventures had state support.”

The California Virtual University’s Web site home page promises many services that are not, in fact, available.

Searching for revenue, Chodorow hoped to gain some through book sales. A contract was signed with Barnes and Noble but “it became clear almost immediately that no one had checked with the campuses,” he said. “They objected that books were their function. Their own financial structures and plans included bookstores. So we were in competition with our own institutions.”

Another dashed prospect involved selling the online courses overseas. Chodorow, a delegation from the higher education institutions visited Japan and China last October. “We would have had some agreements in the next year had we stayed alive,” he said. “We would have had an operation in Japan and Singapore and perhaps with China. We were talking to our sponsors, such as Oracle and Sun, to help develop and deliver overseas courses.”

Last March, an increasingly desperate Chodorow persuaded the CVU board to endorse a request to the three public higher education segments to guarantee a budget for three years at a rate of $1 million a year, to raise money by selling advertising space in the online catalogue, and to attract more matching grants from foundations. The advertising was hardly a normal practice for non-profit campuses. Chodorow conceded, but the board endorsed the proposal “as the way we had to go, the world we were living in.”

But that effort also failed. None of the segments offered to rescue the virtual university. The community colleges and private schools were said to be willing to donate, and UC reportedly would have gone along. But Cal State balked, according to several participants in the discussions, all of whom requested anonymity.

Cal State Chancellor Reed already had announced plans to offer 15 percent of Cal State’s courses online within five years. “He was persuaded that his institution could go it alone, that he didn’t need us,” one source said.

Asked for comment, Reed replied, “It was my understanding that everyone was in the same frame of mind...there was no use putting money into something deeper and deeper in debt.”

Reed referred to a notice from UC President Richard C. Atkinson that, as of May 24, 1999, California Virtual University debts totaled more than $153,000. “Our investigations reveal that the CVU Foundation liabilities far outweigh assets,” Atkinson wrote.

“A year ago when I took office (prospects for CVU) were different,” Reed said. “Everything we can do to provide opportunity for faculty to use technology, we ought to. I have no idea what was wrong. I think people are much more comfortable dealing with a traditional, existing university, rather than trying to figure out how virtual universities work.”

Last March, a disheartened Chodorow decided to give up. He returned a second $250,000 installment to the Sloan Foundation and left the payroll on March 31, along with his lone remaining assistant. This fall Chodorow will return to the UC San Diego History department, where he is a professor emeritus. The University of California agreed to handle final details of shutting down the virtual university and to maintain its website for at least three months.

So ends, at least for now, California’s attempt to compete with other states (Florida, Kentucky) and regional groups (Western Governors University, the Southern Regional Education Board’s “electronic campus”) in the online university business.

Some think this is just as well.

“We’ll decentralize responsibilities for courses back down to the segment level,” said Carol Tomlinson-Keseay, who chaired the last sessions of the CVU board and is vice provost for academic initiatives at UC. “I actually think that’s a good place for it to be.”

“One of the problems with an independent organization is that there’s no connection with the university,” Tomlinson-Keseay added. “(And) online learning is taking a wide variety of forms, from a complete course in front of a monitor to places where technology is infusing courses in terms of sets of problems online, or graded online, or chat rooms, or using multimedia to access multi-collections.”

Financial backing was a major issue, she said, because each of the three public segments has its own funding priorities. “So if you say, spend some money on an independent venture, it’s very hard when each segment has its mouth open and feels it’s not being fed enough.”

Warren H. Fox, executive director of the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC), which advises the governor and the Legislature on higher education policy, favors “exploring more productive relations” with Western Governors University, which plans to offer degree programs. CPEC was critical of CVU almost from the start, contending that it had a misleading title because it was not a university, had no faculty and offered no degrees.

Some predict the California Virtual University, or something like it, is bound to emerge in the nation’s most populous state, but Chodorow is doubtful.

“These kinds of experiments typically are put on a back burner,” he said. “We will see individual institutions aggressively and unaggressively pursue similar programs. State government may develop a public institution supported by public funds in two to four years.”

Hopes all was not for naught: “By its very existence, CVU was a stimulant. It spread the gospel and helped institutions think about how their programs might find a niche...It was like honey bees, moving from flower to flower.”

Carl Irving is a former political and higher education reporter for the San Francisco Examiner.
HELP WANTED: COLLEGE REQUIRED. More frequently than ever, this is the message that corporate America is sending to America's job seekers. More than two-thirds of the jobs being created in the fastest-growing sectors of the U.S. economy—office jobs (including legal, sales and marketing, accounting, managerial and editorial positions), health-care jobs, and teaching positions—now require at least some college. The office sector alone is having an enormous impact on the U.S. economy and the skills it demands of its workers. The percentage of U.S. jobs in the office sector grew to 41 percent of the nation's 133 million jobs in 1997, up from 30 percent of all jobs in 1959. By 2006, the number of U.S. office jobs is projected to grow by another 4.4 million. But creating these college-educated workers will require smarter investment strategies for the dollars we now devote to postsecondary education. The stakes are high. States that do not push enough of their students through college are going to lose jobs, skilled workers and tax revenue to locations that do. In an increasingly global economy, these jobs could as easily go to workers in Tokyo as Topeka.

Many of these new jobs are in education and health care—jobs associated with the development and maintenance of human capital. Why? Because the new economy requires more education, the demand for health care continues to rise (especially as the population ages), and productivity in education and health-care jobs is not rising.

States that do not push enough of their students through college are going to lose jobs, skilled workers and tax revenue to locations that do.

Little is known about how to develop and assess these general cognitive and behavioral skills in students and workers, but most employers associate them with educational attainment, especially college-level attainment. As a result, American employers use a college degree as the standard by which to screen job applicants.

The good news is that a growing number of students will come of age as the new century dawns. “Generation Y” (or the “baby-boom echo” generation) will enter college between 2000 and 2015, and promises to be bigger and more racially and culturally diverse than any generation before it (See figure 1). The bad news, however, is that not enough of these students will be going to college.

As a result of our past educational successes and our surging demographic changes, by 2015 there should be an additional 300,000 Hispanic undergraduates and 200,000 African American undergraduates between the ages of 18 and 24 on our nation’s campuses. But these gains in diversity will be more apparent than real. The share of Hispanic and African American youth now attending our nation’s colleges trails their share of all 18- to 24-year-olds by 630,000 students.

To improve access to college for students of all races, ages and income backgrounds will require a decisive response from educators and government officials at every level—elementary, secondary and postsecondary, local, state and federal. Educational approaches and financial aid programs need review to ensure that the country’s rising students are getting the skills and funding they need to enter and finish college, and to secure their place in the new American workforce.

**College Degrees: A Must for New-Job Seekers**

More than ever before, American employers—whether industries, associations, government agencies, telecommunications firms, schools or hospitals—are making college degrees a prerequisite for new jobs. “Where did you go to college?” has replaced “Did you go to college?” as the question facing applicants, because many employers assume that applicants already have a diploma.

There are many reasons why most of the new jobs in the U.S. economy now require a college education. In 1959, only 20 percent of workers between the ages of 30 and 59 needed at least some college; today that number is almost 56 percent.

There are at least four reasons why the demand for college is growing in the work place:

First, the number of low-wage, low-skilled services jobs in the U.S. economy—jobs that do not require any postsecondary education—is not growing. These jobs, which include restaurant and retail jobs, still comprise only 20 percent of all jobs in the U.S. economy—the same percentage as when Eisenhower was president.

Second, the lightning-speed growth of the high-technology industries—such as computers and fiber-optics as well as related industries, including telecommunications, software manufacturing and design, and Internet service providers—has done two things: It has helped shrink the number of factory jobs while increasing the skill level necessary for those that remain.

Contrary to popular belief, this loss in factory jobs is not being fully offset by gains in new high-technology jobs. High-tech jobs have grown from 3.4 percent to 6.6 percent of all jobs since 1959. This is largely because, as with factory jobs, it takes fewer people to make or repair high-technology equipment. And more education is expected of these workers. More than 80 percent of high-tech jobs require at least some college. As a result, the high-technology field is usually not the answer for displaced factory or other workers—unless they have the ways and means to go back to school.

Third, as the baby-boomer population ages, and its children crowd the nation’s schools, demand for workers in both the health-care and education fields has grown rapidly.

Unlike factory or high-technology jobs, teaching children or caring for patients are tasks that are more difficult to replace with technology. Machines simply cannot substitute for the human touch. They cannot perform surgery, or ensure that a child truly understands how to multiply fractions. As a result, the number of health-care jobs in the U.S. grew from 3.7 percent of all jobs in 1959 to 6.6 percent of all jobs in 1997. Over the same period, education jobs increased from 5.6 to 8.3 percent of all jobs.

Most of these new jobs, however, require higher education. More than one-half of education and health-care workers are managers or professionals, positions that require a two-year or a four-year college education. Overall, 78 percent of all education and health-care workers have at least some college education.

Hispanic and African American workers are underrepresented among the better-paying jobs in these fields as well. Only one in three Hispanic workers in the education and health-care fields has a managerial or professional job that demands a college degree. They are more likely to be orderlies and cafeteria workers than doctors, nurses, teachers or school administrators. African Americans actually have a larger representation than whites in the education and health-care fields but, again, are more likely to hold lower-skilled jobs requiring less education.

A fourth reason for the increase in demand for more highly educated employees is that office jobs demand them. And that is where most of the new jobs are.

The U.S. economy has, in large part, traded in its hard hat for a briefcase. The country that made the assembly line famous now employs more office workers than factory workers. Office jobs, a definition that also includes those working in the headquarters of manufacturing companies, now number 54 million in the United States, or 41 percent of the 133 million jobs in the American economy.
By 2006, the number of new office jobs is expected to swell by 4.4 million. In comparison, the information technology field is only expected to add 750,000 new jobs by then.

Office workers—stockbrokers, accountants, managers, lawyers, editors, salespeople and their like—also are America’s best-paid group of employees. On average, male office workers with B.A. degrees or more earned $63,500 a year in 1997, and female office workers with B.A. degrees or more earned an average of $39,000. (In comparison, annual salaries in the health-care and education fields in 1997 averaged $58,600 for men, $33,800 for females.) Office workers also are well-educated: 66 percent of office workers today have at least some college education, while 30 percent have B.A. degrees.

Hispanics, in particular, are not getting their share of these new office jobs. Only one in four Hispanic men and one in three Hispanic women were employed in office work in 1997, compared to almost half of white workers and 36 percent of African American workers.

**Standards Rising for Existing Jobs**

While there is a 28 percent increase in the number of jobs that have traditionally required a college degree, the largest share of the increase in jobs with postsecondary education requirements—about 72 percent—comes from higher skills required in jobs that previously did not demand college-level education.

To put it another way, nearly three-quarters of the demand for workers with higher education come from educational upgrading within jobs. The remaining one-quarter is due to the shift in the distribution of occupations toward those that historically have required higher education credentials.

In other words, the rise in the share of managers and professionals from 17 percent in 1959 to 29 percent in 1997 represents the shift in occupations (see figure 2). The increase in the share of managers with a four-year college degree from 80 percent in 1959 to 57 percent in 1997 represents educational upgrading.

Between 1959 and 1997, the percentage of the nation’s managers and professionals holding a bachelor’s degree rose dramatically, from 41 to 63 percent. Over the same period, the percentage of these elite jobs that were awarded to individuals with no college education fell from 22 to 15 percent, while the percentage awarded to high school dropouts fell from 15 to 1 percent.

Today, 34 percent of the nation’s 84 million prime-age workers (those between 30 and 59 years of age) hold high-paying managerial or professional jobs paying an average annual salary of $59,300 for men and $34,500 for women. Of these, more than 85 percent have at least some college education and 66 percent have at least some postsecondary education.

**Figure 2: The Education of Workers Has Increased Since 1973**

- **Cumulative Increase in Schooling**
- **Cumulative Increase in Schooling Proportionately**

- **Boxplots**

Better skill building, more funding, greater access to a college education. An all-hands-on-deck approach to the educational challenges of America’s new century is required. The time for it is now.

**What Impact Would True Educational Equity Have on America’s Economy?**

These trends reveal a stubborn, troubling pattern. It appears that not enough members of Generation Y will go to college. Projections show that by 2006, the number of low-skilled workers in the U.S. economy will outnumber low-skilled jobs. But imagine an alternative scenario—one in which the African American and Hispanic communities had the same distribution of college education as the white community.

First of all, we would fill more of those college jobs that may otherwise go begging, go to under-skilled American workers, or go to foreign workers. Second, the difference in national wealth that would result from this infusion of human capital would be startling. If African Americans and Hispanics had the same education as the white majority, African Americans would add $113 billion annually in new wealth; Hispanics would add another $118 billion to the nation’s annual economic output. Together, that is a total of $231 billion a year, an amount equivalent to 6.8 percent of all Americans’ earnings. Moreover, assuming an average combined federal, state and local tax rate of 35 percent, the new wealth created by this new human capital would result in more than $80 billion in new public revenues.

Increasing human capital among the African American and Hispanic communities would benefit minority families substantially. Higher incomes would raise the standard of living of minority families and increase the quality of their lives in countless ways that cannot be measured.

**College: Now More than Ever**

More than ever, college is a must. Postsecondary education has become this country’s worker training and retraining system.

And though a bumper crop of young talent is moving through the nation’s elementary and high schools, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that these students enroll in college, and graduate. More Hispanic and African American students are entering U.S. colleges and universities, but not enough. Many are limiting their college experience to two-year programs or just some college instead of finishing four-year programs. Meanwhile, the rising cost of a college degree is likely to have an impact even on those students who plan to attend college.

In the new world of work, without that college experience, these young people will find it difficult to get good jobs and form stable families, and too many could spend time on the welfare roll, not the payroll.

The nation’s higher education institutions will need to handle the new wave of 18- to 24-year-old students from Generation Y while maintaining their commitment to nontraditional students—those who are older, have families, and may be working or looking for work. Already, 42 percent of all college students are over the age of 24. Among Hispanic college students, more than half are above the age of 24.

Nontraditional students rely on two-year and four-year institutions for retraining or a second chance. For instance, more than 75,000 displaced workers used Pell Grants, and 48 percent of them also used college loans to restart their careers in 1990-91; the most recent year for which these data are available. In 1996-97, 357,400 welfare recipients and 119,400 of their dependents used Pell Grants to improve their prospects. Some assessments suggest that 32 percent of women on welfare are ready to do postsecondary work and, with a boost from 200 hours of basic-skills preparation, another 37 percent would be ready.

If more is not done for the workforce of the future, the U.S. economy of the new century may face rough waters. Keeping the U.S. workforce well-educated is critical to filling the economy’s jobs. This is crucial if America is to compete with its overseas competitors. This, in turn, is crucial to ensuring that America’s high-paying, high-skilled jobs are filled by Americans in America. Without an educated workforce, companies may relocate or, as they did in 1998, bring in more overseas talent. Better skill building, more funding, greater access to a college education.

**Better skill building, more funding, greater access to a college education.** An all-hands-on-deck approach to the educational challenges of America’s new century is required. The time for it is now.

*Anthony P. Carnevale is vice president for public leadership, Educational Testing Service.*
Great university systems flourish where children fare badly

By Gordon K Davies

YOU PROBABLY DID NOT hear this at recent commencement ceremonies: Colleges and universities tend to take credit for much of the good that occurs in a society but to remain shockingly oblivious to the greatest human follies and catastrophes. Although perhaps not deliberate, this posture has allowed institutions of higher education to lay claim to the best and avoid blame for the bad. But the rapid shift to a more open market in which many purveyors of educational services vie for student-customers has revealed this behavior to be self-serving.

As I was preparing to begin the work of coordinating higher education reform in Kentucky, I came across a summary of “Kids Count,” an annual report prepared by the Children’s Defense Fund with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. In it, I discovered that Kentucky ranked 48th among the states in the general well-being of its children, according to commonsense measures like the percentages of children living in poverty, having abnormally low weights at birth, dying before age two, and being born to unwed teenage mothers.

Surely, I thought, if this reform is successful, it will improve the condition of children in Kentucky. But, to my surprise, I noted that a state acknowledged to have one of the best university systems in the nation ranked just above Kentucky in “Kids Count.” I realized that it is possible for a state to build a great system of higher education without improving the condition of its children. Indeed, some respected state universities may have been built at the expense of the poor, whose needs are not met. They are like castles in a bog, I thought.

There are two Kentuckys—one of the haves and the other of the have-nots—just as there are two Californias, North Carolinas, New Yorks and Floridas. The percentages differ, but the social reality is basically the same. In many states with eminent public universities, substantial portions of the population live desperate, dead-end lives: uneducated, unhealthy, and unprepared for the nimble but hard-hearted economy that will shape the destiny of our children and grandchildren.

In many states with eminent public universities, substantial portions of the population live desperate, dead-end lives: uneducated, unhealthy, and unprepared.

By 2020, we want to have nationally eminent universities and a model system of postsecondary education. We want a per-capita income that is at least at the national average. But if we have done this and still there are two Kentuckys, we shall have failed. Or better, we shall not yet have been successful.

Higher education by itself cannot improve the quality of lives in Kentucky or any other state. The connections between causes and effects in solving social problems are both difficult to discern and exceedingly complex. Many institutions, both governmental and private, have to align their efforts before even small improvements can be achieved.

Even though the causal linkages are unclear, correlations are undeniable. Better-educated women experience healthier pregnancies and bear healthier children. The general level of health increases along with education, as do civic involvement, support for the arts, and per-capita income.

In his 1876 inaugural address, Daniel Coit Gilman, the founding president of Johns Hopkins University, asserted that the establishment of great research universities would create colleges and universities that become the envy of the nation, but its kids still do not count.

What Arnold sensed was a total disconnection between the prosperity of some and the abject poverty of others. Whenever some industrialist or member of government trumpeted the great virtues of the age, Arnold suggested, someone else should at least murmur, “Wragg is in custody.”

A great university system in a society whose children fare badly is a failure. If Kentucky creates colleges and universities that become the envy of the nation, but its kids still do not count, we, too, will have failed. When the popular magazine rankings announce the supposed “best” among the nation’s colleges and universities in the year 2000, I hope to hear someone murmur, “Wragg is in custody.” Maybe even during a graduation address.

Gordon K. Davies is president of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

Are Academic Audits the Answer?

“Assessment movement” seeks to measure and improve student learning

By David D Dill

VER THE LAST TWO DECADES there has been increasing concern about the quality of teaching and learning for undergraduate students in U.S. colleges and universities. In the 1980s this concern, coupled with the emerging accountability developments in K-12 education, led to public legislation fostering the “assessment movement” in many states, in which colleges and universities were encouraged to undertake efforts to measure and improve student learning.

In the 1990s the issue of the quality of student learning in postsecondary education has received increased emphasis. The question of how states became disenchanted with the ambiguous results of the assessment movement, and have sought more rigorous forms of accountability. These have included public policies designed to directly regulate college and university teaching loads and, in an increasing number of states, the adoption of “performance funding systems” tied to various indicators of undergraduate education.

Several observers have suggested that while there is cause for concern regarding the quality of teaching and learning at the undergraduate level, the public policies currently being pursued are unlikely to effectively address the problem. That is, there is little evidence that directly regulating the processes of teaching within colleges and universities or implementing incentive systems tied to simplistic measures of academic performance will address the underlying causes of variation in the quality of teaching and learning. Such policies may in fact have unintended negative effects on academic innovation, effectiveness and efficiency.
Instead, these observers have suggested that a more effective approach would be to seek means for restoring and strengthening the internal web of accountability by which colleges and universities have traditionally assured the quality of their teaching and learning.

A number of experiments emphasizing professional self-regulation of the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning are now underway within the regional and professional accrediting community. Several state systems of higher education also are exploring new procedures for improving institutional responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning.

The interest in developing new mechanisms for improving student learning also has stimulated curiosity with forms of quality assurance that have developed outside the United States. Academic agencies in other countries have been experimenting with some novel forms of academic accountability. The rapid expansion of access to higher education in Europe and Asia over the last two decades (termed “massification” outside the U.S.) stimulated public concern about maintaining academic quality.

Lacking a tradition of voluntary institutional and/or professional accreditation, a number of countries developed new mechanisms of quality assurance, most of which emphasized the norm of professional self-regulation in their design and implementation. In the United Kingdom, for example, questions by the Thatcher government in the early 1980s about the quality of teaching in universities motivated the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals of the old university system to develop a system of institutional reviews termed “academic audits.”

Academic audits like U.S. regional accreditation, are external reviews directed at the institution level. But unlike accreditation reviews, academic audits are focused on those processes by which the institution monitors its academic standards and acts to improve the quality of teaching and student learning, particularly at the undergraduate level. As a consequence, academic audits help to clarify the collective responsibility of faculty at both the institutional and unit level for monitoring academic standards and assuring the quality of teaching and student learning.

Similar quality assurance mechanisms soon were adopted in New Zealand, in a number of the Nordic countries, in a Europe-wide system of institutional reviews implemented by the Association of European Rectors, and most recently in Hong Kong.

The contemporaneous development and rapid dissemination among other countries of audit-like quality assurance processes suggests that this model may offer some particularly relevant solutions to those in the U.S. who are seeking answers to the problem of improving the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning through academic self-regulation.

Much of the effort to improve teaching and learning in U.S. colleges and universities focuses on incentives and structures designed to improve the performance of individual instructors. These mechanisms include providing teaching awards to faculty members, developing teaching centers that offer support to concerned faculty members, encouraging faculty members to adopt classroom-based assessment techniques for improving instruction, mandating student evaluation of instructors, and disseminating new instructional technologies to interested faculty members.

In contrast, the clear lesson from the quality movement that swept through industry and education over the last decades is that significant improvement in the quality of programs, services or products results not from changes in the individual practices of workers or professionals, but from changes in the processes by which work is coordinated and integrated. Improving the quality of student learning must therefore be a responsibility of the faculty acting collectively, rather than individual faculty members.

Similarly, research in the United States on teaching and learning consistently reveals that while students’ learning of academic content and their cognitive development are related to the sequence of the courses in which they enroll, by curricula requirements to integrate learning from separate courses, and by the frequency of communication and interaction among faculty members in the curriculum.

Therefore more systematic efforts to improve the quality of learning outcomes will necessarily involve encouraging collective efforts by faculty members to redesign course sequences and requirements in order to achieve greater academic coherence, and to develop consistent, valid means for assessing student achievement.

Unfortunately, there is increasing evidence that the capacity of the academic profession(s) and of colleges and universities to encourage faculty collaboration in improving teaching and student learning is eroding. The first cause of this change appears to be a weakening of the professional norms that supported faculty collaboration in the development of coherent curricula and of the collegial processes and structures that traditionally held faculty members collectively accountable for the quality of student learning. A second and related cause, as George Kuh has suggested, is the measurable shift in faculty time and effort away from teaching and into research and scholarship.

In the case of disciplinary norms and standards, surveys on the views of faculty members in different disciplines suggest declining normative influence from the various academic professions over the curricula of academic programs. In many disciplines faculty members did not easily agree on definitions of curricula content, nor were they in agreement that specified sequences of learning content were appropriate for students.

Even in professional fields such as business and engineering, where faculty members reported the highest perceived consensus on the nature of academic knowledge, they also reported that defining the content of the professional courses was one of their most serious curriculum tensions. In several disciplines, faculty members expressed the belief that the field’s diversity precluded achieving a consensus on what students should know.

In the case of institutional-level mechanisms for accountability, recent studies on university-level policies for influencing the structure and coherence of academic curricula reveal a similar loss of consensus. For example, a heavily cited early report on the integrity of the college curriculum argued, “The curriculum has given way to a marketplace philosophy: It is a supermarket where students are shopping and professors are merchants of learning. Fads and fashions, the demands of popularity and success, enter where wisdom and experience should prevail. The marketplace philosophy refuses to establish common expectations and norms... Electives are being used to fatten majors, and diminish breadth. It is as if no one cared, so long as the store stays open.”

Empirical studies of the catalogues of selective universities and of the transcripts of enrolled students also suggest a decline in the structure and coherence of the undergraduate general educational curriculum. Massy and Zemsky argued in 1994 that there has been “an incipient restructuring—or deconstructing—of the undergraduate curriculum over the last two decades that has resulted in fewer required courses, less emphasis on taking courses in ordered sequence, and greater reliance on students to develop their own sense of how the various bits and pieces of knowledge they acquire in the classroom fit together into a coherent picture.”

University policies on senior theses and comprehensive examinations also can influence the educational effectiveness of academic curricula. Such requirements foster coherence in students’ learning by requiring the integration or analysis of a body of knowledge broader or deeper than that provided in a single course. A 1996 National Association of Scholars study of the curricula requirements over time of the fifty most selective U.S. universities revealed a continuing decline in mandatory requirements for such comprehensive assessments, from 66 percent of the surveyed universities in 1939, to 56 percent in 1964, to 12 percent in 1993.

With regard to faculty involvement in improving teaching and learning, field research at the departmental level in U.S. universities (Massy, Wilger and Colbeck, 1994) also has revealed a form of academic behavior termed “hollowed collegiality.” Departments nominally appear to act collectively, but avoid those specific collaborative activities that might lead to real improvements in curricula and instruction.

Massy, Wilger and Colbeck concluded that “despite these trappings of collegiality, respondents told us they seldom led to the more substantial discussions necessary to improve undergraduate education, or to the sense of collective responsibility needed to make departmental efforts more effective.”

A major contributor to this hollowed collegiality was an observed pattern of fragmented communication within departments in which traditions of individual autonomy and academic specialization have led to curricula atomization and isolation among faculty members. Faculty members in the U.S. not only do much of their teaching alone, but because disciplinary sub-fields are defined quite narrowly, many faculty members find it almost impossible to discuss their teaching with one another.

A second and related negative influence on the improvement of student learning as noted by Kuh is the increasing faculty commitment to research. In an influential series of papers published between 1978 and 1990 the economist Estelle James argued that universities are best understood as multi-product firms, producing both teaching and research. At the departmental level universities operate as labor managed cooperatives in which the faculty have significant control over the factors and consequently the costs of production.

But faculty members have a strong preference for research over teaching, because of its intrinsic interest, because of its clear contribution to unit reputation (which in the U.S. is a major proxy for academic quality), and because in increasingly competitive research and aca...
BRITISH OPEN

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countered the televised courses of the Chicago College of the Air.
When Wilson became prime minister a few years later, he started pushing for a British “University of the Air,” despite
time resistance from political opponents and the educational establishment. One MP, Ian Macleod, called it “blithering nonsense.”

Open University offers the proven concept it calls “supported open learning,” which marries correspondence courses with in-person human tutoring and oversight.

But Wilson responded by “out-snobbing the snobs,” as his arts minister, Jennie Lee, later put it.
Open University would be “open as to people, open as to places, open as to methods, open as to ideas,” its mission statement said. There were, and still are, no admission requirements Formally established by royal charter in 1969, the university had 40,000 applicants for 25,000 slots when it first began accepting students two years later.
The university settled in at Milton Keynes—midway between Birmingham and London to the north and south, and between Oxford and Cambridge to the east and west—which offered it the former family home and stud farm of a London lawyer named Sir Thomas Pinfold; Pinfold’s manor house, Walton Hall, still stands at the center of the campus that has since sprung up around it.
Some of the early courses, broadcast on radio and black-and-white television, were crude, and Open University was the butt of jokes; one radio comedy lampooned a home-taught lawyer who, in court, could not pronounce the legal lingo. It also was inevitably likened to the private fly-by-night correspondence schools that took their students’ money, sent them questionable course materials, and disappeared.

Nearly closed by the succeeding Conservative government, Open University was rescued by, of all people, Margaret Thatcher, who was education secretary at the time—albeit with drastic and recurring budget cuts. What appealed to Thatcher and the Tories were the economic, not the social benefits: the relatively cheap cost of educating students at a distance when compared to paying their tuition at conventional residential universities.

Delivering teaching to the students proved cheaper than delivering students to the teacher. Even today, it costs as little as half as much to educate a student through Open University as at a traditional school in the United Kingdom, and one-tenth the price of an American higher education.

Limited at first to undergraduates, Open University would quickly add continuing and postgraduate education. Since 1971, it has taught over 1.2 million students; of those, 230,000 have graduated, and 70,000 who took OU courses have gone on to receive degrees from other British universities.

Open University is a major reason for the sharp increase in the number of people taking college work in Great Britain. In 1970, only 14 percent of British 18- to 24-year-olds participated in some form of higher education. Today, the number has increased to 45 percent.

It is a group that may not have had access to a higher education otherwise. Four out of five beginning Open Uni-

versity undergraduates lack the minimum qualifications required for admission to a conventional university. Half are children of blue-collar workers, compared to one-fifth in British schools overall. More than 80 percent work full-time while enrolled. The average age of undergraduates is 37, and half are women, the highest proportion of any British university.

Students can choose from among 172 courses in the arts, social sciences, education, health and social welfare, languages, management, mathematics and computer science and technology; just as at most full-time universities, the arts, humanities and social sciences are most in demand. There are another 124 post-graduate courses.

Half of a student’s grade is based on homework assignments, half on the three-hour end-of-course examination. Courses, which last nine months, equate to 30 or 60 points toward the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS) widely used in the UK. Higher education students need a minimum of 360 CATS for a bachelor’s degree and 180 for a graduate degree. Although it is possible to receive a degree at Open University in three years studying full-time, the average time is six years. The cost of an undergraduate degree is between $6,000 and $7,000, cheaper than almost any American four-year program, one-tenth the cost of many.

Unlike newer distance education programs, OU’s beginnings in the days when high technology was limited to broadcast television meant it could gradually adapt the subsequent communications breakthroughs to its curriculum, rather than the other way around. “You’re not developing technology solutions and then finding problems to apply them to,” said Jerzy Grzeda, operations manager of the Knowledge Media Institute, the university’s research and development division.

Old-timers still talk of the drawn-out debate that delayed the move to broad-casting classes in color because of concern for students who might not have had color television sets. Courses today are built around a mix of correspondence texts, radio, television, audio and video cassettes, computing and computer-mediated communication, and home kits for practical work—a rock of states for a geology course, for instance.

Television programs associated with specific courses are broadcast early on Saturday and Sunday mornings and on weekdays from 12:30 a.m. until 7 a.m., a block of time known as The Learning Zone, when they can be videotaped for later viewing. (Some students complain the university is actually too slow to adopt new technology. Course assignments, for example, are still submitted, marked and returned on paper by regular mail. Only about 30,000 of the 215,000 students are

ACADEMIC AUDITS

academic labor markets time spent on research can lead to higher grant revenue and future earnings for the individual faculty member. Consequently, faculties may arrange their workloads to limit their time investment in teaching and to maximize their time investment in research.

James’ model has been confirmed in a number of recent studies of faculty workload in the U.S. that reveal a consistent pattern of faculty decisions leading to a reduction in time devoted to teaching.

It is important to stress that this reduction in time spent on teaching not only may affect faculty performance in individual classrooms, but also negatively affects those collective activities of curriculum development, teaching evaluation and student assessment upon which both effective student learning and the maintenance of academic standards are critically dependent.

Finally, it must be noted that the existing policies and practices for assuring academic standards and quality within U.S. colleges and universities often focus more on the organization and delivery of academic content than on student learning. Since World War II the academic quality assurance mechanisms in most colleges and universities have come to reflect the research universities’ valuing of substantive academic content over instruction.

The purpose of this brief article is neither to impugn the motives of faculty members nor to debase the principal of professional self-regulation. To the contrary, if we are to maintain control of academic work in the face of increasingly assertive public calls for external regulation, we must clearly understand the possible causes of current problems in student learning.

The reported decline in learning-related student academic activity may of course be related to changes in the broader culture and to the motivations and values of students themselves. But research also suggests erosion of the culture of professional accountability by which colleges and universities have traditionally assured the quality and standards of their academic programs and degrees.

Many of the changes in academic behavior outlined in the preceding section are the product of a pronounced shift over the last forty years in the academic “rules of the game”—the policies, norms of behavior, and sanctions that facilitate faculty interaction and coordination.

As Elliot Krauze has noted in his comparative study of professional influence, “Death of the Guilds,” the legal, medical and academic professions have seen their power over their members’ behavior steadily decline in the latter half of the 20th century. In each of these professions the regulatory inroads of the state and the growing influence of corporations and the market have altered the incentives for cooperative behavior.

These larger social forces are increasingly compromising the ability of the traditional norms and sanctions of the academic professions the policies of individual colleges and universities, and the rules of relevant departments to sustain faculty commitment and cooperation in improving student learning.

In this new context we will need to identify means by which the academic community itself can act to restore and develop the internal web of academic accountability within colleges and universities whereby the quality of student learning and maintenance of academic standards is assured. Responsibility for academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning must lie where the power exists to control or change academic practices—with the faculty of an institution.

But seeking means to better understand and to strengthen the processes within academic institutions whereby the faculty collectively and within academic units exercises its responsibility for academic quality assurance and improvement is a reasonable and necessary public goal. The process of academic audit might contribute to strengthening collegial accountability for improving the quality of teaching and student learning. ◆

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required to use computers as an element of their courses.)

The instructional materials are developed by the university's 950 faculty members in Milton Keynes, where there are also 3,350 administrators and support staff who do everything from printing textbooks to processing assignments. A typical course costs between $2.5 million and $3.3 million to produce, and takes three years; the investment is amortized over the expected eight-year life of the course. Open University's library of course materials has grown to tens of thousands of pages of text, plus 907 hours a year of television programming and 66 hours of radio. About a third of the budget goes into course development. "Just putting lecture notes on the Internet is a waste of time, because they need a human voice," said Blaine Price, a member of the faculty. "We design our content to be read."

The process is, by all appearances, exhaustive, involving peer review and, typically, three drafts of the materials before anything goes to the students. Take S-103: Level 1 Science. First comes a fancy loose-leaf binder with an introduction, glossary and study tips, additional articles from scientific journals and other sources, and a wall map of the earth's surface. Open University's library of course materials has grown to tens of thousands of pages of text, plus 907 hours a year of television programming and 66 hours of radio. About a third of the budget goes into course development. "Just putting lecture notes on the Internet is a waste of time, because they need a human voice," said Blaine Price, a member of the faculty. "We design our content to be read."

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Open University students work on their own much of the time—with materials that are mailed or sent electronically—but many choose to attend voluntary tutorials as well. BBC is running it on Friday nights in prime time—opposite Top of the Pops and Coronation Street, both top-rated shows.

The heart of Open University, however, are the current key to its success, is not on TV or CD-ROM, or in Milton Keynes, for that matter. It is in places like Foxcombe Hall in Boar's Hill near Oxford, once the ancestral home of the eighth earl of Berkeley, and now one of the OU's regional centers. Here, in this genteel country manor off a narrow road lined with hedgerows, are the people who recruit and counsel students in this part of the country, and assign them some of Open University's 7,600 part-time tutors. All registered students have tutors, who also are known as associate lecturers and serve as subject specialists available to provide help and advice by telephone and e-mail, and in person at periodic non-mandatory meetings, along with other local students in a course.

This is the human element of Open University that distinguishes it from other distance education programs, a relationship made famous by the movie "Educating Rita" about a romance between an Open University student played by Julie Walters and her tutor, played by Michael Caine. The 13 regional offices are implemented by a network of 301 study centers in the U.K., and another 31 throughout the rest of Europe. Here recruiters review each "reservation form," or application; since there are no admission requirements, students who seem from their credentials unprepared for the level of a course they want to take are encouraged to enroll in remedial programs called access courses, generally offered by other colleges and local councils.

The Oxford regional office alone hosts 29 introductory meetings, seven "Welcome to Open University" orientation sessions, study skills workshops for 1,300 people, and test preparation classes. Each new student gets a phone call from an associate adviser, and a follow-up call if they fail to submit their first assignment on time.

If that seems a far cry from the isolated individual correspondence school, consider this: Open University students in some courses also meet together for intensive instruction at "residential schools" on weekends or for a week during the summer, often in hotels or conference centers. Many form study groups with classmates in their towns. There is a student association that organizes social gatherings, and there are chemistry, geology, computer, sci-tech, space, football and art societies, and a university newspaper full of opinionated letters to the editor. There are Open University T-shirts, course newsletters and annual reunions. "You're not isolated if you don't want to be," said Sally Eaton, 35, who postponed academe when she got a job designing embroidery, and now is an OU undergraduate majoring in psychology.

For that matter, the first tutorial of B-600, "The Capable Manager," in a borrowed university classroom on a Saturday afternoon in London, is downright giddy with camaraderie. "You're all sure you're in the right class? It's not hang-gliding for beginners, or flower-arranging," jokes the tutor, Peter Guildford, a personnel manager who serves here as combination drill sergeant and summer camp counselor.

"My mission as a tutor is to make sure you get through this, but you have to do the work, not me. I want you to go away from here more confident," Guildford tells the group, which includes a budget analyst, a prison officer, a personnel manager who serves here as combination drill sergeant and summer camp counselor.

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show that, since the introduction of tuition, students are abandoning full-time study for part-time, and more students are beginning their studies late. Both trends favor Open University. “Insofar as we’re competing with the full-time student market, we’re now competing on equal terms, because they now have to pay fees as well,” said Prior. Some even draw comparisons to the days when Open University was founded. The only difference is that the obstacle to higher education for many students has changed from elitism to economics.

On the income side, Open University has been rapidly developing new sources of revenue. It began accepting students in Europe in 1992, and now has 8,000 in Western Europe and 10,000 in Central and Eastern Europe and Africa; partnerships in Singapore, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates account for another 12,000 students, and there are plans for additional growth in South Africa, India and the United States (see related article on page 1).

The university has licensed its course texts and educational materials worldwide through a commercial subsidiary called Open University Educational Enterprises—now OU Worldwide Ltd.—and has made its staff available as consultants to governments and institutions contemplating distance education projects of their own. It has even issued an OU Visa card, and made a deal with an insurance company to sell home, auto and travel insurance to students, alumni, staff and friends, with a portion of each premium as a commission. “It’s a business, but it’s a business in support of the university,” said Keith Williams, director of academic development for OU Worldwide. “We make surpluses, and they’re all returned to the university.”

In the vanguard of the university’s expansion has been the Open University Business School, whose students are generally reimbursed by their employers and therefore can be charged much, much more. A graduate course in the humanities, for example, typically costs about $1,080.

All registered students have tutors who are available to provide help and advice by telephone and e-mail, and in person at periodic non-mandatory meetings along with other local students in a course.

while a course toward a master’s degree in business administration costs as much as $4,180.

And there are 25,000 students in the OU Business School, making it the biggest distance learning MBA provider in the world. More than 25 percent of U.K. MBAs come from the OU Business School. In fact, the British have cornered the market in distance business education. British universities collectively now have 140,000 overseas students via distance learning, most of them in business courses, according to a report by Sussex University’s Institute of Development Studies. That is worth $400 million a year in revenues to Open University and other British institutions, so much that the OU Business School won the 1997 Queen’s Award for Export Achievement.

The university has plowed much of its money into new technology, determined to hold its lead as more and more competitors line up. It created the Knowledge Media Institute, a laboratory for research and development in Milton Keynes that also does corporate research with partners including Sun Microsystems, Apple and Andersen Consulting that pay much of the operating costs in a model similar to that of the Media Lab at MIT. It is spending more than $16 million developing new distance education media including satellite broadcasting and more sophisticated CD-ROMs. It has hired more than 40 new faculty with expertise in new technology since 1995. It has developed virtual microscopes, CD-ROMs that show thin slices of rocks and magnets at different angles and degrees of magnification and polarization. It has run a “virtual summer school,” linking about a dozen psychology students in different countries with guest lecturers by video conference. It is developing an “Internet Stadium” capable of hosting up to 100,000 participants for mass events.

All of which position OU at the forefront of the distance education market at a time when governments are looking for alternatives to building huge new campuses, and when students are being drawn to part-time higher education to save both time and money.

The plan is to find universities in other countries that will collaborate with Open University, helping adapt the course materials to different languages and cultures and, not coincidentally, giving it quick access to a low-cost labor pool while making potential competitors into partners. This is what already has been done in Eastern Europe, where Open University joined with five existing schools to cooperate closely. In Hong Kong, OU licensed course material to the Open Learning Institute, since renamed the Open University of Hong Kong, and still provides more than a third of the curricula.

“What we’re effectively doing is building clones of ourselves,” OU Worldwide’s Masterton said as a group of Eastern Europeans tutors on a training visit strolled through the commuter on the Milton Keynes campus. “What’s in it for us is licensing income from a lot of different sources. Also what’s in it for us that we in effect become a joint partner.”

This benefits both sides, according to Masterton. “We in effect are a turnkey university for governments that can’t afford to build new,” he said. “In many countries, distance learning is the only means by which to solve the problem.”

Jon Marcus is a senior editor at Boston Magazine and covers U.S. higher education for the Times of London.