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of Land Grant Universities and
Cooperative Extension?**

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Gerald R. Campbell¹

“A system lives in it’s own world, a world whose meaning it has made. It becomes who it is by what it has chosen to be. Every system takes form from the self it has created.

Identity, then is another essential condition for organization. It is the self of the system that compels it toward particular actions and behaviors. It is the self that defines meaning. It is the self that invites people to change or compels them to resist.”

Margaret Wheatly and Myron Kellner-Rogers, p. 85¹

Introduction

It is a pleasure to be here today to contribute and learn. For me this is a point in what seems like a long journey. I am looking for your help in making meaning of my reflection and experience. I began a search in 1989 to sort out my experience of nearly 30 years as a student and teacher in five Land Grant universities². I was motivated primarily by my career shift into administrative positions as Associate Dean for Cooperative Extension and later Vice Chancellor for UW Extension. In the great tradition of universities I sometimes refer to this period of my life by saying I “fell off” into administration. That phrase assures my faculty colleagues that I respect their cultural norm that the only truly desirable role in the university is to be a professor. At this point in my journey I am convinced that in Land Grant universities and Cooperative Extension are tradition and our opportunity calls for us to intentionally bring learning back to the center of our work.

¹ Professor and Extension Specialist, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics and Center for Community Economic Development, University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension. Comments prepared for presentation to the quarterly meeting of Minnesota Extension Service, campus faculty and staff, October 28, 1996. This is a work in progress and I appreciate comments via mail to me at University of Wisconsin, CCED, 1327 University Avenue, Rm 107, Madison, WI 53706 or via E-MAIL to campbell@aae.wisc.edu or via telephone to 608-265-8137.

² I have been a student at The Ohio State University. A graduate student, research or teaching assistant at New Mexico State University and Michigan State University. I have been a faculty member with teaching, research and extension support at The University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension. I have been a Visiting Professor at the University of Minnesota at St. Paul.

As I entered academic administration in 1989, I began in for the first time in my career to seriously reflect on my experience in the Land Grant university. Initially my focus was on what “extension” was and how I could relate my experience with extension to those I dealt within the University but outside the influence of Cooperative Extension and those inside the University of Wisconsin System who had not served in a Land Grant university.

I was surprised, after examining the UW System’s total budget, that my experience of 17 years in a department with about 40 percent of its resources from Cooperative Extension was relatively unique among UW faculty and staff. In 1989 only about 7 percent of the budget for the UW System was associated with extension and public service³. I was beginning to see that what I new of organizational identity was different from what others in the UW System new. My research initially centered on the history of the University of Wisconsin at Madison especially cooperative extension and continuing education extension. The search has led in many directions. Today’s remarks will reflect that search of history, several contemporary ideas as well as a brief look at the future we might create. My comments are from work in progress. They are meant to stimulate our discussion and reflection together as I try to create with you a space in which obedience to truth can be practiced⁴.

Land Grant Universities have been and are many different things. Currently they all are still centered on being “Research Universities”

No two Land Grant universities across the fifty states and the District of Columbia are alike. The very nature of the Land Grant university is influenced by state federal and county relationships and cultures. Any specific organization will be reflective of the unique characteristics of its relationships and cultures. Its identity will be uniquely, Its own. My comments are centered on the University of Wisconsin but I believe they are relevant to many other Land Grant universities and the Cooperative Extension systems related to them. Today all Land Grant universities have become “research universities” with major sections of their budgets and the prime elements of their culture centered on the creation of new knowledge and new applications of knowledge. My observation is that the preference for the creation of new knowledge as their primary activity has so deeply permeated the culture of Land Grant universities and so skewed their work that they are dangerously close to losing elements of the public support base on which

³ This included budgets for Cooperative Extension, Continuing Education Extension and Extension Communications. Portions of these budgets primarily in Continuing Education and Public Broadcasting reflected revenue earned through fees, grants and other sources.

⁴ In his book *“To Know as We are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey”*, Parker Palmer describes teaching as follows: “to teach is to create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced”. For me that is a powerful description of what teaching should be. I will refer to it again later.

their fortunes have rested⁵. The culture of the university permeates the culture of the Cooperative Extension institutions attached to the university.

The rhetoric of recent times often stakes the Land Grant university's unique place in U.S. Higher education on their "world-class research, first-rate service and access to affordable education for all"² This was not always the case. At the time of the Morrill Act in 1862 the chief focus of Congress was access to education for the sons and daughters of farmers, mechanics and laborers. They sought to "democratize" education and the country by increasing access for citizens who had been shut out of an elitist system of higher education. They also encouraged the application of knowledge to the issues confronted in everyday life of farms, factories and households.

The University of Wisconsin

In Wisconsin the state university was founded in 1848, before the Morrill Act. It took three years after the passage of the Morrill act in 1862 for Wisconsin to settle where it's Land Grant University would be. In designating the "land grant" Wisconsin remade the existing University of Wisconsin by adding an Agriculture Department. What was taught in that department was in the style of the day which meant that it was meant to elevate the mind, was not particularly practical and thus did not encourage many farmers to send their children. Through heavy external influence of a strong Board of Regents the UW built new programs for farmers on a strong tradition of self education and experimentation in agricultural societies.

The College of Agriculture was formed in 1889 with a state Experiment Station added in 1893. Even before this, the University had established "Farmers Institutes" to take its knowledge to farmers where they were. The Regents also established the "Short Course" which brought farmers to the campus for courses during the winter. In these early days there was considerable discord between farmers (sometimes including members of the Board of Regents) and university researchers. In his history of the UW College of Agriculture, Glover³ writes of this period that, as Dean of the College and the director of the Experiment Station, W.A. Henry was not interested in buying harmony with the farmers if that harmony came from:

"...servile devotion of the staff of a station to the immediate and superficial aims of farmers."

⁵ I am certainly not the first one to make this claim. In this paper I have not described the extensive writing on these issues including the substantial efforts of my own Agricultural Economics colleagues like George Mc Dowell and G. Edward Schuh. Nor do I acknowledge as clearly as I should the contributions of UW colleagues like Sue Sadowske or the contributions of the various reports from ES, USDA or the committees of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. My attention here is on my own experience and attempts to draw much from writing beyond those within the Land Grant and Cooperative Extension system.

Glover goes on:

“The intimacy of farm leaders with the Wisconsin Experiment Station was thereby fraught with dangers that could be avoided only by the directors insistence on fundamental scientific study, on one hand, and by patient understanding on the part of the farmers of the tediousness and uncertainty of the laboratory on the other.”

These early years set the stage for the evolving identity of both the experiment station and the relationships between farmers, the college and the broader university. To shorten a long but interesting story, the University and its College of Agriculture established its identity as the creator of knowledge. It would interact with farmers but the University would set the research agenda. That agenda would be firmly based on science as applied at the experiment station.

The early efforts of the college to communicate it’s growing knowledge to farmers came in the form of publication in the farm press. This was later augmented by the direct distribution of bulletins. In 1901 the college established out of the department of Agronomy the Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Association to link instructors, students and alumni in the continuation of knowledge building. This group grew and began county level associations in 1908. Dean Russell was determined that as much as possible the departments would be the centers of effort to extend their knowledge. While Russell was influenced by developments in other states, he wanted an agricultural extension system that fit his ideas. He established the college’s extension service in 1909 with a commitment to keep its work mainly growing from the academic departments with only a limited college level presence. He and his colleagues invented a system where counties supplied half the funds and an office for the agent.

Dean Russell fought off attempts for control of extension by people outside the University and he convinced the legislature in 1913 to enable the expenditure of public funds for agricultural extension work by the county boards. Russell also established that county agents would be part of the “legal faculty” of the college and listed as assistant professors in their departments. The Smith Lever act of 1914 anticipated county agents who fit very nicely within the already established Wisconsin framework. It specified that the people doing the work would be

“..technically trained practical minded agricultural teachers who would show the farmer and the farm woman on their own farm and in their own home how to apply the new knowledge in agriculture and home economics to their everyday problems.”

The Smith Lever Act 1914⁶

The Smith Lever Act also allowed specialists to be hired at the campus level. The act set in motion clear requirements for distinction between resident instruction and extension work. It

⁶ Quoted in Boyte, Harry C. And Nancy N. Kari, *Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1996, p.73

anticipated a close connection between extension and research at the state experiment stations and the U.S. D.A. laboratories.⁴

The University Extension Movement and the Wisconsin Idea

The developments of agricultural extension at Wisconsin were from the beginning influenced by developments in the university extension movement elsewhere. The farmer's institutes had been in part copied from the "English extension movement" which had taken lectures off campus and into towns and villages. The establishment of UW "general" extension work in the 1890's was reinvigorated under President Charles Van Hise leadership from 1904 to 1918. The UW established the Extension Division of the University in 1907. Van Hise with heavy support of Robert La Follete and Charles McCarthy had increasingly defined the importance of bringing university knowledge to people across the state, and bringing university faculty expertise to state legislative and other governmental bodies and otherwise making itself useful to the citizens⁵. A careful look at Van Hise reveals a university president who was also a geologist and who was mindful of the creation of Johns Hopkins and Chicago as new universities where creation of knowledge and graduate study were redefining the idea of higher education. Van Hise had a strong interest in establishing Wisconsin as a university in the new pattern where the discovery of new knowledge was as important as the teaching of existing knowledge. He understood that if the public was to support research to create new knowledge it must see that research as beneficial to its interests.

The "Wisconsin Idea" of the university in service to the state provided a rich conceptual backdrop for the development of agricultural extension. However, implementation of the Wisconsin Idea set off disputes between the College of Agriculture and the Extension Division which still influence relationships today. Throughout the disputes however, an idea was firmly held by both units, that the University was the primary source of new knowledge. The College and the Extension Division contested over who would organize the University's system of "extending" knowledge to "the boundaries of the state." They were not contesting over the creation of knowledge in university libraries, faculty offices and laboratories as a prime university activity.

When the 1914 partnership of University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county government, which has come to be Cooperative Extension was established in Wisconsin, it rested on an existing culture for the University and the College of Agriculture. That culture has had a dramatic effect on the identity of faculty and staff on campus and in county and area offices. That culture is strategically centered on the promise of the Land Grant university as a creator of knowledge with classroom, laboratory and extension as its vehicle for disseminating that knowledge. It is founded in major part on the notion of knowledge as utilitarian and the creation of new knowledge as an engine of economic growth.

The growth of the Land Grant University as a Research University

I believe that this same story was repeated in only slightly different ways across the United States. If we have an identity crisis in Land Grant universities today about knowledge creation vis a vis teaching its roots are in our beginnings. Our identity as creators of knowledge was significantly reinforced by the development of federal formula and competitive grant funds for research. It was also reinforced by the continuing citation of the mantra of “research based programs” as the distinguishing feature of Cooperative Extension programs. Our identity as creators of knowledge and the accelerated flowering of the “research university” was reinforced after WWII as the usefulness of war time research became widely apparent. The GI Bill also filled university classrooms. The demand for College teachers boomed and the cold war gave impetus for even more federal funding for a vastly increased scope of university research. For the UW College of Agriculture the expansion of research funds for biological and health sciences research was especially important. The Colleges’ strong programs in basic and applied biological sciences provided competitive advantage for Wisconsin in seeking federal dollars.

During this period Land Grant universities, with Wisconsin near the head of the pack, took their faculty’s inclination toward discovery of new knowledge fueled by outside funds to fundamentally redefine what a Land Grant University was. The self governing faculty culture helped move the university away from its early emphasis on teaching to an emphasis on research. This movement was not just happening at Land Grant universities but at all major universities. In many ways it was a self reinforcing system with research prestige and dollars as prime measures of status. Across academe pointing to the universities to be emulated meant, pointing to research universities. These universities were also the source of nearly all new Ph. D.’s who became university faculty and took the identity they learned as graduate students as a model for their own careers. From the mid 1950’s to the mid 1970’s these new Ph. D.’s found little difficulty in securing new faculty positions. They also found a relatively generous climate for funding their research interests.

During the 1960’s Land Grant Universities grew rapidly as the “baby boom” began to come to college. By the end of this period the strains of growth in many directions and the political turmoil within and outside the university was taking a toll on all of our large universities. Jaques Barzun (with Columbia University as his base) wrote of the future of the “multiversity” with a great pessimism about the future⁶. During this period there was certainly turmoil at Land Grant Universities but their colleges of Agriculture also saw some of its greatest successes as domestic agriculture became more and more technologically complex, the international green revolution was in full swing, new developments in basic biological sciences and early developments in computer technology all fueled the technology of discovery. For extension this meant a growing stream of new ideas and technologies to bring to farmers, agribusinesses and farm families. When I interviewed for a faculty position, including some extension funding, at the University of Wisconsin in 1972, I was assured, by those in the agricultural extension program leadership as well as the campus-based faculty, that at Wisconsin “extension” really meant “applied research.” I am sure that the assurance was meant to reassure me that I would not need to worry about much real engagement with those outside the university except to “extend” my research results.

The university orientation toward research began to draw outside attention in the 1970's. This attention was in part a reaction to the campus disturbances during the Vietnam war, but was also associated with the environmental movement and other societal forces which questioned the products of science and technology. The 1970's also saw the controversies over displacement of farm labor by machines and the beginning of health concerns over the use of chemical pesticides in agriculture. For Land Grant university Colleges of Agriculture the 1970's saw the publication of the critical report "Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times" by Jim Hightower questioning the priorities of agricultural experiment stations and a growing concern that agricultural surplus production brought into question the very notion that we needed technology which expanded agricultural surpluses.

In the 1980's the concern about universities spawned a number of critical essays and books⁷. The general critique of public institutions and the particular conservative critique of universities as centers of "political correctness" brought the issue of the identity for the university to public and legislative attention. It gained ground as a greater share of the public had direct experience with university education and as the "baby boomers" heard their children complain about how they were being treated. This led for calls for accountability, proposals for legislatively mandated faculty teaching loads, the creation of systems of tenured faculty review and a general tightening of the scrutiny by governing bodies for public and private higher education.

The Internal Debate Over the Roles of University Faculty Gives Context for Defining the Future of Land Grant Universities and Cooperative Extension

The public and legislative critiques of the 1970's and early 1980's, the enrollment downturn of the 1980's and the growing number of new Ph.D.'s who could only find part time faculty positions began to raise questions about the roles of University Faculty. While the debate over faculty roles seemed new to many of us, it had been going on for much of this century⁸. The name most often associated with renewing these broad discussions of faculty roles is Earnest Boyer. Until his death in 1995, he was a visionary and forceful leader of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. In that role Boyer led the development of the 1990 study *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*⁹. I cannot overstate the profound impact which Professor Boyer's book has had. It resulted in thousands of campus discussions about the evolving roles of faculty. It spurred the rewriting of tenure and promotion criteria at some of the nations most prestigious Universities.

In my personal case it gave explanations for the unease I felt in reconciling my academic life which centered on teaching, on and off campus, in an academic department where the implicit reward structure favored research. Boyer said clearly what most in American higher education knew, that higher education had "moved from an emphasis on the student to an emphasis on the Professoriate, from emphasis on generalized education to specialized education, and from loyalty to the campus to loyalty to the profession." (p. 13)

Scholarship Reconsidered concentrated on revealing what university faculty were actually doing and the schizophrenia they felt in a culture which pulled them away from their desire to make a difference in the lives of their students, and to make a difference in the communities in which they lived. *Scholarship Reconsidered* made meaning of the Carnegie Foundation survey findings by describing faculty work. It identified four types of scholarship and recognized the diversity of contributions today's faculty make. These were described as "...the scholarship of *discovery*; the scholarship of *integration*; the scholarship of *application*; and the scholarship of *teaching*." (p.16) The Carnegie Report explicitly called for movement away from the teaching vs. research vs. service language of the past. Its arguments allowed me to see that I had been doing all four forms of scholarship. In my case those forms of scholarship took place in the context of budgets associated with research, resident instruction and extension. On reading *Scholarship Reconsidered* it was clear to me that all these forms of scholarship were taking place around me and that what I did was often inaccurately described by naming it with the budget categories that supported the work. Even though Wisconsin had a philosophy of "integrated" teaching, research and extension departments, each of us knew who the extension, research or teaching faculty were.

Scholarship Reconsidered came at a time when universities were under increasing pressure from parents, legislators and students to improve the quality of teaching. It also revealed that many faculty and administrators were longing for a conversation about faculty roles and rewards. As an academic administrator for UW Extension it provided me a rich context through which to connect the activities of extension educators with their colleagues on and off university campuses. For me the primary work of extension has always been to teach. That orientation results from my professional area, agricultural economics, where we spend most of our extension resources teaching people how to perform economic analysis in the context of farm, business, personnel, community or public policy decisions. Agricultural Economics also has long disseminated research results and economic intelligence. However, we have never centered our work on experimental research where direct technology transfer was the expected outcome. Thus, what I did as an agricultural economics extension specialist always looked like teaching to me.

Scholarship Reconsidered and the Reflective Practitioner

During the same period that Land Grant (and many other) universities were establishing and building their identity as "research universities," Donald Schon of MIT had been studying professionals and how they do their work and how they learn. He reported his results in the book "The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action" and recently reflected on the interplay between the proposals to broaden the definition of scholarship in *Scholarship Reconsidered* and how colleges and universities have developed their conventional approaches to creating and disseminating knowledge¹⁰. In essence Schon said that redefining scholarship would be a difficult case of cultural change because of the conventions and well practiced set of behaviors which universities have built up over time.

Fundamentally, Schon argues that Universities have accepted an epistemology (a way of

knowing) which he calls “technical rationality.” In this model, widely adopted from German University practice in the 1890's and early 1900's, knowledge is built from initial abstract propositions. These propositions are then tested with empirical investigation guided by the scientific method. The investigation produces results which can be applied and taught usually in the form of in well defined and well-behaved problem situations. He argues that this model of “technical rationality” encourages a highly specialized and compartmentalized university with each of the disciplinary departments developing its own specialized jargon, theory, applications and control of the curriculum. That curriculum, based on a model puts theory and well-defined applications ahead of direct experience⁷.

Schon contrasts the universities abstract and constrained world with the world of the university trained working professional toiling in the “swamp” of professional practice. In the “swamp” of practice none of the theory or well-behaved problems of the discipline seem to fit the unruly facts and behaviors found on a daily basis. Schon longs for a melding of the theory and abstraction with the knowledge gained through active practice. This melding is evidenced in what he calls the reflective practitioner and the process of action research which moves freely from experience to abstraction and back again in a real learning system. Schon contends it will be very challenging to move universities to the proposed in the new definitions of scholarship without changing fundamentally the ways of knowing.

The New American Scholar

Eugene Rice at the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) has been leading their initiative to examine evolving faculty roles since moving there from work with Boyer on *Scholarship Reconsidered*. In a recent paper he brought together many different ideas to examine the potential place for the “new American scholar.” For our discussion today Rice brings several perspectives which are useful even though they were developed primarily with the comprehensive and metropolitan universities in mind¹. He concludes that the recent history of the University from about 1950 to the 1970's came to be characterized by some widely accepted assumptions. These assumptions became so ingrained in faculty thinking that they were seldom discussed. Further, the assumptions led to behaviors that were inconsistent with serving a number of constituencies including undergraduate students and the public. The assumptions were further brought into question as the dearth of faculty positions in the 1970's and 1980's meant fewer and fewer new faculty were able to live by the assumptions that their senior colleagues had come to define as the reality of faculty life.

The assumptions developed by Rice are shown in Figure 1. below. In my view these assumptions are quite consistent with the University of Wisconsin identity which has surrounded

⁷Schon notes that even in the Humanities this curriculum which moves from abstraction toward experience is the norm. He describes the ever present debate in academe between rigor (abstract, analytical knowledge) and relevance (knowledge from experience and professional practice).

me. They are at some odds with the early philosophy in Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture especially in the Schools of Home Economics which saw the family as a unit which would encourage integration. My spouse, a Professor and Extension Specialist in the School of Human Ecology at UW-Madison was not successful in convincing me that the early ideas of Home Economics of integrated approaches are at the center of their work today. The assumptions made apparent by Rice also are inconsistent with historic and continuing rhetoric about a responsive and engaged university. If the assumptions are true then much of what our brochures and reports have said leaves us with a “truth in advertising” gap.

Rice goes on to use the work of psychologist David Kolb¹² in studying experiential learning to provide an extremely useful diagram linking the abstract and analytical knowledge preferred by the campus with the concrete connected knowing found through experience. He further adds the dimensions of active practice and reflective observation as dimensions of processing knowledge to complete the model (see Figure 2. below).

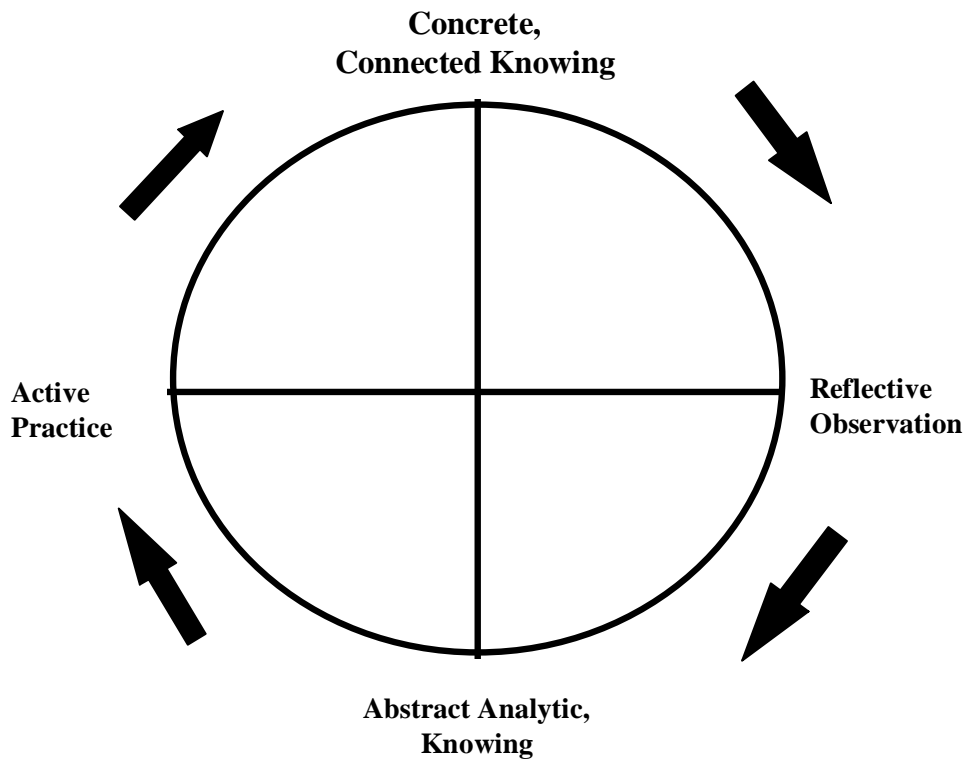
The diagram seems to me to provide a useful way of recognizing that if we think of the promise of the Land Grant university and especially Cooperative Extension as the idea of moving the results of abstract analytic knowledge from the campus to the countryside then we design one sort of system. If we view the promise of the Land Grant university and Cooperative Extension as creating a dynamic interaction among all the ways of knowing and processing knowledge (Learning) indicated in the diagram, we create a very different sort of system.

Figure 1. The Assumptions of What it Means to be an Academic Professional Developed between the 1950's and the 1970's as Described by Eugene Rice.

- **Research is the central professional endeavor of academic life.**
- **Quality in the profession is maintained by peer review and professional autonomy.**
- **Knowledge is pursued for its own sake.**
- **Pursuing knowledge is best organized by discipline (i.e., by discipline-based departments)**
- **Reputations are established in national and international professional associations.**
- **Professional rewards and mobility accrue to those who persistently accentuate their specializations.**
- **The distinctive work of the academic professional is the pursuit of cognitive truth.**

Source: Rice, R. Eugene, Making a Place for the New American Scholar, pp. 8-9

Figure 2. Dimensions of Learning: Knowledge Perception and Knowledge Processing



Source: Created based on Rice, Eugene, *Making a Place for the New American Scholar*, p. 14 and Wilson, Kathleen and George E.B. Morren, Jr., *Systems Approaches for Improvement in Agriculture and Resource Management*, Macmillan, New York, New York, 1990, Chapter 2, pp. 27-66. Both these authors rely fundamentally on the work of D.A.Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1986.

The Criticism of University and Other Professionals and the Rethinking of Professional Work

The evolving criticism of professionals including university professors also has implications related to the above¹³. In my view we especially in Land Grant universities are at a critical time. You can feel it in the air as tradition contests with reform. The models of Schon and Kolb and those who have been applying their ideas provide persuasive signals about where we need to go to recapture the public support which we need to survive as public institutions. The new relationships we will define with our students and those we work with are consistent with what Schon refers to as the Reflective Practitioner. Schon gives us insight into alternative model in the following table:

Table 1. Contrasting the Expert and the Reflective Practitioner

Expert	Reflective Practitioner
I am presumed to know, and must claim to do so, regardless of my own uncertainty.	I am presumed to know, but I am not the only one in the situation to have relevant and important knowledge. My uncertainties may be a source of learning for me and for them.
Keep my distance from the client, and hold onto the expert's role. Give the client a sense of my expertise, but convey a feeling of warmth and sympathy as a "sweetener."	Seek out connections to the client's thoughts and feelings. Allow his respect for my knowledge to emerge from his discovery of it in the situation.
Look for deference and status in the client's response to my professional persona.	Look for the sense of freedom and of real connection to the client, as a consequence of no longer needing to maintain a professional facade.

Source: Schon, Donald, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, p. 300

It is clear that much of our Land Grant university history has used the technical rationality perspective to drive us toward the "expert" model outlined in the left side of the diagram above. The assumptions discussed by Rice easily move us toward a demeanor as "research based" university professionals which are too frequently condescending to our students but especially so to those outside the university¹⁴. It reflects the way we think about ourselves and those with whom we interact. This "expert" stance results in resentment against academic professionals and as Schon and others have pointed out that it results in the general rejection of and hostility toward many professions founded on and practicing the expert model today. It also prevents us from fully being true to our professed interest in learning. At the University of Wisconsin we are proud of the 100-year old tradition of academic freedom which encourages "that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found" (UW Board of Regents Report, 1894). If that search for truth is to serve well the citizens who fund their university, we will be

fearless in admitting the ideas, knowledge, experience and participation of our students and our citizens. This calls on us to be both teachers and learners. Fundamentally it calls on us to reexamine our identity.

Remaking the meaning of our Land Grant universities, work requires us to rethink how we know, how we teach and how we behave as professionals. In that rethinking is the potential for renewing the unique partnership of university, federal and local government resources to support a system centered on learning and human development so essential to meet the challenges of our times. For me the potential and promise of our work lies in our ability to, as Parker Palmer says “create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced.” That obedience to truth is facilitated by the reflection and practice, by abstraction. Conceptualization and concrete experience. I would describe this new orientation as centered on learning.

Centering our work on learning, holds much opportunity for us. So long as the Land Grant university and especially it’s College of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension was founded on the creation of new knowledge and dissemination of the products of knowledge it is vulnerable to the cycle of economic activity which ultimately makes that knowledge valuable. For example if agriculture is a shrinking economic sector and if food production is far in excess of society’s needs the results of knowledge creation and extension in agriculture has limited public support. If however, we join knowledge creation with the human development associated with deep learning, we expand the demand for our services and reduce our dependence on the vagaries of particular economic sectors. For me centering our work on learning is ultimately a more rewarding sort of work because it is true to our historic role as learners and our historic role as catalysts in the learning of others. The orientation toward learning does not displace our work in creating or disseminating new knowledge but it places that work in a different context. It acknowledges that work as among the dimensions of learning not at the center.

“If we want to change what has come into form, we need to explore the self that has created what we see. All change - both individual and organizational - requires a change in the meaning that the system is enacting. It requires looking into the systems identity, the self through which it perceives and creates.”

Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers, p.100

If we believe we should center the work of Land Grant universities and Cooperative Extension on Learning, how would we get there?

What would happen if we centered the work of Cooperative Extension on learning? A similar question was asked by the faculty of the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western University. Richard E. Boyatzis, Scott S. Cowen and David A. Kolb provide a very interesting description of the innovations they created with their colleagues at the Weatherhead School¹⁵ I rely here on their chapter ten **“Conclusion: What If Learning Were The Purpose of Education”** to shape some ideas for the future of Cooperative Extension and Land Grant

Universities¹⁶. They point out that most educational innovations begin by assuming that there will be no change in items which are essential to change. For Cooperative Extension a prime example is the insistence that our work is “research based” (recently included in the list of givens at the front of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension’s Design Committee report). If we believe the learning philosophy of Kohl and others discussed above, relying only on “research based” learning severely limits our capacity to use all elements of learning. A second candidate for close examination is our “program” orientation. This is the direct descendant of the semester and all other time specific packages for learning. The program orientation does not view learning as a continuous ever changing cycle of refining and remaking what we know. **The essential question which we would ask over and over is “How does this structure, practice, method, habit or tradition promote or inhibit learning”** How would we answer that question about the NASULGC committees ECOP, ESCOP, ICOP for example as bodies that not only separate us from each other within the Land Grant and Cooperative Extension system but separate us from the rest of higher education.

The second element suggested by Boyatzis et. al. is **the importance of an outcome orientation to measure value added**. We have spent much time on program evaluation in Cooperative Extension but for most of us the struggle to measure outcomes remains daunting. I believe that has been true because we have been pressed hard to show economic impact or behavioral change. This has always frustrated me. Much of the learning which we shape in economic education, if successful, produces better decisions. In some cases the “better” decision results in no apparent action. It is quite possible, that the single biggest impact activity I was ever engaged in as a university extension professional resulted in the decision not to build a new export grain elevator at the Milwaukee Harbor. If that elevator had been built in the early 1980's it would have been a major financial error. By measuring behavior change or immediate economic impact my educational activity had no apparent effect. If I measured learning, however, I could have documented whether or not those involved retained new knowledge we learned together that influenced their decisions.

Boyatzis and his colleagues show that an outcome orientation allows us to much more freely consider changes in the structures we are now using. So long as we measure quality based on inputs like the terminal degrees held by extension workers or the number of publications they create we will be locked into our current technology of producing learning and will not be able to take advantage of new opportunity. The substantial success Cooperative Extension has experienced in nutrition and youth education programs provides evidence of what we can do if we can free ourselves of conventional models and design responses to create value added learning based on specific learners’ needs. Our groping to learn how to use the new electronic learning technologies is still, too frequently, centered on the technology as a device for current teaching methods (most satellite video conferences are prime examples) rather than designing learning technologies into meeting the needs of the learner.

A third element suggested in the Weatherhead School experience is **becoming a learner centered institution**. Land Grant universities and Cooperative Extension have a long history of trumpeting responsiveness to students. However, we have much more to do to become a learner

centered institutions with students and our faculty and staff. We still have not figured out on campus or in the field our students' preferences for learning time, style or technology. Too many of our staff development opportunities continue to try to use money saving techniques of large scale, one size fits all, for our professional education. We continue to spend more resources on the instruction of our faculty and staff through the workshop and lecture model. Few faculty and staff have the opportunity to develop a personal learning plan with the resources to carry that plan out. Further, too few of us, administrators and faculty alike demonstrate the tentative, uncertain, groping, collaborative and supportive behaviors which are part of a shared commitment to learning.

We have followed a cultural path toward specialization which results in our seldom leaving either our Land Grant university, Cooperative Extension or academic discipline homes to learn from others across higher education. For Cooperative Extension this may have its greatest significance in failing to learn from our colleagues in community and technical colleges across the nation who have been leading in the engagement with adult students and the communities where they are located. As Boyzatis et.al. argue we need to reach for a context where people build on each others ideas not merely respect each others autonomy.

Boyzatis and his colleagues argue that a real commitment to learning requires that **learning must become central to all of the fields in which we operate**. Learning about learning agricultural economics must become as important as what is learned about some aspect of the agricultural economy. In extension there has long existed a divided culture between those trained in extension and continuing education and those trained in the agriculture, natural resources, youth development and family subject matters associated with cooperative extension. This division of the house is probably stronger at the state specialist level than for county-based faculty. It remains the rare instance in which we have used the expertise we already have within the organization to develop working teams that can effectively learn how we improve the learning experiences we are trying to create. This challenge is even greater as we complicate the added dimension of new electronic learning technologies.

The Weatherhead School experience relied heavily on **ongoing conversations with stakeholders** as a key element in their commitment to continuous learning. In extension such conversations seem to be intense and broad followed by years of scattered and unorganized efforts. We simply have not developed a philosophy that stakeholder engagement is part of an ongoing continuous learning process. In Wisconsin the process is more consistent with some constituents, especially county board extension committees' than at the state level. Continuous conversation with constituents does not currently have the status of new programs delivered to constituents. A real commitment to learning would make us more willing to move away from our frenetic activity delivering programs and move toward a more strategic model of delivering learning activities.

If we use our freedom and intelligence, individually and together, we can remake our Land Grant and Cooperative Extension institutions in ways that retain the best elements of creativity,

abstract and conceptual knowledge generation. In doing this we should use all the strengths that our campus and county bases provide. Mary Lindeman Walshock in her book *Knowledge Without Boundaries, What America's Research Universities Can do for the Economy, Workplace, and the Community*, (Jossey Bass, San Francisco, 1995) reviews many of the trends we have pointed out above. Walshock argues that research universities have several advantages which I believe we must retain in a learning centered Land Grant and Cooperative Extension system. The advantages are:

- Universities are recognized as centers and magnets for expertise.
- Universities are frequently at the edge of new knowledge creation.
- Universities are often able to bring a multi disciplinary response.
- Universities continue to have a reservoir of trust that they can foster a neutral environment for considering controversial ideas.
- Universities have facilities and experience to promote the discussion and dissemination of ideas.

Walshock would quickly add that these advantages are not exclusively held by universities but the combination of these features is a unique asset to being to a learning centered Land Grant and Cooperative Extension system.

A broad commitment to learning will help us realize the Land Grant and Extension promise in building a democratic, compassionate and progressive society. It also could help us build organizations which provide the opportunity for faculty, staff, students and citizens could be mutually engaged in work which allows them to realize their aspirations. I believe making learning the center of Land Grant universities and Cooperative Extension will be supported by a public which eagerly joins in a partnership to meet the challenges of our particular places and creating a sustainable future.

Forces with the potential to help us in centering our work on Learning

As I have been considering where we might go I have had the good feeling that we could connect our interest in learning with a set of "forces" which seem to be at work in our society. Perhaps, it is only through my recent reading the literature about these forces that they seem to me connected to rededicating the Land Grant University and Cooperative Extension to Learning. However, I present them briefly here to add to your reflection. The forces are listed in no particular order:

- **The Study of Complexity and Self Organizing Systems** -- I began this paper with a quotation from Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers. They are among many who are trying to take what we are learning about complexity and the tendency of systems to organize themselves to draw lessons for how we might think about our work. It seems to me that in this work is great potential to encourage the evolving and changing connections among learning partners be they organizations, colleges, academic

departments, or citizens. A key dimension of the opportunity and challenge for us here is in the implications of this work for leadership and organizational structure in the Land Grant University, Cooperative Extension and the public and private institutions they relate to. Our current hierarchical, formalistic and mechanistic structures seem in substantial contrast to the fluidity implied within the general self organizing principles examines by Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers.

- **The Quest to Understand and Reclaim Connection** -- The academic and popular press has been awash with articles about social capital, community building, and trust. We are learning that our free society and our free economy depend on relations that connect us to each other. We are recognizing through the work of people like Wendell Berry, Robert Gardner, Robert Putnam, Cornelia Butler-Flora, Francis Fukuyama that we need to be attentive to the institutions which create community and social capital⁸. A major recent thread in the evolving organizational development efforts of Peter Senge and others associated with the concept of continuous quality improvement is the importance of community in building learning organizations. For me this concern for community and social capital points toward a reexamination of the ways in which cooperative extension helped build and encourage community and social capital, often as a byproduct of educational programs but also out of an understanding of and respect for the role of local institutions which facilitated positive community development. The concern for social capital asks us to look carefully how our design of learning opportunities develops connection, trust and community.
- **The quest to Reinvent Citizenship** -- The return to a concept of democracy as something citizens make through their public work has aided new thinking about areas like education. The ubiquity of the market system in modern American life reinforced by political rhetoric centered on choice among providers and our limited recent personal experience with actually “doing” democracy has left us thinking that making choices among alternatives presented to us by others is what democracy is about. This seems directly parallel to the tendency to view education as something that is done to or for us. The work of Harry Boyte, Nancy Kari, Scott Peters and their colleagues at the Center for Democracy and Citizenship, in the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, their partnership with the Minnesota and Extension Service and with University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension is an entry point to this area of work. I am certain that the experience of encouraging, catalyzing and participating in public work will provide lessons that carry very well into our creating a learning centered Land Grant University.

⁸ See The Kettering Review, Summer 1996, The Kettering Foundation, Dayton Ohio for a number of articles on community. Perhaps the most current and comprehensive work on social capital with special relevance to Land Grant Universities and Cooperative Extension is being lead by Cornelia Butler-Flora at the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at Iowa State University.

- **The Growing Interest in the Connected University** -- Across U.S. Higher Education the interest in service learning opportunities, the public service of faculty, the interplay of campus health, day care, housing, physical plant and employment policies with the community immediately surrounding the campus has been growing. Russell Edgerton at American Association for Higher Education has argued that the connection between the campus and the community beyond it is parallel in priority to the pressure to improve instructional performance. While this has long been a concern of Land Grant Universities, the leaders in this movement are metropolitan universities like Portland State, Penn and Cincinnati as well as many comprehensive universities. This movement provides a broad positive context for the connection and service dimensions of higher education which create a positive environment of models and acceptance that this work long trumpeted by Land Grant Universities and Cooperative Extension is legitimate. Earnest Lynton at AAHE has brought together a particularly useful monograph which looks at the ways in which service has and can become a part of the new definition of scholarship. A related body of work has been emerging on the role of the “public Intellectual.” The Kettering Foundations 1996 issue of their “Higher Education Exchange” has a number of examples and a healthy discussion of this work.

The recent efforts of the W.K. Kellogg foundation in their Food Systems Professions Education initiative is energizing visioning across a large share of the Land Grant Universities of this country. After stage one of the visioning process a large number of the universities have a renewed connection between campus and community (including those at Wisconsin and Minnesota) and a renewed effort to include those beyond campus boundaries in the learning process. Scott Peters work on the history of the Land Grant University especially the writings of Liberty Hyde Bailey has created a sense of connection to a tradition that had been temporarily lost. This provides us with a sense of hope that change is possible and the renewal of the high ideals for a connected university of the early founders of the Land Grant University and Cooperative Extension is possible.

- **The Sustainability Movement** --The growing movement to study, design and implement sustainable systems is providing at least two elements which seem to encourage our efforts in moving toward Learning as our central philosophy. First, the sustainability movement has turned us toward biological models of organisms and away from industrial machine models. This means that we are moving toward thinking about all we do more frequently as systems of continuing, and evolving relationships. This is an approach in which learning is always occurring.

Sustainability also turns our attention toward the small and local as well as the regional and global. Sustainable systems are acutely influenced by the specific immediate and often unique circumstances around particular activity. In learning, the companion ideas are the capacities, preferences, and environment experienced by specific learners. If we learn from the sustainability movement, we will no longer rely so heavily on the mass

education approaches associated with an industrial, economies of scale model. This is such a broad area of work that I will suggest only two names, David Orr at Oberlin College whose work on the connection between the environment and higher education and Elaine Andrews, at the UW Extension Environmental Resources Center, as good places to start your quest for more learning in this area. Connecting to my final force described below I will suggest that a search of either your local electronic library card catalog or the Internet's world wide web search engines for the key words sustainable and environmental coupled with education is also a way to get started.

- **The Explosion in Electronic Information Technologies**-- Distance Learning and Instructional Technology are hot topics in higher education. The attention they are getting is deserved for in education and learning more broadly we are now able to do things that we were never able to do before. As I have developed this paper, I have repeatedly reflected that the creation of a hypertext document would have fit my helter skelter style of thinking much more readily than the structure of a conventional academic paper. I have used extensively the word processing capacity to alter, revise, move and delete as I tried to fit my ideas into order. The challenge for us is to use this power in a learning context and to ask over and over how would this technology enhance learning. So far we are just nibbling at the edges of the opportunity to create learning in a "with" technology world.

For advancing the agenda of turning our attention toward learning as the center of Land Grant universities and Cooperative Extension electronic information technologies push us in a variety of desirable ways. They show us that new approaches to envisioning information exchange and communication are possible. They break down and challenge artificial barriers of space, institutional boundaries and hierarchy in knowledge sources. They unleash the creativity of the experimenters among us and challenge the status quo. These new technologies are still mostly "vapor ware" in terms of yet to be realized promises. The American Association for Higher Education has again been a leader in the confrontation of these technologies with the real dilemmas of bringing them to fruition in higher education. Steve Gilbert at AAHE is a prime source of contact.

New electronic communication and information technology applications is an area where Land Grant Universities like Wisconsin and Nebraska and the Extension Service at U.S.D.A. have been leaders among those in higher education. It is also an area where the technology's potential, a long history of facilitating learning across distance and rapid change drew people from across extension and land grant universities together. The learning experiences they share would provide good case studies of the potential for collective learning aided by electronic technologies in the face of rapid change. Sources of contact in this area are Terry and Chere Gibson at the UW-Extension and UW Madison and Janet Poley formerly with ES, USDA and now I believe at the University of Nebraska.

There are many more elements to each of the forces highlighted above and there are probably forces that may have even stronger positive influence. There are clearly also negative

forces that will slow our movement toward learning as the center of our work. I believe that the two biggest negative influences are the inertia of continuing to do things as we have always done them reinforced by the pessimism that we cannot change. In the October 20, 1996 edition of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel an article by Garrison Keillor titled *Escaping Our Trashy Today*, ended with the following advice:

I say, forget it. Just get over it. There's the future out there. Go live it.

If we really believe that learning holds power to enrich all elements of our individual and collective lives we will take heart from the positive forces and take Keillor's advice about the negative.

END NOTES

1. Wheatley, Margaret and Myron Kellner-Rogers, "A Simpler Way", Berret-Koehler, San Francisco, 1996, 135 pp.
2. Kellogg Foundation, "Taking Charge of Change: Renewing the Promise of State and Land Grant Universities", NASULGC, Washington, D.C., June 1996
3. Glover, W.H., "Farm & College: The College of Agricultural of the University of Wisconsin A History", University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 1952, P. 112.
4. A substantially different perspective on the purpose of the Land Grant university and extension work was being played out at Cornell. There Liberty Hyde Bailey saw the role of the university as strengthening democracy and enhancing the capacity of ordinary people through extension work. Scott Peters has provided an extensive set of insights into Bailey and others in the early years of the Land Grant and extension system. See especially "Cooperative Extension and the Democratic Promise of the Land Grant Idea", Minnesota Extension Service and Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, 1996.
5. The following paragraph follows a discussion of the University's association with progressive politics. "A University that Runs a State." was the title of an article that appeared in the *Worlds Work* in April 1913

" The indefinable Wisconsin Idea, which came into currency during the progressive era, is probably better summarized by some of the catch phrases of the time than by the hyperbole of "a university that runs a state." "the expert on tap, not on top," "the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state."

from Robert C. Nesbitt, "Wisconsin a History", University of Wisconsin Press, 1973 p. 426. Merle Curti and Vernon Carstensen's two volume history of the University of Wisconsin (UW Press, Madison, Wisconsin) from 1848-1925 has excellent and detailed information on the "Wisconsin Idea" and the role of Charles Van Hise, his predecessors and contemporaries in creating and shaping it.

6. Barzun, Jacques, *The American University: How It Runs, Where It Is Going*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, second edition, 1993 (originally published in 1968), 319 pp.

Writing in 1968 he said of the university:

"... It will in slumber, dream of itself as a great national force and call itself a multiversity, which at first only a few will see as a contradiction in terms. And for a while all will seem well enough, that is, in a state of trouble. Federal transfusions will keep the great heart pumping; friends will rally round and bring jam (rarely meat); and commencement speakers will administer with a free hand the drug of self-praise.

Then the parts will begin to drop off, as the autonomous professor has begun to do; or go into spells of paralysis, as the student riots have shown to be possible. Apathy and secession will take care of the rest, until a stump of something once alive is left to vegetate on the endowment or the annual tax subsidy. The change will be gradual enough for everything to adjust to it, and *varsity*, neither *uni* nor *multi*, will survive, in utility a vestige just next to the Electoral College. Some will think the two connected, as the names suggest." p. 240-241

7. See for example: Anderson, Martin, *Impostors in the Temple*, Simon and Schuster, New York, New York, 1992, 255 pp.; Sykes, Charles J., *ProfScam: Professors and the Demise of Higher Education*, (Regnery Gateway, 1988; and Weinstein, Laurence A., *Moving a Battleship With Your Bare Hands: Governing a University System*, MAGNA Publications, Inc., Madison, Wisconsin, 1993, 294 pp.

8. Thorstein Veblen the infamous philosopher economist and social critic in his book "*The Higher Learning in America*" published in 1918 set out the quest of knowledge as the only truly unique role for the university. (See the citation below by Schon for more on Veblen's ideas) In a book also called "*The Higher Learning in America*" ,(Transactions Publishers, New Brunswick New Jersey, 1995) originally published in 1936, Robert Maynard Hutchins added a different thrust to the debate. Hutchins was critical of the ascendancy of empiricism and pragmatism in higher education. He was a staunch supporter of the traditions of liberal education and identified John Dewey among the leading "anti-intellectuals" of the time.

9. Boyer, Earnest L. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, The Carnegie Foundation For The Advancement of Teaching, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1990, 147 pp

10. Schon, Donald, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Basic Books Inc., 1983 and "The New Scholarship Requires a New Epistemology", *Change*,

November/December, 1995, pp.27-34.

11. Rice, R. Eugene, Making a Place for the New American Scholar, Inquiry No. 1, AAHE Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards, American Association for Higher Education, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C., 1996, 36 pp.

12. Kolb, David A., *Experiential Learning: Experience as a Source of Learning and Development*, Englewood Cliff, N.J.;Prentice Hall, 1984

13. Several recent authors have written about the growing suspicion of and distrust for professionals. In addition to Boyte and Kari cited in an earlier footnote and Boyte, Harry C. *CommonWealth: A Return to Citizen Politics*, New York: The Free Press, 1989, see especially William M. Sullivan, *Work and Integrity: The Crisis and Promise of Professionalism in America*, HarperCollins, 1995, and McKnight, John, *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits*, BasicBooks, HarperCollins, 1995.

14. Wendell Berry has been a provocative, articulate frequently caustic critic of our society. In the introduction to the collection of essays *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1992. He reminds us through biting satire that what we sometimes celebrate is a cause for mourning by others. He lists a set of characteristics of what he calls the “new commercial education”. Among the items on his list are “Educated people are more valuable than other people because education is a value-adding industry”, “The sign of exceptionally smart people is that they speak a language that is intelligible only to other people in their “field” or only themselves. This is known as professionalism”, “The place where education is to be used is called “your career”, and “A great university has many computers, a lot of government and corporation research contracts, a winning team, and more administrators than teachers.”

15. Boyatzis, Richard E., Scott S. Cowen and David A. Kolb, *Innovation in Professional Education: Steps on a Journey From Teaching to Learning, The Story of Change and Invention at the Weatherhead School of Management*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1995.

16. Two other provocative sources are not discussed here. They are Barr, Robert B. And John Tagg, From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education, Change, AAHE, Washington. D.C., Nov./Dec. 1995, Vol.27, No.6, pp. 12-25. and Brookfield, Stephen, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1995, especially the chapter Creating a Culture of Critical Reflection , pp. 246-270.