



CISL Gazette - May 2003

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The Two Year Attraction

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Jennifer Jacobson wrote an article entitled "The Two Year Attraction," which was published in the Chronicle of Higher Education a couple of months back. The highlights include observations made by faculty who have taught in community colleges, some by way of purpose and plan and others out of survival.

Here are a few of the more interesting comments. No doubt, some will sound familiar. Before they had teaching experience in the two-year college they heard or believed:

- Only lackluster Ph.D.'s who don't get hired in four-year institutions want to teach at community colleges, with their heavy work loads and unprepared students
- An associate degree and a dime (?) will get you a phone call
- Good teachers should make wide circles around the community college; there's no intellectual stimulation

After their experience teaching in the two-year college, they observed:

- There's a greater opportunity to interact with students and experiment in classes
- The real act of empowerment comes when teachers notice students starting to consider themselves as learners
- Classrooms are livelier when they include the 16 year old home-schooled and the early octogenarian

The before responses sound like something read between the lines when the old graduate school advisor told the Ph.D. candidate that he would be "on the fringes of the profession" should he choose to teach in the community college. The after comments sound more like people moving deftly to extend grasp and reach. That would be "on the fingers of the

profession," wouldn't it?

One final thought. Which would you rather have? A teaching assignment with a three-year renewable contract in a dynamic institution with a great future or one teaching declining enrollments in a four-year college offering the equivalent of "Tenure on the Titanic."

Responding to Pick-A-Prof

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Last month the gazette ran an article on a database that is available electronically for students who are interested in their classmates' evaluations of professors (i.e., grade distributions and drop-out rates). The Pick-A-Prof database peaked the interest of John Pisarra, Associate Professor of English, CCBC Dundalk.

After investigation, John expressed the following: "I used the search-engine Google to explore this idea and was surprised to find two hundred plus items on their web site Pick-A-Prof. After my initial review, I did not quite understand what the commotion was all about."

John continued, "What did strike me, though, was the inordinate amount of controversy surrounding this issue. More specifically, I was struck by the fact that much of the controversy centered around a few basic assumptions of college educators: Assumption #1) college faculty who give high grades have easy courses and are not considered to be the best educators; Assumption #2) college faculty who give low grades have difficult courses and are considered

to be the best educators; Assumption #3) college faculty appear to have an inherent lack of trust in their students' ability to make sound decisions. I failed to see the logic of the first two assumptions and am greatly disappointed in the third."

Thank you John, for the curiosity and follow-up. You just may have started something here. This examiner grudgingly acknowledges that there is a kernel of truth in most ideas, but those assumptions? Do college educators really believe that stuff?

Can you give high grades, teach a demanding course, and still be a "good educator?" Of course you can! What do the rest of you think?

Correction

[This Month's Headlines](#)

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The Gazette apologizes to Bill Barry for trying to rename him Bill Bradley in last month's edition. What were we thinking? Was it Thorndill's Blitzkreig of B's that set us off? Or the fact that Barry's salary is in the NBA league or even comparable to that of a U.S. Senator? Didn't we know that a person's most prized possession is his name?

Nah, none of these. We just made a mistake, pure and simple. Sorry Bill.

Learning More About What Students Think

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The National Association of Colleges and Employers included an article entitled "The Class of 2003 Speaks Out on Recruitment Practices" in its latest newsletter. The soon-to-be graduates didn't have much good to say about how companies are recruiting them.

In response to a Scott Resource Group open-ended survey question on what students wanted employers to know, the third most popular answer was, "Career Fairs are becoming a waste of time."

The students cited a widening disconnect between themselves and recruiters. The latter are apparently alienating students by an almost ubiquitous demand for electronic resumes and referral of students to company web sites for information. Not surprisingly then, the students' strongest negative reactions in the survey appeared in response to questions related to the use of job-search boards, on-line applications, video interviews and chat rooms.

Job placement and career program coordinators will no doubt take note of these things. And others too, given the amount of disgruntlement about a world that is becoming more impersonal everyday.

What Will It Take?

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What's it going to take to one day step out on the other side of the contracting divide that now separates us from the premiere learning-centered college we have chosen to become? One hundred percent effort, that's what. Anything less will not get us there.

Others on the outside have often concluded that 99.9% effort was good enough. Were that the acceptable standard, here's what would happen:

- The IRS would lose 2 million documents a year
- Hospital nurseries would give 12 babies to the wrong parents, each day
- The U.S. Post Office would mishandle 18,000 pieces of mail, every hour
- Financial institutions would deduct 22,000 checks from the wrong accounts in the next 60 minutes
- Telecommunication services would misplace 1,314 telephone calls in the next 60 seconds

In the next year:

- 22,000+ drug prescriptions would be incorrect
- 270,000 defective tires would be rolled out
- \$761,900 would be spent on tapes/CDs that wouldn't play

And, Just To Let You Know

[This Month's Headlines](#)

This is the last issue of the CISL Gazette for which I will be the editor. I've enjoyed every minute of observing and writing about the tremendous distance we have traveled together in the new learning-centered Community College of Baltimore County.

Hard to believe it's been four years. Hope you feel that I gave the effort 100%.