

**Making the leap?
Transformative Processes, Academic Freedom and Engendering a
Research Culture in Ontario Colleges and Small Teaching-Centered
Universities**

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Abstract

This paper explores the potential for the development of a research culture in Ontario's community colleges and small teaching centered universities. An exploration of both the benefits and impediments to this development in both forms of institution is explored. Colleges, it is suggested, face considerable obstacles in attaining this goal due to their current collective agreements, working conditions for faculty, and the lack of academic freedom. The latter is seen as a pre-condition for any significant retooling of colleges for academic research. For small universities, the conversion to a comprehensive status, combining research with teaching is argued to face several challenges including a "top down" approach to developing a more vibrant research culture, and workload issues which exist in small institutions, and a lack of current funding mechanisms which can support research start up and the dissemination of research results. They also face the issue suggested by Ito and Brotheridge of the "80-20" split which distinguishes highly productive research faculty from those who are much less productive. Colleges and small universities are seen to have much to gain by engendering a strong research culture particularly in an age of declining governmental support, global competition, and changing expectations of students and the community.

Key words: research culture, transformation, colleges, small scale universities

Introduction

To bring about academic change by reforming the operation of an existing college or university, rather than by creating a new institution or adding a satellite program to an already established one, involves relatively fewer risks for academic innovators but offers the most difficulties. (Martorana and Kuhns, 1975: 105)

One of the most significant challenges facing colleges and small teaching-centered universities in Ontario that have focused primarily upon teaching is the transformation to a culture that is increasingly concerned with research. Pressures to adopt this role have emerged from a variety of sources. Provincial funding mechanisms have perpetually shortchanged colleges and smaller universities, favouring research-centered first tier universities, a process which accelerated under the Harris conservative government and has continued to erode under successive governments. Research-centered institutions have also been able to reap substantive economic rewards from innovative research which creates new products and services, particularly in the technology and science spheres. Research is also a means to attract funding from the private sector who recognize the potential of research projects, and from private donors who can be sold on the vitality of the institution and the importance of their contribution to future "discoveries." Post secondary institutions are complex entities that deliver a wide variety of programs and services. When there are fundamental shifts in their missions, the success or failure of such paradigm shifts requires a significant retooling of structures and culture. Mapping the route to organizational restructuring which can support a new vision and purpose is not without its difficulties. For colleges and universities moving from a longstanding and successful role as teaching institutions to a comprehensive status, encompassing both teaching and research is fraught with both internal and external problems.

In this article I take as my purpose an assessment of the cultural and structural issues which will confront the reinvention of colleges and small universities in Ontario as “comprehensive” institutions, with a new focus on research and teaching. I review the primary political and social forces which have acted as catalysts to the development of new visions of the “millennial college” (Fleming, 2007) and comprehensive university. The role of restructuring administration, developing and communicating the boundaries of the emerging research culture, strategies for encouraging faculty support of emerging “new” missions are explored. The centrality of the re-invention of institutions to their long-term relevance to various constituencies, and to the satisfaction of their employees is considered in the context of Lowe’s (2008) conception of markers required to ensure employee, read as faculty, long term commitment to the workplace. The road to transformation is viewed from an over-arching perspective which places institutions within a broader global framework addressing issues of continuing relevance and centrality as centers of learning and research. I argue that academic freedom is central to the underpinning these structural changes, and that the role of faculty is central to the “re-creation” of the faculty role in the case of college governance (Benjamin, 2007: 73-77). For both forms of institution, issues of both the “public” and “private” lives of colleges and universities (Fisher and Rubenson, 1999:77) are central to the transformative process. The reforming of colleges and small Ontario universities in a process of academic change (Martorana and Kuhns, 1975:105) will be shown to involve relatively little risk, but present some significant difficulties.

College Versus University Academic Cultures

College

Historically, Ontario’s colleges have developed a radically different work culture from that which exists in universities. One might look to the fundamental governance structure which established colleges as an explanation of the origin of the genesis of the directions these institutions took over the past forty years. Colleges were established as an alternative to universities by the Ontario government in the 1960s for students who wished to pursue post secondary options (Denison and Gallagher, 1986:1 and 33). The primary focus of colleges until recently has been on vocational training focused on direct entry into the workplace. At a societal level some analysts have suggested that colleges were the provincial government’s response to deal with unemployment, prepare young persons for entry into vocational and technical trades, and I would argue intended to forestall the entry of young persons into the workforce (Denison and Gallagher, 1986:13-15). However, colleges also filled a gap which had been identified by employers, for employees possessing more advanced skill sets and abilities than high schools were producing. As early as 1937, Mowat Fraser (1937:216) speculated on the future form colleges were to assume in his book, “The College of the Future”. He wrote that the original concept of the colleges, and the part it played in civilization, was to support the aims of “intellectual life, liberal education, and “culture”...”scholarship” and “learning.” He argued that the concepts of liberal education and culture had been largely abandoned by this point in the American college system, and education for individuals was confined to “a very few restricted bodies of knowledge.” (Fraser, 1937: 217). His contentions have a certain resonance today in college culture where liberal arts is largely subjugated to specific vocational courses, viewed as a burden by students who cannot grasp its relation to future employment or what Fraser termed “citizenship.” What possible use could philosophy, political science, sociology or english have for future police officers, beauticians, or pilots?

The vocational nature of Ontario colleges, and their establishment as a “alternative” route for students unable or unwilling to perform academically at a level which would garner them admission to university secured for them an instant student population at the end of the 1960s. Parents eager to have their children benefit from post secondary education, and a government equally as relieved at diverting thousands of young people out of the workforce (and presumably away from the “hippie” culture of the time) viewed colleges as a route to higher pay cheques, not as a stepping stone to university (a development of the post 2000 era) (Denison and Gallagher, 1986:34). The initial formation of the colleges were largely shaped by university presidents according to Denison and Gallagher (1986:34-5) specifically limited the scope of college activities, “...colleges should not interfere with the *unique* position of the universities” (emphasis added). Thus an academic culture combining the vocational with the strengths of liberal education was lost, by the university presidents’ insistence on shaping their initial limited role in vocational terms. This was further reinforced by the autocratic rule of the “extended” high school regime exemplified by the transplantation of the former principal of Northern Secondary high school as the first president of Seneca College rather than an individual with university administrative experience ensuring that universities retained their exclusive control of academic education at the post secondary level. Instructors were treated as a “resource” to be used by the institution, and assigned teaching duties in a variety of fields at the whim of the administration. The introduction of the union for faculty members signaled the beginning of collective bargaining and protection of their rights, but it also could not overcome the fractured relationship between faculty and administration. An academic culture had been rejected by administration in favour of a shop floor approach to colleges. Faculty were viewed as “workers” who could be assigned “duties”. Academic chairs were referred to as “the boss” and had the right to assign workload, whether it happened to be in the field of training of the faculty member or not.

The introduction of the SWF workload formula signaled a further enshrining of antagonistic relations between administration and the union. Classroom teaching hours, “contact” hours with students, meetings and other duties were reduced to a formula. ¹Essentially this produced a teaching-centered environment with a heavy emphasis on in-class hours. Most professors are assigned fifteen to sixteen hours in the classroom teaching five courses per term. This does not include preparation or marking time. The SWF is a highly constrictive device since it is highly inflexible with regards to other academic endeavours, as the discussion will demonstrate. Viewed as a necessary corrective to administrative efforts to erode faculty rights, and set unreasonable working conditions, the SWF, and so the collective agreement is largely blind to the types of activities which support a research culture.

Finally, as Dennison and Gallagher (1986:188-189) provincial governments have over the intervening decades since the establishment of Ontario’s community colleges insisted on colleges being “more cost effective and more productive but rarely invited to share in determining the process by which these goals should be achieved.” This has been combined with increasing budget cuts and calls for colleges to generate more income to make up the shortfall. As they note, “Canada’s colleges have never fully been the master of their own destiny.” If the Ontario government wishes to establish colleges as part of a system of credential portability and multi-directional portals, then I would argue, that the governance of colleges must change to accept the notion of academic freedom for faculty, faculty centrality in decision making, and the development of a vibrant research culture which will help to breach the considerable lack of communication between university and college faculty. As a common denominator and corrective to an almost exclusive focus on vocationalism (Fisher and Rubenson, 1999:77), research, collaboration as well as networking which emerges from this culture, and the sharing of discovery has the potential to play a powerful role in reshaping the post secondary landscape in Ontario to the benefit of college and university faculty, students and administrators (Fleming, 2007).

Small Teaching-Centered Universities

Ontario's small teaching centered universities are located outside of the central urban areas of Ontario (Toronto, Ottawa and Windsor) and have largely provided an avenue for local students (and, of course, students external to the immediate area) to pursue post secondary education while maintaining residence in the vicinity of the institution.ⁱⁱ Their position in the post secondary landscape has significant parallels to those of university colleges in the British Columbia system as described by Dennison (2006:107). Given their relative size, these "second tier" universities existed, and continue to exist without the large scale funding which flows to universities which house faculties of law and/or medicine. Much like colleges their emphasis has historically been upon teaching (of academic subjects) since the limited research funds, and research support mechanisms within these institutions when compared to larger universities has not been capable of supporting a research culture which can equal that of "first tier" research universities. While innovative and important scholarship does seem to thrive regardless of these financial and structural limitations, it is not on a scale which approaches large scale universities.

There is a natural tension which this sort of culture creates. While research has not been the focus of these universities, there are still requirements in collective agreements regarding research, and hence obtaining research funds and publishing in peer-reviewed forums. But the standard of performance required has not matched that of larger institutions, and could not, as I will argue in the next section, given the teaching loads, service requirements, and resources available to faculty in these settings. Moreover, these institutions have largely "sold" themselves to students in terms of approaches to teaching which larger institutions are incapable of supporting. The cornerstone of small teaching universities, has and to some extent remains, small class sizes and direct contact with professors. Large universities have adopted a "big box store" attitude towards particularly introductory level classes. Classes may reach enormous sizes utilizing concert halls, and televised remote sites scattered across the campus to present the lectures. One of my children, for example, was a student in a class of 1600 plus students. Students, by virtue of the sheer numbers involved typically interact not with the professor but rather with tutorial assistants who meet with them in seminars, grade their assignments, and provide feedback on tests, papers and other written exercises. As a natural consequence of class size, and a supportive tutorial assistant system, it is a relative rarity for students in these classes to have ever spoken to the professor either in person, on the telephone or via email in contrast to the small classes offered at "second tier" universities.ⁱⁱⁱ

"Large" classes at smaller universities at the introductory level may range from 60-175 students, a fraction of those at larger institutions (a function not only of registrations but also classroom limitations. For students from small towns and rural areas there has been a great appeal in attending university locally, not only in terms of smaller classes but in regular direct access to professors. Even if there are graduate programs at small scale universities the majority of professors lead the main lecture and will often lead small scale tutorials. They usually teach without benefit of teaching assistants which are mandated by union agreements at large scale universities on various ratios, for e.g. one assistant per 50 or 60 students. Understandably the teaching load is dramatically more demanding for faculty at small scale universities. Normally they are solely responsible for delivering the lectures, leading tutorials, fielding student inquiries both in person, and via telephone and email, and providing academic counseling. A typical course load is a "3 and 2" formula, in other words, five half courses per year.^{iv} Given the small number of faculty in any given department or unit, there is also a push to have faculty develop a wide variety of courses so that faculty can be more flexibly assigned to courses that need to be covered, for example, in the case of sabbaticals. Thus faculty, in the initial years of their

appointment before tenure are generally called upon to develop numerous courses with the added burden of preparing course outlines, and course materials on a yearly, if not term basis. Additionally, there is a heavy emphasis on service to the university and particularly to the local community in small scale universities where there are limited numbers of faculty, and a variety of services to be performed. Small scale universities typically have very strong ties to the local community, its government and businesses which require some faculty participation.^v

Given the above discussion it should be clear that faculty in small scale teaching universities labour under a considerable disadvantage vis-à-vis research than do their colleagues in large scale universities. While in-class time may vary from approximately 6 to 9 hours per term (depending upon whether the class is lecture format, or lecture/tutorial format) the additional duties detailed thus far, severely limit the time faculty can apply to research endeavours. In these ways they bear some similarities to Ontario's colleges whose faculty have been straitjacketed, almost exclusively into teaching roles. The question which I will now address is why Ontario colleges and small scale teaching universities have now seemingly embarked on a path towards the creation of academic research cultures. My attention will then turn to the impediments to the realization of this goal in both institutions.

Why Do Colleges and Teaching Universities Want to Develop a Research Culture?

Ontario's colleges and small scale teaching universities have recently signaled that they wish to embark upon a new institutional "mission." No longer content to merely teach students, these institutions have decided that research must form part of their future.^{vi} There are two questions which this raises, and which I will attempt to answer. The first is why they wish to move in this direction (or add this dimension to their current visions of the institution), and secondly, why has this push towards research occurred at this juncture in Ontario's history?

First, it is obvious to both colleges and universities that research has the potential to solidify relationships with businesses, private partners and public sector funding agencies. For both institutions the pursuit of wide scale research by their faculty brings a number of significant benefits. First and most obviously, are the funds which can flow into a university or college via the medium of research grants in the form of overhead payments. At approximately fifteen percent on standard grants, the potential economic payoff for both forms of institution makes research an attractive path to expand. Second, as researchers advance in their careers the size of grants will tend to increase, thus increasing the funds flowing to the institutions. Third, some research projects will bring private sector and/or business investment in both the research itself, and further, for university and college infrastructure. Fourth, research attracts media attention and can generate considerable public interest and pride in local institutions channeling potential students to attend the institution, and prompting private donations to the institution.^{vii} Scientific and technological advances derived from research can also yield considerable financial windfalls to institutions in the form of profit sharing with faculty, when the institution encourages innovation.^{viii} The University of Waterloo, for example, has created a vibrant research culture which has developed strong links with local companies particularly in the scientific and technological sectors in a mutually beneficial partnership which has seen tremendous growth in industry launches and location in the city of Waterloo. Both colleges and small teaching universities have struggled under successive provincial governments whose approach to funding post secondary education has, for at least a dozen years chronically under funded these institutions. As largely autonomous institutions, large scale universities with law and or medical schools have been able to reward faculty with significantly higher salaries than their counterparts in small universities.^{ix} They also enjoy medical and dental benefits which outstrip those in small universities, and well funded and

generous pension plans. They also are able to provide travel and professional expense amounts which on a yearly basis are much greater than that provided to faculty at small universities, and additionally can provide travel funds for international conference presentation which, in contrast, outstrip the funds available at small universities.

Obviously having faculty develop a research program also yields benefits for the faculty in terms of job satisfaction and their engagement with the discipline. Moreover, the emphasis on multidisciplinary teams by large funding bodies like SSHRC and NSERC translates, at the faculty level, in encouraging thinking across disciplinary boundaries. Faculty involved in research will also retain currency in their discipline, and across other disciplines, which provides a significant benefit to students at all levels of study. Thus issues of institutional profile, and the potential for the generation of additional revenue sources make the development of a research culture extremely appealing to administrators. But what has happened to prompt this directional change at this time?

For colleges the most significant developments, other than the desire to generate capital pose a considerable challenge for institutions. Part of the answer is revealed in advertisements for faculty positions at colleges. The minimum requirement for professors at Ontario colleges, in terms of academic credentials, is now an M.A. or Ph.D. in most disciplines.^x With the influx of highly educated faculty possessing graduate credentials which has escalated annually since 2000, colleges are faced with a faculty group that has the potential to contribute meaningfully to research. This is in contrast to a large number of faculty prior to this era whose credentials rested largely in practitioner-based expertise suited to the imparting of vocational skills. While colleges offer gainful employment for these faculty in the teaching realm, little opportunity, impetus or reward for research has been forthcoming, a topic I address in the next section of this paper.

The recent move towards diversification in college missions in Ontario (Fleming, 2007) and the re-naming process which has accompanied this has been an effort to raise the profile of colleges as more acutely attuned to scientific endeavours, and to differentiate colleges in order to attract more potential students. In the Toronto and surrounding area, five colleges, Centennial, George Brown, Humber, Seneca and Sheridan compete for students. When one considers that colleges have also very actively pursued transfer and co-joint programs (i.e. Guelph-Humber) with universities there are pressures to both further increase the “scientific” profile of their institutions and to gain some footing in the relationship with transfer institutions. The obvious attraction of being able to sell students (and their parents) on colleges not as simply vocational institutes, but rather as portals to further education satisfies not only the hopes of parents that their children will decide to pursue further education after college but also acknowledges the reality of rising standards expected by employers of potential employees. In some programs at college, there is a tacit recognition that a diploma will not be sufficient for the majority of students to enter their chosen profession. In police foundations, for example, students are not only typically far too young following graduation to enter policing (which selects candidates in the mid-20s) but it is also common sense that students who obtain a further university degree and some experience in policing-related fields will be preferred applicants in the increasingly complex world of the profession.^{xi} A highly active research program at colleges will give them credibility with the public, but also recognition by university partners. This would do much to bridge the gap between colleges and university faculty which appear to be largely, although not exclusively, a one way street for enrollment leading from the college to the university.

Small teaching universities are not immune from the desires of incoming faculty to pursue full and rewarding careers which at least attempt to balance teaching and research roles. Aside from the benefits which may accrue to the institution, worker satisfaction has to be considered in an age where

there is considerable competition for faculty members, particularly in the most “popular” disciplines that attract large numbers of students, require little investment outside of faculty positions, and generate large scale revenue for universities. Small teaching universities have recognized that faculty will not be content to be cast into the singular role of “teacher.” Research programs also lead to graduate programs and support for graduate students in their quest for knowledge. It would be disconcerting, to say the least, for individuals who have spent many years (and financial resources) attaining the status of Ph.D., only to discover that the research skills they have garnered are to be shelved to take up a role restricted primarily to teaching given the lack of tangible rewards for research,

Why Now?

Barriers to the Creation of Research Cultures at Colleges and Universities

Colleges, Governance and Academic Freedom

While the benefits of developing a research culture are apparent to both administrators at both colleges and small teaching universities in Ontario, at least from a financial perspective, the impediments to the realization of this goal are significant. In some cases the problems which confront the institutions are unique, while some are shared in common. In this section I explore the major barriers which have, and will constitute key challenges for institutions in attempting to move in the direction of a vibrant, productive research culture.

By far the most overwhelming problem for colleges to developing a research culture has been, and continues to be a lack of room in the collective agreement for recognizing the value of research contributions. Colleges do not reward research in any tangible way, either through merit pay, tenure, or progression through the ranks. Colleges do not distinguish between faculty except on the basis of seniority. Thus those few faculty who currently engage in research, writing and publication do so for their own personal satisfaction, in the hope of moving to a university setting, or to gain some small remuneration for their investment of time. Currently collective agreements can accommodate some small remission of time for faculty teaching in Bachelor of Applied Arts programs but this amounts to a few hours per week, hardly the amount of time required for serious research and writing. This situation is compounded by the lack of a meaningful sabbatical system which can support scholarship. Sabbaticals are rarely granted and are given on the basis of long service on a limited basis.

Secondly, as reactive institutions, colleges are engaged in a never ending effort to please and appease what they perceive to be “business leaders” in the community who might be a source of employment for graduates or financial contribution to the college. Legally, colleges are not autonomous institutions but rather an arm of the government. College Boards of Governors and Advisory Boards for programs are composed largely of business persons with some expertise in the programs offered by the college. Thus research is encouraged which explores issues such as how to better relationships with the business community, how to improve curriculum and programming, and so on, which do not intrude on the realm of critical scholarship. Colleges effectively limit the academic output of faculty by refusing to acknowledge its importance in any sense. For many faculty this state of affairs is not something they wish to challenge since once their commitment to teaching for the week is completed, they are free to engage in outside teaching, consulting and business ventures. Thus, in an environment largely devoid of tangible encouragement for research, faculty have sought out reward in the larger community, as is their right under the terms of the collective agreement.^{xiii}

Third, and most importantly is the issue of academic freedom, or rather, the lack of it in colleges. As Byron (1992:71) notes, it creates an entirely different environment in the institution which comes to define its culture and character:

Freedom in the academy is an environment. Academic freedom is an environment within which personal and institutional autonomy remain open to outside influence but protected from outside control. Finally, academic freedom is an environment dependent upon and expressive of an academic institution's charter and mission statement.

Moreover, as Daniel et al, (1993:2) argued "...academic freedom is an essential precondition for the education, research, administrative and service functions with which universities and *other institutions of higher education* are entrusted (emphasis added)."

Sir Robert Birley (1972:3-4) explored the life of Christian Thomasius, whom he regards as the founder of academic freedom.^{xiii} He wrote about the centrality of its existence as the foundation of institutions of higher learning (from Herz, 1962:111, quoted in Birley) that "unfettered freedom, yea, freedom which is the very life of the spirit and without which human reason is as good as dead." As Dennison (2006:18-20) concluded in his review of the development of the university college in British Columbia, and their future development as institutions supporting research:

They need to operate at a level of autonomy comparable to universities. It is essential to the success of university colleges that governments recognize and respond to this necessity....If faculty in university colleges are expected to be teacher-scholars, to assume professional leadership roles in their communities, and exercise a responsible position in academic governance, they are entitled to the freedom to teach and research subjects which may be viewed by some as controversial. This comment will apply particularly to those involved in "new" applied degrees where it is inevitable that the status quo will be challenged."

Essentially there is no provision for academic freedom within existing college contracts. Faculty have a tenuous hold on their positions in the absence of tenure since faculty retention is directly linked to student enrolment. If student numbers drop significantly in any year it can mean the elimination of faculty positions. Faculty can be relieved of duties and if this situation continues made redundant. Thus there is a continuing pressure to recruit enough students to ensure the vitality of programs since enrolment drops can translate into layoffs for faculty. Byron (1992:71) notes why academic freedom is important, and underscores its importance for the development of a research culture which has a direct relevance for Ontario colleges, in light of the current conditions of employment discussed above:

Why have academic freedom? To protect the disciplined inquirer from the unwelcome whims or reprisals of powerful others who may disagree with his or her views. Academic freedom provides a needed measure of employment security to professionals whose ideas might displease their academic employers.

Given the reactive nature of colleges and their close association with corporations/ practitioners as key decision makers in the college, one can immediately see the jeopardy which faculty members who wrote material critical of corporate interests or practices.

Fourth, colleges have little in the way of financial resources to commit to the issue of developing a research culture. Given their lack of support of faculty research in current labour relations, colleges have a difficult time convincing faculty to engage in research projects. This lack of investment also means that faculty, despite solid academic credentials, do not have any history of publication since they quickly learn that such activity is discouraged by any lack of incentive in the current system. One could argue that the spirit of research and academic freedom has been effectively stifled in the current Ontario college system in favour of some perception of appeasing business and community leaders as perceived by senior administration. This state of affairs is further accentuated by a lack of administrative leadership in the field of research within colleges. Academic chairs, who are so in name only, are reduced to constant attention to minor administrative matters, dealing with the construction of faculty workload forms, working through faculty grievances, attempting to spread sparse financial resources even further each year, and recruitment efforts. They spend enormous amounts of time ensuring that programs are run in a manner that provides for extremely minimal waste, since again, under enrolment can lead to faculty layoffs, while over enrolment will require the hiring of part-time instructors and produce even more pressure on over-extended budgets. While top administrators may possess terminal degrees in their respective fields, college administrations are still largely populated by individuals with either considerable practical experience or long term college experience. For these administrators, the day-to-day pressures of managing the institution and their own lack of interest, and the college's institutionalized undervaluing of research have meant that the cultivation of a research culture has simply not occurred.

Fifth, some measure of hope for the creation of college research cultures seems to have emerged lately in the development of various administrative positions which seem to imply that research will soon emerge from the multiple missions of contemporary Ontario colleges. Whether encourage by Research Directors, Deans of Research, or Research Officers, there might appear to be an explosion of research looming in the near future. However, it would be incorrect to assume that a faculty centered research culture will be created. College research strategies, in my experience as an Academic Chair for three years, and as a local representative of OCASA, the provincial organization representing college administrators, have generally clustered around the acquisition of research funds to explore institutionally- related issues such as operational efficiency or student management. This is applied research in a narrow sense that satisfies a desire to solicit research funds from agencies such as *The Trillium Fund* and private sources. Research funding bodies traditionally used by universities have been identified far less frequently as potential sources of funding.^{xiv} This form of research also conforms to the reactive nature of colleges which do not want to be seen by businesses to be engaging in critical scholarship, which might, for example, explore issues which could have the potential to upset community "partners" or business organizations with ties to the college.^{xv}

As long as research is restricted by college fears concerning the imagined ramifications of unsettling partners there is little hope that an academic research culture will emerge. It is also clear that research has been conceived as an "add-on" to the multiple missions (Fleming, 2007) that colleges have experimented with during the past decade in their effort to remain attractive to students, and to find new sources of revenue in an era of shrinking post secondary budgets in Ontario. But finally, it is clear that there are three great impediments to the development of a research culture in colleges which reside in the denial of academic freedom to faculty members, and the concurrent development of an academic system of tenure, merit and progression through the ranks which would have the benefit of raising the profile of colleges with potential students and allowing faculty to use their full range of skills in the pursuit of knowledge. This is truly where spin-offs with huge potential for the college will emerge, not through college attempts to control research efforts from above, in a carefully managed and sterile vision of research that has to be non-offensive. It reduces such work to research for its own

sake on many levels. Thus it is the development of a new vision of college governance which I argue is completely essential to develop a research culture and maintain the relevancy of community colleges.

As long as colleges hold fast to a system which embraces an antagonistic system pitting administration against faculty, with administration retaining the right to order the working lives of faculty, the current environment of malaise and mistrust which dominates many colleges will continue. I would argue that this is a state of affairs which does not release the potential of the highly educated faculty (and administrators) who have been recruited to colleges since the millennium. As colleges have entered increasingly into partnerships with universities through the medium of transfer agreements, students are increasingly able to move between institutions, and that movement while occurring predominantly from college to university, also is beginning to occur in the opposite direction in many programs. If colleges are to answer their critics and move beyond their reputation as an institution which "...fails to deliver the educational and occupational opportunity it promises." (Dougherty, 1994) and as merely reproducing "social inequality" (Pincus in Dougherty) then the creation of an environment of academic freedom supporting a strong research culture would do much to achieve this goal. Given the increasing number of highly credentialed faculty who are entering college employment it would be criminal to continue a system which cannot accommodate the research skills that faculty bring to colleges. What is needed is a new model of governance which creates academic structures appropriate to the support and nurturing of research and the growth of faculty as researchers. This will require, in my opinion, a paradigm shift in governance which will place faculty as equal stakeholders and decision makers in the process of change. While it will be difficult for colleges to jettison the governance structure and processes which have ruled them for some four decades it is essential if they are to maintain their relevance in the future. As vocational skills become more complex in a technologically driven world, and as students demand more of institutions, simply operating as though a top down management system will suffice to lead innovative practice necessary for the survival of colleges is a foolhardy course to take. As Martorana and Kuhns (1975:105-6) argue, "...the momentum of the institution will keep it going; ...a major reform which passes successfully through the several developmental stages of maturation is by its very nature incorporated into the day-to-day life of the entire institution." However, they also caution, "for this same reason, such changes are the most difficult to achieve; they require that faculty, students and administrators give up earlier procedures and ways of behaving in order to adapt to the new."

Universities, Research and Institutional Change

The modern curriculum is seeing a dominant movement from the left-hand quarter to the bottom right-hand quarter; from curricula driven by discipline-specific concerns to curricula influenced increasingly by an interest in promoting transferable skills with a value in the labour market... The university is an institution in a dynamic relationship with society and its functions change over time as that relationship changes. (Barnett, 1996:67).

Small universities are better equipped than their college counterparts to effect the change from a teaching dominated regime to a comprehensive status which balances research with teaching. As institutions which embrace academic freedom, tenure, merit and promotion universities have already established some of the foundation required for the successful transition to a new vision of purpose. They also have an interest in developing significantly more productive research cultures since they have a stake in reinforcing their unique status from colleges as institutions which are highly active in the research sphere. They are also aware of the effects of globalization on their relevance and health. As Natale, Libertella and Hayward (2000: 176) point out:

In the immediate future, universities will need to respond to increased competition from new education providers and virtual universities. Therefore, the universities of the future must balance academic tradition with changing expectations on the part of all their stakeholders...”

In an era of declining funding and the movement towards much more “personalized learning opportunities”(Natale, Libertella and Hayward, 2000:192) increasing educational costs, and demands for graduate training, small universities also recognize that local students want to pursue graduate opportunities in their own community to make the costs affordable. Research underscores this development, provides opportunities for students to study locally and contribute to their local communities during and after graduation.

But there are a number of challenges which small universities face in this process which are worth consideration. Small teaching centered institutions do not possess the financial resources of first tier universities. This places serious restrictions on plans to embark upon a process of renewal which will result in a vibrant research culture. One would also predict that they will reflect the “80/20” rule proposed by Ito and Brotheridge following Erkut (2007:1), that is, “...there exists a system of stars who produce a disproportionate volume of research such that most research tends to be undertaken by a small percentage of the academy.” Thus serious consideration has to be given as to how to overcome this relative vacuum in faculty research output if there is to be a significant improvement in research production in small universities.

First, research and travel funds emanating from the university are necessary to support the initial and ongoing goal of creating the conditions which make success in research possible. Small universities can only provide very limited, and outdated levels of financial support for travel and professional development for faculty. Travel funds have generally stagnated at under \$1,000 for several decades which makes attendance at international conferences a venture that is largely self-funded.^{xvi} Small universities also have competitive grants for international travel offered twice through the year. However, the number of grants offered are limited and are extremely small in number.^{xvii} Unless this fundamental barrier to the dissemination of knowledge is eliminated, faculty will become disenchanted with calls for a research culture that do not have meaning since they seem to involve faculty effort and expense with little in the way of required financial support from the institution. Given the variable nature of the research enterprise some faculty will move on to travel funding for presentations emerging out of research grants, while the nature of some research will not garner consistent travel funding from external sources. But, it is at the initial stages of the development of a research culture that the university must invest extensively in supporting travel to present research findings to provide both an internationally recognized research profile for faculty and the university, as well as to solidify the reputation of the university as a centre for excellence. If faculty from small universities are consistently absent from international forums, institutional claims that it supports research will quickly be seen to be of little substance. These issues will also be important for colleges to act upon in their quest to develop a sustainable research culture.

Second, in common with colleges there is a key problem in the way in which small teaching universities have approached the issue of comprehensive status. Administrators appear to be reading off the script of Clark Kerr’s (1982:179) important book, *The Uses of the University* in trying to force change. He took the position that, “Most successful new policies in higher education have come from the top.” In line with this assertion, plans proceed with the hiring of presidents and other senior administrators who have had a record of success in other universities with the promotion of research, or in apparently creating an environment which has increased the number of faculty research grants.

However, these individuals, despite obvious talents and abilities, are naturally recruited from research centered universities who have a long established culture of involvement in grant seeking and research. They face considerable challenges in generating a greatly expanded research culture.

Additionally, as I argued above, they have also had the financial resources to support and encourage a strong research culture. The question is whether a research culture can be “imported” from another or several universities? Roger Benjamin’s (2007:70-72) position has a relevance to the potential pitfalls of this development. In arguing for the revival of governance in research universities, he makes, I believe, a strong case for the absolute necessity of involving faculty in the movement from teaching to comprehensive status in small universities. He suggests that universities produce “public goods” which in order to be produced require “many participants and much sharing in production and consumption to produce goods of high quality.” I take part of his argument to be a position that faculty must be at the centre of transformation. The increasing diversification of universities over the past forty years has created, for Benjamin (2007:71) a fractured faculty disengaged from governance of the institution, and part of the task is to construct “...a common language they might use to reengage at the institutional level.” Part of this discussion will naturally cause reflection by faculty and administrators on the costs and benefits of embarking upon a particular path. Thus there is a need in creating new comprehensive institutions to move towards a model of what Benjamin terms “shared governance” (2007:71) He persuasively argues that what is required, in the case of research universities, and I would argue, small teaching universities, is the revival of “...faculty interest in undergraduate education...raised from the departmental to the institutional level.”

Third, by virtue of the workload carried by faculty at small teaching universities a profound change in the role of research in terms of merit, tenure and promotion must be viewed with unease. Institutional change must create the conditions in which increased expectations with regard to research production are not viewed as merely another addition to an already overly heavy workload. Given the heavy involvement of faculty in teaching duties, the creation of a research culture, to be successful, must be accompanied by a reduction in teaching load in line with research universities. Ito and Brotheridge (2007:7) in reviewing the relationship between time and scholarly production are clear that available time to work on research results in significantly higher research production. Fairweather’s (2002) (cited in Ito and Brotheridge, 2007:7) research strongly underscores this assertion:

Fairweather (2002) found that the combination of the excellent teacher and the excellent researcher was relatively rare. In particular, time-consuming teaching methods, such as those that require extensive collaboration with colleagues, higher student contact hours, and heavy teaching loads inhibited research output.

Perhaps more importantly productive scholars are able through removal from other teaching and service duties to maintain a work-life balance and develop a “strategic focus”^{xviii} which Ito and Brotheridge (2007:7-17) cite as a characteristic of productive scholars. Current course loads and ancillary duties at small universities make the development of a research program functionally impossible for individuals who are not tethered to their computers, and willing to sacrifice substantial portions of their life outside work to their careers. One note of caution which emerges from Ito and Brotheridge’s (2007:7) work is that the time freed from other duties must be invested in research activities for productivity to rise.^{xix}

Conclusion: A Research Culture or Not?

In this article I have addressed the issue of Ontario colleges and small teaching universities attempts to develop research cultures and some of the major problems associated with what amounts to additions to the duties expected of faculty. The question is whether either or both forms of institution are wise to proceed down this path? It is apparent that there are substantial rewards, both financial and in terms of status for institutions which can develop a sustainable research culture. Lowe (2008), Canada's leading scholar of work, has been clear in suggesting that retention of workers; (faculty) will be a primary concern of the workplace of the future. The long overdue repeal of a standardized retirement age in Ontario was a signal concerning the difficulties of replacing our aging workforce. As competition for faculty increases in all sectors, it will be centrally important for colleges and universities to offer an environment in which faculty are free to work in an environment of academic freedom as full partners in the decision-making process to ensure the success of research ventures.

The rewards for institutions and faculty in developing an academic research culture are self-evident, and an essential formula for survival in an era of shrinking budgets and the globalization of education. To do nothing is not an option, but to pursue any option without a vision of the centrality of faculty, academic freedom, and the diversion of funds to the research endeavour will be a recipe for disaster. As Gabor argued (cited in Brennan et al., 1999:197) "...the future cannot be predicted, but *futures can be invented.*"

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Endnotes:

ⁱ The standard workload form establishes the distinct duties of the college professor according to formulas concerning the number of teaching and contact hours with students and for administrative meetings. However, in a unionized environment it also means that professional duties which form part of a university professor's work can, and is, refused if it does not appear on the SWF, since the instructor is not financially compensated.

ⁱⁱ I do not mean to imply that there are not research-centered universities in small cities and towns, e.g. Queen's, The University of Western Ontario, and The University of Waterloo but these are the exception rather than the rule.

ⁱⁱⁱ I do not mean to imply that students cannot speak to the course professor or email them but rather than with graduate student tutorial leaders assigned to small tutorials communication is typically filtered through the tutorial assistant. In teaching a large introductory class at a major research university in Ontario, I was assigned a tutorial leader for roughly

every fifty students. Aside from short discussions with a small number of students after class, all communication was filtered through tutorial leaders.

^{iv} Course reductions can occur when a faculty member becomes involved in an administrative position. In some collective agreements course reductions occur when a faculty member reaches a specific number of students (e.g., 350 plus over five half courses) or for a limited number of faculty when they have a book contract or are attempting to complete a major research project.

^v This is a natural consequence of the function of the university within small communities not only as an institution of higher education, but as a resource for expertise. The financial partnership of small universities with the community in terms of donations of lands or buildings also reinforces these ties and the natural reciprocity of the institution with the community and its members.

^{vi} Wilfrid Laurier University, for example, has signaled its intention through notices to the faculty that it intends to shift its focus in this direction. This has also been accompanied by the hiring of a new president who supports this development, a vice-president of research, and rising standards for tenure and promotion which, in my opinion, represent signs of a measured progress toward this end.

^{vii} “Name” recognition associated with particular faculty whose research interests appeal to students, and important studies which capture the imagination of students and donors can generate both student numbers and financial support for the institution.

^{viii} College collective agreements typically exclude faculty from ownership of any intellectual property created “on college time” which can include using a college computer to write a book or using college facilities to invent a process or product.

^{ix} See Faculty Salary comparisons at Ontario universities at www.yorku.ca.

^x Obviously in some fields the Master’s degree does not have relevance, for eg. those teaching in automotive repair, apprentice programs, underwater skills, pilot programs, and beauticians, for eg.

^{xi} Students might alternatively seek experience in various security related professions to gain the necessary skills, experience and judgement required for police work.

^{xii} Refer to the discussion of the SWF in endnote 1 which establishes the clear parameters of the work obligation owed to the college by faculty.

^{xiii} In 1690, Thomasius criticized a work by the Court preacher in Denmark. Punishment was demanded by the Danish government. He fled the country of Prussia where through his efforts the Academy of Halle was raised to the status of a university. He became its first Professor of Jurisprudence.

^{xiv} Given the vocational mandate of colleges and the lack of tangible rewards for research accomplishment, research is thus focused on institutionally lead efforts. As a consequence of the lack of institutional support for research, faculty often lack significant publication or grants records. Thus colleges can face an almost insurmountable barrier to conducting research unless support for academic freedom, and recognition of the value of research emerges in collective agreements.

^{xv} Given the make up of college boards which consist of individuals with strong business backgrounds “critical” scholarship will be viewed with suspicion. I would argue that it is not reasonable to assume that college boards will be supportive of research which is critical of businesses, or organizations which are in partnership or provide financial or other forms of support to colleges.

^{xvi} When one considers the cost of airfares to destinations outside of North America, ground fares, accommodation, food and conference fees in Europe, academics typically will need to invest \$2,000-\$4,000 of their own income in order to present a paper at a learned conference. Typical conference fees in Britain, for example, range from 250 pounds sterling to 450 pounds sterling. The author has served as a faculty member at two Ontario universities from 1988-2000, and from 2003-2008. Travel funds have risen minimally during this period. There are, of course, variations in the travel funds available specific to universities which may exceed this amount.

^{xvii} Typically they offer \$1500 which still does not cover the costs associated with international travel, even when combined with the faculty travel allowance. So conference attendance always carries with it a financial burden for faculty. The number of grants available on an annual basis generally constitutes an extremely small percentage of faculty, meaning that grants are available to less than 1% of the faculty. Large universities can offer more substantial recurring travel funds to faculty (\$3,000 and more per annum) plus substantially more competitive travel grants. Chairs and Deans in these institutions will also have more disposable funds which can be used to support conference attendance and other ancillary activities.

^{xviii} The strategic focus has scholars focus on research related activities including seeking grants, writing and collaborating with colleagues, and attending conferences to stimulate the exchange of ideas. It is also an important factor in “managing ideas” (Ito and Brotheridge, 2007:17) which are not possible when faculty are tired from carrying out a multitude of teaching and service duties.

^{xix} Some universities have developed teaching streams for faculty wherein they are assigned higher course loads while active researchers receive reduced course loads.