John C. Smart
Michael B. Paulsen
Editors

Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research

Volume 27

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Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research

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Contents

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Chapter 1
I Have Always Been a Student: A Tale of Two Careers

Patrick T. Terenzini

I was among the people John Smart consulted in the early 1980s about his ideas for what became *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*. I thought it was a great idea then, as I do now, to provide a source where scholars, administrators, and policy analysts can find a definitive review of the literature on a wide array of important topics in higher education. Because I strongly believe that higher education scholars and administrators should have some sense of their intellectual and professional heritage, I also thought it was a great idea when John started inviting some of our senior scholars to reflect on the origins and evolution of their careers.

Thus, when Mike Paulsen invited me to write a chapter about *my* career in higher education, I was surprised and honored, and deep inside, *very* pleased, that is, until I went back to refresh my memory about who had written earlier chapters and how they had handled them. Then my surprise and sense of being honored increased sharply, along with my nervousness, for I have never considered myself a scholarly peer of the likes of C. Robert Pace, Wilbert McKeachie, Joan Stark, Alexander Astin, Marvin Peterson, John Centra, Yvonna Lincoln, or James Bess. However, as a friend once said, after sharply critiquing a list of the "top" higher education programs in the United States: "But if there's going to be a list, it's better to be on it than not." So, I happily accepted Mike's invitation and set about discovering what I had to share that would be beneficial to my colleagues, students, and professional successors.

In thinking about the task and asking myself: "Well, what *have* you learned?," I began to realize more fully that I had learned a great deal, mostly from some won-

One might hope that this narrative of my professional career is more or less factually accurate. Memoir writers can, however, be prone to a failing memory or its twin, writing revisionist history to their own advantage. So, kind reader, *caveat emptor*.

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derful teachers, mentors, colleagues, students, and friends. I also realized that, since the age of five, not a year had passed when I was not in school. I had *always* been "a student" in some fashion or another—curious, watching and listening, wondering why I was seeing or hearing what I was, asking questions, reading, trying to make sense of it all. It was, I thought, a pretty big part of who I am.

Roots and the Early Years

My father's parents had emigrated from Italy to the United States just before he was born, and my mother's Irish grandparents were also immigrants. My father's education stopped at Grade 8 so he could work to help and support his family. My mother graduated from a "Normal school" and taught in a one-room schoolhouse at the end of the rail line that served the Vermont Marble quarries. Both grandfathers and at least four uncles had been marble men, and my father sold life insurance. However, my three siblings and I were to have "a good education," partly because of my mother's background (her younger sister was also a school teacher), partly because my father was determined that his children would have the education he never had.

As long as I can remember, I have enjoyed learning. I liked to read (or to be read to), and as a child the Greek and Roman myths fascinated me. I loved the stories, not yet understanding that they were part of how two great civilizations explained what they saw going on about them, as well as the ways they passed on their culture and socialized their young. I later came to realize that they also did partly what faculty members do—try to understand and explain why things are the way they are, or behave the way they do, and then pass those discoveries on to others.

In elementary and secondary school, I was an acolyte, "serving" at various Roman Catholic liturgical services. I enjoyed learning the acolyte's Latin responses to the prayers of the priest celebrating the mass, although at first it was pretty much rote memorization and recitation. At age 7, however, my First Holy Communion gift was an adult's missal which had the Latin and English versions of the liturgy on facing pages. By following the Mass in the missal, I could now see words with the same meaning but in two different languages. It was a peek into another world. I also became familiar with the gospels and parables. That and my earlier interest in the Greek and Roman myths were excellent preparation for understanding the themes and metaphors in literature, art, music, and drama, as well as the power of language and metaphors, something I later came to value greatly in writing and speaking.

In my elementary and secondary school years, football, basketball, and baseball were the only organized sports in the schools I attended, and a 5′4″, 120-lb. kid who could not hit a fastball had no future in any of the sports all my friends were playing. However, I was being raised in Rutland, Vermont, the site of North America's first "T-bar" ski lift and home of Andrea Mead, the first American to win an Olympic medal (two of them, actually, both gold). Skiing was growing in Rutland, and when I was nine, a youth ski development program opened. I got involved, and my life

changed forever. Skiing opened doors for me that would otherwise have remained closed, and it initiated a chain of events that I can follow easily from then to now.

In my later high school years, I worked as a lifeguard and water safety instructor to support my skiing habit. In teaching beginning swimmers, I discovered a talent for teaching. I enjoyed working with the little kids, particularly those who were afraid of the water. I took great satisfaction in watching their faces light up when they discovered they could put their faces in the water and live, then float, and eventually swim the 25 yards across the pool (demonstrating their readiness to swim with the big kids in the deep end). I also took pride in knowing I had helped them make those discoveries. It may have been those experiences more than anything else that turned me toward teaching. My growing interest in studying English and the encouragement of Walter Moore, who taught senior-year English, turned me to teaching English, and in high school, those interests and my skiing came together.

I had been a good student throughout my precollege school years. I was valedictorian of my small, Catholic high school class, and I had developed into a serious and successful competitive junior skier. The timing of my graduation from high school could not have been better. Dartmouth College had not won the team skiing events of its nationally famous Winter Carnival for three consecutive years, and I was one of a small group of promising skier-scholars (the order is significant) encouraged to apply. My academic preparation turned out to be not as strong as I had thought, although it was good enough to earn passing grades. In my sophomore year (freshmen were not allowed to compete in varsity sports), we Big Green skiers won our Carnival. To my mind, however, my first term was a disaster. As Dartmouth had a trimester system, students took only three courses per term, and this "valedictorian," who had never seen anything but "As," and who worked really, *really* hard, managed only two C^{+}s and a C^{-}. The message seemed pretty clear to me: I was in academically way over my head.

Fortunately, that first year also introduced me to the "student affairs" side of the College's operations in the person of Albert I. Dickerson, Dartmouth's legendary Dean of Freshmen. Dean Dickerson was legendary because he could channel for parents the despair their freshman sons would soon experience when the College released the first set of midterm grades to students and parents. Dean Dickerson wrote periodic letters to parents alerting them to the speed bumps their previously high-flying sons would encounter at key points in their first academic year.

His letters to my parents saved my Dartmouth life, which changed the ones that followed. When I raised with my parents the possibility of withdrawing or transferring to another school (the behavior that would later help define my early years as a researcher), my mother was loaded for bear with all the arguments Dean Dickerson had passed on both to allay her own concerns and to help her encourage me to continue at least another term. I did, was more successful, and the thought of leaving Dartmouth never arose again.

Besides the superb liberal arts education Dartmouth gave me, my early years there also introduced me to Bourdieu (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1977), although it would be another 30 or more years before I ever heard of the man or learned anything about his concepts of human, cultural, and social capital. Nonetheless, it was evident to

me that most of my peers came to college with far better academic preparation and skills than mine. They also came from higher socioeconomic stations and were more comfortable at Dartmouth than I both academically and socially. Some also came with friendship networks developed in prep school. They had done things, were interested in things, and been places I had never even thought about. Many had traveled internationally; I had never left the country and rarely traveled beyond New England and eastern New York. Some of my classmates were planning to major in fields I had never considered, in some cases did not even know existed. During my sophomore and junior years, I considered changing my academic major plans from English to French and to geology (paleontology was as interesting as the ancient myths). I always came back to English and teaching. In my senior year I flirted briefly with the idea of going to law school (many of my friends were going into law, and I knew attorneys made more money than school teachers). However, instead I enrolled in June of 1964 in the year-long Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Harvard to prepare to be a high school English teacher.

Three important things happened while I was at Harvard. First, I met Caroline Tuttle, a Middlebury College graduate who had also enrolled in the Harvard MAT program. We married 2 years later, raised a family, and have lived together ever since. Everywhere I look in my career, Caroline is there.

Second, in the practice-teaching portions of my MAT program, I taught under two superb English teachers, one at Newton High School (his name was Thomas Wolfe, however, he was unrelated to the famous American writer), the other at Dorchester High School, both of whom provided superb mentoring. Both sat-in on my classes (Wolfe did so frequently) and let me observe theirs. We would then meet to discuss what had happened, good and bad, and why. In addition, Newton and Dorchester High Schools served communities at the extreme opposite ends of the socioeconomic spectrum. The challenges of teaching in those circumstances were predictably diverse, however, the experiences and the lessons I learned were wonderful preparation for teaching diverse students in diverse settings in later years.

My third significant experience at Harvard was reading some of the work of Jerome Bruner (1966, 1979), a leading cognitive learning theorist. Bruner maintained that learning was based largely on the process of categorization and that we interpret our world by discerning similarities and differences. Bruner also believed that a complex concept or process can be taught to anyone, regardless of age, if the parts of what is to be taught and learned are properly deconstructed (my word) and appropriately sequenced. He is credited with coining the term “scaffolding.”

I have never forgotten watching an instructional film in one of my Harvard courses in which a prominent mathematician demonstrated the validity of Bruner’s theory by teaching calculus to fifth graders. Inasmuch as calculus was the only college course I ever dropped (it was impenetrable), I watched in wonder as fifth graders, guided by a skilled teacher, accomplished what I could not. I am not schooled enough in psychology to understand or explain how that can happen, however, the message I took from Bruner was that effective teaching required, first, a teacher with enough mastery of the material to deconstruct it into its key parts, and second, the ability to sequence and present those parts in ways appropriate for the students

being taught. Doing the latter, of course, requires knowing how much one's students know and do not know, what elements must be introduced, and in what order so the students will learn what one wants them to learn. I will come back to this critical skill later.

The Early Professional Years (1965–1969): From English to Higher Education

My interests in teaching English and in competitive skiing were relevant to my getting into Dartmouth, and they were the keys to getting my first full-time professional job. As I was completing my MAT, I was offered a position teaching 11th grade English and coaching the alpine ski team at Colorado Academy, a K-12 prep school on the outskirts of Denver, CO. Near the end of my senior year, I had spent a week skiing at Aspen in new-every-day, deep powder. With that indelible memory, the opportunity to return to Colorado to teach English and to ski the major ski areas (all expenses paid) was a skiing bachelor's dream-come-true. It also turned out to be an opportunity to work with and learn from Frank Slevin, the chair of the English Program at CA and yet another of the best classroom teachers I have ever seen. My good fortune and pleasure in learning from three master English teachers made it ever more likely that "teaching and learning" would be central parts of my life. The research part lay not too far over the horizon.

In 1966, I took a position in the English Department at (then) Dean Junior College in Franklin, MA. I joined a department led by Bob Hefferman, yet *another* master English teacher, and loaded with recent hires dedicated to good teaching. At one point at Dean, I also car-pooled with Charlie Cramer, a popular economics instructor and widely read individual who enjoyed discussing a wide variety of topics. He was also always the great teacher, politely challenging people to defend their opinions and defending his own. [Bill Green, a Dean alumnus and now Chairman and CEO of Accenture, publically credited Charlie with teaching him economics and how to think analytically (Green 2008)]. On one trip with Charlie, the conversation turned to the death penalty and whether it was an effective deterrent to murder. I was skeptical, and Charlie encouraged me to back it up. I accepted the challenge and spent a fair amount of time over the next week or two gathering information on murder rates in states with and without the death penalty, and in states that had (or did not have) the death penalty and then abolished (or instituted) it. My research design and analytical methods were pretty primitive (what did an English teacher know about social science research methods?), however, the hunt for an objectively supportable answer to the question was intellectually exciting. Charlie had planted the seed of my future career, and a couple of years later, while doing my doctoral dissertation at Syracuse, it would germinate and flower.

From the Small World Department: David Leslie was also at Dean as the College's Registrar and Director of Institutional Research (I had never heard of the

latter position, but soon would). In 1969, David headed for Penn State for doctoral study in their Higher Education Program and to work as graduate research assistant in the Center for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE). At the same time, after discovering some interest in college administration, I left Dean for Syracuse University for doctoral study in the higher education administration program there.

A Prologue to the Syracuse Years

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed social change of staggering proportions. The Baby Boomers arrived on America's campuses, augmenting the enrollment pressures already brought on by the G.I. Bill. Mario Savio was drawing very large crowds of listeners and followers to the Free Speech Movement at the University of California at Berkeley. America's involvement in Vietnam swelled, and the Civil Rights Movement grew in scope and public attention. Freedom Riders rode, were attacked, and died. A Black church in Birmingham was bombed, killing four little girls. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 extended voting rights and opened up public facilities (including colleges and universities) to all Americans, however, not before Newark, Detroit, and other US cities big and small experienced race riots. The Higher Education Act of 1965 put higher education within the reach of economic and racial/ethnic groups that had historically been excluded. Student unrest was on the rise, fueled by the Free Speech Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and opposition to the Vietnam War and the military draft. *In loco parentis*, the legal doctrine that had historically allowed institutions to act "in the place of the parent," was in its death throes as institutions lost legal challenges for failing to provide due process to students charged with rule or law violations.

The impact of all these events on higher education was transformative. The curriculum and how colleges and universities functioned became common targets of protest, reexamination, and revision. Institutions grew rapidly in size, composition, mission, and number. In the mid- and late 1960s, community colleges opened at the rate of one per week. It was a postsecondary education bull market. Administrators scrambled for any information they could get to manage their rapidly growing institutions. Much of the institutional record keeping, however, had been transactional, focused on the current status of individual students and employees. Records were not kept with an institution's analytical needs in mind. Mainframe computer-based administrative record systems were growing, and "institutional research" was born and spread rapidly. Not without some justification, many people on campus considered "bean counting" and reporting the numbers of students, faculty members, and dollars to be IR's primary functions.

Another response was the emergence of higher education programs and research centers, such as the federally created centers (and their associated graduate programs) at the University of California—Berkeley, Michigan, and Columbia. Others appeared at Penn State, the University of Georgia, Syracuse, and elsewhere. The new programs were hardly at a loss for things to study.

The Syracuse Years (1967–1978)

I enrolled in Syracuse's doctoral program thinking I wanted to be a dean of students. Syracuse already had a prominent graduate Student Dean Program, founded in 1931, that prepared women to be deans of women in colleges and universities. Despite my initial interests, as I got deeper into my Syracuse program, being a dean lost some of its allure. Deans were involved in messy issues involving students, changing student-institution relations, and campus unrest. I began to doubt my interest in doing that for the rest of my life. Moreover, too much of what I read in the field lamented the second-class citizenship of "student personnel" staff members and exhorted professionals to explain to faculty members how they contributed to the development of "the whole student." So numerous were the lamentations that I began to spoof them as manifestations of the field's "Rodney Dangerfield Syndrome." [Dangerfield was a popular comic whose trademark shtick was fiddling nervously with his necktie while complaining: "I don't get no respect."] I believed then, as now, that respect must be earned and that the student personnel profession had not provided evidence or convincing arguments for the validity of the claims of contributing to students' overall development. In the literature review section of my dissertation, I noted the irony of the "no respect" complaints, documenting that since its inception the field's intellectual leaders (such as W. H. Cowley and C. Gilbert Wrenn) had urged the profession to capitalize on the research that was available to support their claims to being "educators" on a par with faculty members.

The founder and chair of Syracuse's program in higher education administration at the time was Maurice Troyer, from whom I learned about an emerging field called "institutional research." I did not know that within a year or two I would begin a 14-year career as an institutional researcher and would thereafter spend much of my career as a faculty member with strong interests in the functions of institutional research.

In doing my dissertation, I realized again what I had first discovered (with Charlie Kramer's prodding) while at Dean Junior College: I really enjoyed doing research. The challenges of discovery and the excitement and pride in finding answers and learning were highly enjoyable. At the time I finished my dissertation, moreover, Charles V. Willie, a member of my dissertation committee was just stepping down as chair of the Sociology Department to become Vice President for Student Affairs. Syracuse's Office of Institutional Research reported to the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Business, and the office's analyses, thus, focused on the University's financial operations. Chuck Willie wanted some research done on Syracuse's undergraduates. I was going through a frustrating period of unsuccessful searches for a position in student affairs administration and was being turned down for having either too little experience or too many credentials. When Chuck asked if I might be interested in establishing an "Office of Research" in the Division of Student Affairs, I believe I took his offer without asking how much it would pay. I may have been having reservations about becoming a student personnel administrator, but I had never lost my interest in students. The thought that someone would be willing

to pay me to do research on students was just too appealing to decline, and I enjoyed that assignment from 1972 to 1977.

Chuck Willie was an extraordinary person. When I first met him, he was also Vice President of the Methodist Church's House of Deputies, at the time the highest ranking lay position in the Church. During the period I worked with him, he was also President of the Eastern Sociological Society, produced two books and multiple journal articles, and delivered the sermon at the ordination of the first women ministers in the Methodist Church (the Bishop later annulled the ordinations, and Chuck resigned his position in protest). He was among the most politically skillful administrators I have ever known. Chuck Willie was a role model and mentor whom I have tried to emulate throughout my career.

Charles Willie embodied what I came to consider the three traits I admire most in colleagues: a high degree of competence in his field, a deep understanding of people and how to work successfully with them, and solid ego control. He had a knack for bringing an innovative idea to life while letting others get credit for having the idea and for developing it. Getting the credit was not important to him; he was more interested in making good things happen. During one unforgettable year I worked for him, female undergraduate students occupied his office demanding creation of a women's center. Chuck was sympathetic to the request, however, he was also a skillful teacher and shrewd administrator who knew a "teachable moment" when he saw one. He asked the occupying students, all of whom were White, what their Black sisters' feeling and ideas were on the matter. They had no answer, however, with Chuck's encouragement and help, a series of meetings were held (I was Chuck's representative) in which White and Black women students explored each other's needs and discussed how a women's center could help meet the needs of all women. A Women's Center was eventually established, however, I still marvel, remembering how patiently and skillfully Chuck guided its emergence and the education of the women who developed it. I learned other lessons working with Chuck. His departure for Harvard was a great loss to Syracuse and to me. I still had so much more to learn.

Working for Chuck Willie was the instrument of another turning point in my career. Syracuse's high rate of student attrition (that was what student withdrawal was called in the early 1970s) concerned him, and doing a "dropout study" became my first assignment. At the same time, Robert Diamond, founder and Director of SU's Center for Instructional Development, hired Ernie Pascarella, who had just completed his Ph.D. in Higher Education and who had been a graduate assistant in the Center, as CID's associate director for research. Bob was also concerned about Syracuse's attrition and asked Ernie to study the matter. At a Christmas holiday party at Joan Stark's home (Joan had recently become chair of the Higher Education Program, and Ernie and I both held adjunct faculty appointments), Ernie asked if I was interested in working together on the attrition study. We were friends during our graduate studies, however, we had never worked together. All that was about to change.

Over the next 3 years, Ernie and I worked together developing and analyzing data on SU undergraduates. By concentrating on factors related to students' dropping

out, our analyses served the purposes of both Student Affairs and CID, however, they also formed the foundations of other studies and our scholarly careers. My collaboration with Ernie, and my role as an early institutional researcher, made it possible for me to do my job and still write two or three conference papers per year. I was pretty sure at that point that I eventually wanted to become a faculty member, and writing a conference proposal was, I knew, the first step in a process that could lead to a refereed journal article. Having a conference proposal accepted, after all, obligated one to write the paper. If one wrote a paper, why not submit it for possible publication?

In the fall of 1975, as we were making plans for a second dataset, I read an article by Vincent Tinto (1975) in *Review of Educational Research*. It contained the most thorough review to-date of the attrition literature and suggested a conceptual model that had grown from his review. The model would, of course, redefine research on the college student withdrawal process for the next 25 years. Vince's model seemed tailor-made for Ernie's and my continuing retention studies, and we developed a set of items and scales to operationalize the major components of the framework, particularly those relating to social and academic integration. We never copyrighted the five scales we developed and which we called simply our "integration scales" (although users have graced them with far more elegant labels). Although we never kept track, we estimate that they have been used in perhaps a thousand studies or more. Their development also became the occasion for a number of enjoyable conversations with Vince, who in the fall of 1975 took a faculty position in the Syracuse College of Education. Our relationship with Vince grew over the years, ultimately involving our joint collaboration with him (and others) in a national research center. However, I am getting ahead of myself.

The Syracuse Higher Education Program faculty included (at one point or another) such distinguished scholars as Maurice Troyer (organizational theory and administration), Joan Stark (students and faculty), John Honey (public policy), Mary Evelyn Dewey (students and student affairs), and James Heffernan (students and student affairs). However, the Program also ran with substantial support from adjunct faculty members, including Bob Diamond (instructional development), Edward Kelly (program evaluation), Allen Splete (history of higher education), George Stern (social psychology and college environments), Ernie, and me. Adjunct faculty filled various roles, however, I tried to teach one course per year. I taught the history of higher education one year and team taught a research design course with Ernie. We were a good team, each of us bringing different strengths to the classroom. In one set of course evaluations, a student commented: "Ernie and Pat are a great team. Indeed, one can start a sentence, and the other can finish it." We both enjoyed research design so much that we have continued to teach it (albeit no longer as a team) as part of our regular faculty teaching loads. It is still my favorite course.

In 1977, the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education gave Joan Stark a grant to support Project CHOICE, an effort to improve the nature and quality of the information colleges and universities provided to potential students and their parents. Joan was looking for an associate director to oversee the research aspects of the project. I resigned my position in Student Affairs to work with Joan

(Chuck Willie had announced his decision to take a faculty appointment at Harvard) knowing it would be a good opportunity to work with a dynamic and extraordinarily productive scholar, as well as to learn something about securing external funding and managing funded projects. At the end of my first year, however, Joan accepted an appointment as Dean of the School of Education at Michigan and would be moving Project CHOICE to Ann Arbor. Ernie had also decided to take a faculty position at what was then the University of Illinois—Chicago Circle. For several reasons, I was ambivalent about following Joan to Michigan (as good a friend and mentor as she was).

I explored other possibilities, including one as director of institutional research at the State University of New York at Albany. My lack of experience in most of the important IR functions (such as enrollment projections, faculty workload analysis, and planning studies) kept me off the A-list, however, I eventually received an invitation to visit, did so, and had an offer by the time I returned to Syracuse that night. I am convinced it was my general preparation in higher education and administration, and not my technical skills, that got me the job. I did not realize it at the time, but my *real* education in how colleges and universities operate was about to begin.

A Prologue to Albany

The turbulence in the United States that had begun in the 1960s carried into the early and mid-1970s. The educational bull market of the 1960s, however, turned bearish. The national debt crept steadily upward as the Vietnam War drained the nation's resources and provoked deadly protests at Kent State and Jackson State Universities. In 1973, the first Mideast oil embargo sent the prices of gasoline and heating oil skyrocketing. Institutions with financial plans for the next decade saw them become obsolete in a matter of months.

The effects of these national and international events and trends, as in the previous decade, had their effects on higher education. Traditional student enrollments continued to increase, but at a much slower rate. As money became tighter, the enrollment "beans" were now being linked to cost figures to derive cost/bean ratios: cost/credit hour, cost/FTE student, cost/degree granted (overall and by major), and cost/anything else institutions could count. The drive for efficiency was on. As Peterson (1985, p. 10) noted, "An era that began with student discontent and prospects for an educational revolution that promised to raise significant educational issues became instead a decade of increasing concern for prudent management and accountability that focused on efficiency and effectiveness in higher education." On college and university campuses and in state houses, executive chambers, and board of trustees meetings, the question of "How many?" that had dominated institutional operations and planning in the1960s was replaced by questions of "How much?" "Accountability" and "efficiency" were the watchwords. As the costs of other state programs and services, such as prisons, highways, and social services rose, funding priorities shifted, and the long-standing assumption that higher education should be

strongly supported came under close scrutiny. State-wide coordination grew, and state higher education boards began to ask hard questions about the need for certain programs and about the costs of offering them.

In response, colleges and universities turned to corporate America for ideas on how to cut costs and manage resources. Management philosophies and techniques developed for the commercial sector were imported into higher education. "Program Planning and Budgeting" came up on everyone's view screens, and efforts were made to identify the ongoing, cyclical data needs of administrators. Mainframe computing had continued to develop, and elaborate software programs and systems emerged to analyze and report on large, quantitative databases. It was the age of administrative management information systems. Computer programs were developed to produce the needed reports on a regular, scheduled basis, affix costs to enrollments, and simulate the effects of various enrollment, cost, and pricing changes on departmental, college, and institutional workload, staffing, and budgets.

The late 1970s' pressures to conserve resources through increased efficiencies and institutional contraction led logically to the growth of program evaluation to support prudent resource allocation. Program evaluation grew in importance; the assessment movement was waiting just over the horizon, and higher education programs grew in number and in the range of their instructional and analytical interests. The transformations underway touched all areas of college and university functioning.

The SUNY-Albany Years (1978–1986)

When I arrived at SUNY-Albany as its second director of institutional research, the University was struggling with the aftermath of a period of significant internal program reviews and retrenchments. Major financial problems in the State of New York had required serious reductions in the State's workforce, and no branch was exempt.

Albany Presidents Louis T. Benezet (1970–1975) and Emmet B. Fields (1975–1977) had overseen the University's responses to the State's financial challenges. Having announced his intention to retire, but wanting to prepare the University for the difficult budget reduction decisions to come, Benezet named a Select Committee on Academic Program Priorities to recommend places to cut. Shortly after Fields succeeded Benezet, the State of New York announced additional budget reductions that would require more cuts. SUNY-Albany faced the loss of 103 positions (most of them faculty lines) and $1.8 million (a reduction, I was told later, of about 15–17%). Most SUNY campuses responded to the storm by making "horizontal" reductions, eliminating vacant faculty lines, not renewing term contracts, and adopting other management tactics that would reduce the size of the campus workforce. The approach was essentially random, snatching vacant lines wherever they occurred, but lending at least the appearance of even-handedness. Under Fields, Albany forsook the "across-the-board dribble" (Volkwein 1984, p. 395), choosing instead to

retrench "surgically" through a Mission-linked process that involved evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of every program against a set of criteria, identifying strategic opportunities, and making targeted cuts that in the long run would focus and strengthen the University (see Shirley and Volkwein 1978 for a description of the process).

Fields named a Task Force on Priorities and Resources, a broadly representative body of the Albany campus' community, to advise him on where to cut. Simultaneously, he also asked his budgetary group to make similar recommendations. The two groups met independently but used the same criteria and data. Differences in the two groups' recommendations were resolved, and Albany proceeded with what one observer later characterized as "an act of self-amputation." Albany's strategy called for more cuts than the State required but which the State had agreed in advance the University could retain and reallocate to strengthen remaining programs. The process culminated in the closing of two schools, three departments, 26 academic degree programs (six of them doctoral), an experimental college, and several academic units (Volkwein 1984). The excess-reduction lines were reallocated to enhance the vitality and quality of continuing programs. In some instances, the reallocated lines bolstered seriously understaffed departments; in other cases, they supported the efforts of departments with high promise to achieve national recognition through the appointment of nationally and internationally prominent scholars.

Vincent O'Leary, a nationally respected criminal justice scholar and dean of Albany's School of Criminal Justice, had chaired the Task Force. At the time I took over as IR director, O'Leary, after a year as Interim President, had just been named President with wide faculty approval. I had met this engaging man during my interviews and knew of his role in the retrenchments. On learning he had been appointed president, I could only marvel. What an extraordinary event and revealing reflection on this man: He had chaired a committee that recommended significant reductions in the faculty ranks but could *still* be named—with strong faculty support, no less—the University's next president. I was excited to be moving to Albany at such a dynamic time, although I had no idea of the extraordinary education I was to receive in how the world of higher education administration really works. Vince O'Leary would rival Chuck Willie in his influence as a mentor in my professional life. I still cannot believe my good fortune, much less in successive professional appointments.

I moved to Albany excited by the prospects of working close to the decision-making power centers, but also concerned about whether I had the technical tools to do the job. I had had excellent classroom preparation in higher education administration, solid experience in survey research, knowledge of research design, and the good fortune to have had a front-row seat in watching Chuck Willie navigate and manage the Syracuse student affairs operations. However, I was bringing little else in the way of practical preparation or experience in analyzing an institution's performance in virtually all other functional areas. I still think the move was a leap of faith on both Albany's part and mine.

I need not have worried. Although the learning curve was steep, I had moved into an office of highly competent and professional IR people. My early weeks

briefly overlapped my predecessor's closing days as IR director. Dwight Smith, a criminal justice scholar with a particular interest in organized crime (an interesting background for an IR director, I thought), had founded Albany's IR office, but he was now on his way to a faculty appointment at Rutgers. He was good natured and keenly analytical, and together with Wendel Lorang, his associate, introduced me patiently to the breadth of institutional research and to the intricacies of SUNY-Albany's data systems, particularly the office's enrollment reporting and projection models and its faculty workload models which, together, guided Albany's decisions about how many students it needed to enroll (full- and part-time at each of four levels of instruction) in order to justify its budget requests and sustain its operations. In the SUNY System, enrollment projections drove the budget development process. The enrollment and budget projections affected the number of faculty lines a campus would be allocated (a touchy subject at Albany, given its recent history of retrenchments), as well as library acquisitions; equipment replacement funds; housing, advising, and counseling loads; physical plant operations, and a range of unit-level budgets and workloads. When the enrollment projections exceeded or fell short of subsequent enrollment realities, the whole campus knew about it and felt the effects for a couple of years. I quickly came to understand that running enrollment projections may have been my office's least-glamorous activity, however, it was also its most important one. The summers preceding each fall semester were periods of high anxiety as I monitored the Admissions Office's periodic updates on applications, offers of admission, and acceptances, as well as other related statistics, and held my breath, waiting to learn how close we had come.

I also quickly discovered, however, that IR was multidimensional and very exciting work. It was, in fact, a window on the University's administrative challenges and internal operations. Early in my IR career, I took pride in thinking I was aware of about 80–90% of what was going on inside the University.

Wendel Lorang, my associate in the IR office, was a huge asset throughout my years at Albany. Conscientious, hard-working, imaginative, thoroughly professional, and a good friend, Wendel knew our enrollment and "over-/understaffing" workload analysis models inside and out. He helped me understand them, but his competence also relieved me of having to learn them to the depth that would have been necessary without him. Indeed, I often thought: "If Wendel leaves, I'm outta here, too!" With Wendel overseeing the enrollment and workload analyses, I could turn my attention to other IR topics. Together, from 1978 to 1984, we extended the scale and reach of the IR office's activities into, among other things, a student outcomes analysis program (outcomes assessment was just emerging). In the late 1970s, budgets were tight everywhere; program evaluation was gaining in importance, and "assessment" was just a couple years short of becoming a "movement." Albany was not immune to the pressures to demonstrate its educational effectiveness. I had realized earlier that Vince Tinto's withdrawal model could be easily adapted for use in designing studies of other educational outcomes besides persistence. In fact, my generalizations of Vince's model became the foundation of Albany's assessment program, as well as my scholarly research. When Fred Volkwein succeeded me as IR director when I left for the University of Georgia, he extended and refined the

original outcomes and assessment program. We are both proud that the system remains in place and in use at Albany.

My IR portfolio also included faculty salary equity studies (women's rights issues were appearing on the front pages of national publications, and gender- and race-related salary differences were a rapidly growing concern nationally and at Albany), as well as the design and implementation of a course and instruction rating system (Albany had none when I arrived); development of a set of university, college/school, and department performance indicators; and other analyses in support of the president, the University's planning process, vice presidents, deans, and department heads. In each activity, I learned something new, not only about the IR trade, but also about the University's internal operations, the flow of formal and informal power, and the faculty culture.

For example, the sensitivity of gender- and race/ethnicity-related salary inequities and the threat they posed to the University's collegial relations, morale, and public mission of the University were quickly becoming clear. While preparing my salary equity studies, I could also watch and learn as President O'Leary found ways (as Chuck Willie had) to bring long-overdue attention to campus inequities and to reduce, and eventually eliminate, the salary distortions while educating both faculty and administrative staff members and the public about the University's past and future. (His obituary noted that O'Leary "grew the faculty, staff and student body into a more diverse force," including "add[ing] the third stanza to UAlbany's (sic) alma mater to make the school song correspond with increasing levels of diversity, adding lines like 'pass the torch from one to all/guide each destiny'" (Former UAlbany Leader Dies 2011). It was clear that things were often far more complex than they seemed at first.

I learned two other important lessons at Albany, and I have tried to pass them on to my graduate students. The first grew from my work as the staff member to a faculty committee O'Leary had formed to consider what should be done with respect to instituting an instructional rating system at Albany. Pressures for such evaluations were just gathering steam nationally, and instructional evaluations were a hot issue among faculty members. Many faculty members resisted them strongly, arguing that one cannot evaluate teaching quality reliably or validly. The committee (mostly faculty members) devoted its early meetings largely to debates about whether "good teaching" could be evaluated. I had made available research literature on the topic, but the discussions continued. In the course of one discussion, I realized that the key issue was not *whether* one could evaluate teaching but rather the quality of the "evidence" to be used. I commented that faculty members actually evaluate their peers all the time, whether casually or in more formal processes such as course assignments and promotion and tenure discussions. To that point, I noted, the "evidence" used was largely anecdotal, based mostly on hearsay, student comments or complaints, or watching and listening as colleagues presented their research. The committee, I suggested, was being asked to recommend better ways to gather evidence to inform those judgments, evidence based on instruments with known psychometric characteristics and which could be revised and refined as analyses suggested. My remarks grew from the understanding that, in the faculty culture, "evidence" is the

coin of the realm. Without evidence, any truth claim is merely an opinion. My comments resonated with committee members, and our work shortly thereafter returned to the available published research and to the development of a student rating (not "evaluation") form that would be credible to faculty and worthy of adoption University-wide. My lesson was the value and importance of understanding what those with whom I was working valued, what the "deal breakers" would be in discussions and negotiations with them. It was what Chuck Willie had demonstrated in his interactions with the students demanding a women's center. It was a clear application of Sun Tzu's (1961) dictum to "Know your enemy" (in a nice sense, of course).

The second valuable lesson, similar to the previous one in its own way, came when I presented President O'Leary with the fruits of my first efforts to produce campus, college, and department "performance indicators." The goal of those efforts had been to assemble in one place information to which the president and academic administrators could turn to learn how their unit was performing with respect to the University's missions of teaching, research, and service. Previous reviews and discussions had relied almost exclusively on measures of instructional workload, although unit performance evaluations (always pretty informal) also occasionally incorporated reports on funded research productivity. My goal was to create "new" performance indicator reports that would include quantitative information in all three areas of instruction, research, and service. I presented the president with a 5–6 inch thick binder of mainframe computer output. The binder had multiple indicators for each "productivity" area and at three levels of detail (university, college/school, and department). The President scanned several pages in some detail, then flipped quickly through the rest. On closing the binder after about a minute, he turned and handed it back to me. "Pat," he said gently, "don't make an analyst out of me." I understood instantly that I had given him what a researcher would have produced and valued, not what President O'Leary needed to do his job. At that point, I manifestly did not "know my enemy," or at least had not thought carefully or fully enough about what the president needed and what I should have given him.

In 1984, I was asked to be the president's assistant for planning. As IR director, I had provided staff assistance to the University Budget Panel, an annual, university-wide review body that focused on staffing levels and distributions (largely because the most threatening sections of the Governor's budgets for SUNY campuses focused on staffing). I would now coordinate and (working with the president) refine that process. President O'Leary hand-picked Budget Panel members, taking great care to ensure university-wide representation across academic, administrative, and governance units. Members read, interviewed, and heard reports by the vice presidents and the directors of major University units recommending, if the SUNY System's final budget required staff reductions, where the cuts could be made with the least damage to the Albany's mission and operations. Staffing redistributions in and across all areas were on the table.

The spring-semester-long work of the Budget Panel was another extraordinary window on the University, an opportunity to watch how potentially competing units could also collaborate. Perhaps as a by-product of the recent retrenchments and O'Leary's handling of them, SUNY-Albany functioned with a remarkably high level