**Blood from a Stone:
Institutional Barriers to Fostering Academic Freedom and
Research in Ontario's Community Colleges**

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Abstract

Recently Ontario's community colleges have embraced the development of academic research as a means of extending partnership opportunities with universities, business and the community as well as in the hope of generating revenues from intellectual property rights. The original mandate of community colleges as vocational institutions has undergone a extensive period of challenge, change and multi-directional mission development. The ability of colleges to succeed as institutions which offer programs from pre to post college level, and to engage in academic research has been challenged by critics and researchers as an untenable approach doomed to failure.

This paper explores the institutional barriers which exist in Ontario's community colleges which have and will continue to prevent the development of a vibrant academic community with the ability to contribute to research and forge research partnerships with universities. The paper examines significant barriers which include faculty workload, limitations of the collective agreement, the lack of academic freedom, issues involving ownership of intellectual property rights, union administrative relations, and the anti-intellectual climate which, it is argued, pervades college environments.

Finally, suggestions are offered for the future development of colleges as sites of academic research excellence. It is clear that the academic credentials of faculty that have and are entering community colleges are increasingly reflective of post graduate credentials. It is argued that if colleges fail to embark upon a course of radical institutional change that the existence of colleges may be subject to political challenge. The question which remains is if change can be effected internally given the barriers to positive change which exist, and how restructuring in the issue areas raised in the paper can be achieved.

Introduction: What's in a Name?

In Ontario, the political will to transform community colleges into multi-purpose post secondary institutions accelerated rapidly during the eight years of the conservative Harris and Eves governments (1995-2003). Retooling Ontario's community colleges was largely driven by decreasing revenue streams flowing into institutions in a "lean economy," which stressed entrepreneurial programs aimed at shifting part of the funding burden of colleges into the private sectors. In a series of "progressive" measures which mirrored corporate agendas, colleges were commanded to begin a process of reconfiguration which assumed a number of forms. First, colleges were encouraged to adopt new names that reflected an increasing focus on technology or specific mandates that were argued to have the effect of differentiating the mission of specific institutions

for student, the public and industry. This form of corporate branding also reflected the increasing competition offered by private colleges, both those that had existed and were entering the market under new legislative mandate. The reactive nature of colleges resulted in what Dougherty (1994) astutely termed "the contradictory college," which does not assume the character of an educational institution, and in which there is a sense of contradictory and ever changing futures. While adaptation is not argued to be a negative feature of colleges, certainly it appears that in Ontario changing missions are not largely embraced by faculty who view them as imposed rather than negotiated.

Educational entrepreneurship became the mantra of community colleges whose budget shortfalls were glossed over by the government and transformed into "opportunities" for entrepreneurial relationships with community partners (Grubb et al, 1997). Under pressure to "globalize" (Levin, 2001) for the future, Sheridan College, as an example, transformed itself into Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Several other colleges followed suit in desperate attempts to convince parents, students and potential community (read as typically corporate) partners that something new and wonderful was afoot. This debate of 2002-2003 might have been thought of as a defining moment in the evolution of college missions; however, previous research has pointed to the entrepreneurial nature of colleges and their adoption of new missions to reflect the political focus of changing governments. (Bailey and Averianova, 1998; Bogart, 1994). Colleges underwent lengthy and difficult internal evaluations of their purpose, functions and overall missions. Seneca College, for example, as Ontario's largest community college, embraced a top-down vision of its future as a "national college" somehow servicing students across Canada and in relationships with university partners, a vision which has gone largely unfulfilled. The opening of the Ontario college market to a broader range of international and private college programs in 2002/3 was perceived as a major threat to the student base of colleges. Perhaps anticipating competition from internationally based internet colleges whose programs can be accessed from Inuvik to Gander, colleges scrambled to present themselves as cutting-edge, high tech institutions. Certainly a stroll to their "learning commons" as opposed to libraries reflects a heavy investment in internet based resources and learning. But where are the books and resources which can support a research mission?

Other institutions strongly viewed partnerships with existing universities (for example, in the case of The University of Guelph/Humber College marriage) as the road to academic credibility (Outcalt, 1999). In the case of the new University of Ontario Institute of Technology, their location and strong connection with Durham College from their inception was another example of the Ontario government's desire to implement its "portals and pathways" vision of higher education; that is, a seamless system where students could easily cross from college to university and vice-versa. Rather than being trapped in what Leitzel and Clowes, (1991) termed "the diverted dream," students could move towards the dream of a university education through the college transfer route. We are aware that there is significant interest on the part of colleges, students and parents in university transfer programs. No longer are their daughters and sons going to attend college and then begin a career, now they will have the opportunity to move on to a university. Thus college is viewed as a stepping stone to university by many rather than

as a finishing institution, a theme explored over thirty years ago by college researchers (Wechsler, 1968). The question is what prompted this sudden urge to merge other than financial expediency in the wake of Ontario's decision to eliminate grade 13 from the high school curriculum and budget shortfalls that required the generation of new revenue streams to keep colleges financially viable?

Catalysts to College Transformation

The attempt to construct what I have termed the "millennial college" can best be understood in terms of both the external political forces which propelled this reluctant embracing of a new vision, and the internal politics of colleges. I contend that three key external factors provide an explanation of this process. Extending O'Connor's (1981) concept of the "fiscal crisis of the state," the conservative government's educational agenda focused in the provision of college education within the constraints of the lean economy. This approach embraced increasing tuition fees, larger class sizes, ever decreasing budgets, and a focus on "flexibility"—a theme to which I will turn my attention later in this article. The elimination of Grade 13, to which I alluded earlier, produced a "double cohort"; that is, a year in which there was an overabundance of applicants for university and college entrance. This created a "crisis" in education, a stated aim of the government across funding sectors. Many qualified applicants who would have traditionally been admitted to university would be excluded given the large number of qualified applicants, and the raising of entrance standards which followed this phenomenon. It was quickly realized, after the fact, that this would create political storm, as parents, angered students, and the community realized what had occurred. This produced the second wave; an attempt to remold colleges, virtually overnight, into legitimate academic institutions and quasi-academic institutions offering new hybrid degrees, the Bachelor of Applied Arts (B.A.A.) in order to placate students and parents while at the same time signaling a shift in the focus of colleges. These can be viewed as a form of "safety valve" (Brint and Karabel, 89:208) permitting students to access what are essentially post-diploma programs.

B.A.A. programs are not, however, an equivalent to university B.A. programs as Grubb (1996) has cogently argued. Clowes and Levine (1989: 83-84) go further in asserting that colleges, for the most part, cannot deliver on large transfer numbers so that students are left with educational outcomes that are of what they term "uncertain academic value." They are really terminal degree programs with some measure of credit portability. Finally, the third wave of this process was another attempt to address the problem of growing reductions in operating budgets through encouraging "applied research" as a conduit for public-private enterprise partnerships with the potential of generating funds for colleges. These funds would include private grants for research which it was hoped would eventually yield profits from copyrights, trademarked products and inventions. Colleges were quick to assert their claim to intellectual property rights over products, inventions, courseware and resources produced by administrators, faculty and staff anticipating a potential financial windfall. Colleges asserted that any product created while an individual was at work, or even using any college property (a desk, computer, etc.) was their property. This produced a "wet blanket" effect that immediately sent any

individuals working, for example, on books, to avoid the use of any college property or services. I shall now turn my attention to the internal structure of colleges comparing them to universities in order to provide an explanation as to why the millennial college has not, and will not succeed in its research mission in the foreseeable future. I will then offer some suggestions as to how a more positive academic base in colleges could be produced in the future.

Inside Two Solitudes

It is a truism that colleges and universities exist in very different worlds with attendant environments that are largely unfamiliar to university faculty particularly. The historical origins of the community college system in Ontario can be traced to the late 1960s. The conservative government of the time realized there was a need for skilled labour in Ontario that was not being addressed by the existing university system. For a large number of lower income Ontarians, university was not yet an option, yet there was an expressed need for what Katsinas (1994) has termed "democratizing" institutions which could provide a post secondary option for students who did not fit the university mould, and concerns from employers about the need for more skilled labour. The college system also provided a buffer for the labour market as attending students spent on average two years still in school, not seeking full time employment, which some would argue provided a buffer against potential burdens on the unemployment and welfare systems. As Clark (1960:3) argued "colleges play a functional role in adjusting (down) the expectations of students so they are consistent with the labour market." Some analysts have gone further in suggesting that the political turmoil which characterized the relations of wider society to youth in the late 1960s caused a perceived threat to the social order and thus keeping them from "idleness" (Foucault, 1995) was a relatively economic form of mass social control. Ontario's community colleges were positioned as institutions whose instructors would have "real world" experience, along with more educated instructors in the liberal arts or general education fields who would produce a reliable supply of skilled persons for employers. For Clowes and Levine, it meant that career education was the only viable core function for most colleges. They stated this view rather ominously, "One implication for community colleges is that they need to take their broadly defined occupational purpose more seriously: They are not academic institutions….even when many of their students hope to transfer to four year programs." (Clowes and Levine, 1989:83).

Soliciting high school principals and teachers as the architects of the new college system, the government assured that a labour environment characterized by unionization, restriction and conflict would emerge. Faculty and staff quickly unionized while administrators remained Crown employees, existing on individual contracts with no permanent tenure or protection against dismissal.

In contrast, universities are autonomous institutions legally constituted under the *Universities Act of Ontario*. Colleges, on the other hand, do not enjoy autonomy from the government. Colleges are governed by The Council of Regents, a politically appointed board which oversees all colleges in Ontario. Few administrators joined, or have joined

the provincial organization which represents them, the Ontario College Administrative Staff Association given their fear that they will suffer repercussions or dismissal by upper management. Thus is created a never ending tension where front line administrators are placed effectively in the middle of conflict between the faculty and administration. As "academic chairs" in name only, they are not given the tools to foster an academic environment.

Academic chairs within the college system are effectively managers. Their duties are purposefully restricted to program development, budget management, assigning workload, and student issues. The creation of an environment conducive to academic research is, at present, virtually impossible given the restraints chairs work under, and the nature of collective agreements which govern workload and working conditions. While I will not be able to discuss all of the underlying issues in detail I will consider some of the major impediments which have forestalled the creation of an academic research culture.

First, with the straightjacket of the transposed high school structure and an unswerving focus on practical employment following graduation, despite quite considerable rhetoric from administrations concerning research, an academic environment did not emerge. The Standard Workload Form (SWF) which is the basis for teaching assignments involves a complex method weighing such factors as class size, number of classroom teaching hours, preparation, teaching approach, number of courses and faculty duties. Typically (although there are variations), faculty teach a fifteen or sixteen hour schedule per week while SWFs reflect from 39 to 44 hours of assigned labour. All tasks which a chair wishes to have the faculty perform must be assigned hours on the SWF, and because of budget restraints, faculty hours must not exceed 44 otherwise overtime, and possible grievances will arise. Thus, for many faculty, their duties are fulfilled after teaching, marking, and the odd faculty meeting. As a result of arbitration, for example, administration cannot compel the holding of office hours and neither may they direct the nature of "professional development." Others will contribute far beyond the SWF but not without criticism from faculty who believe they should adhere strictly to the SWF formula.

While significant numbers of faculty have either college or first degree educational qualifications, there is no reward for either pursuing a higher degree or publishing as exist in a university environment. There is no allowance for regular sabbaticals, a long standing and important component of university collective agreements. Thus college faculty who have pursued either further degrees or publications (and there a quite a few) do so even in the knowledge there is no reward forthcoming from their employer, who at the same time is pressuring faculty to engage in research. Colleges are disingenuous when they promote the idea of a college research culture on one hand, while on the other not giving faculty or administrators pursuing further degrees time off or other considerations to assist them. As an example, administrators at Seneca College were told that in order to pursue a doctoral program at O.I.S.E. they would have to do so on their own holiday time. This demonstrated that the college did not value further credentialing of its administrators to the extent that they would invest in this effort.

For faculty, these efforts are not allowed for in the SWF formula in terms of course reductions, and rewards for contributions, nor is it required to transform teaching schedules to permit attendance at university courses. It is difficult for faculty entering the college system with graduate credentials to maintain an active research and publication program. Other than self gratification or the prospect of moving to a university academic position, there is nothing to motivate serious academics in the college system to develop a research culture. There is also a severe lack of funds available to program chairs to implement the creation of an academic culture since operating budgets beyond faculty salaries and benefits, and minimal support for teaching are almost non-existent given the government's funding formula.

The highly unionized and combative nature of administration-faculty relations dates back many decades and is strongly entrenched at many colleges (Barrett and Meaghan). In environments where disputes are routinely the subject of grievances and arbitration, there is little chance of a dramatic change in the workload formula, thus restricting avenues for academic research. Further, one of the early strong features of community colleges, small class sizes, were constantly enlarging due to budget cuts so that by 2000 class sizes were routinely 30 to 46, even in courses designed to provide remedial instruction in English. A significant percentage of students entering colleges who are successful high school graduates are unable to pass the mandatory English entrance test at college. With increasing numbers of students arriving with deficiencies in written and oral communication including ESL students who did not attend high school in Ontario, colleges have contemplated separate college preparation divisions to address this growing problem. Interestingly, the foremost complaint of employers of college students is their lack of written and oral communications skills. Declining revenue transfers from The Ministry of Colleges, University and Training placed pressure upon colleges to actively pursue international students as a significant source of revenue. This results in students who pay enormous enrolment fees and are naturally viewed as an important revenue stream. The traditional emphasis of colleges on occupationally relevant training was, and is, achieved at many colleges at the expense of general education, a euphemism for arts, humanities and liberal studies. Indeed, in many programs, students could fail a general education course or receive extremely low marks and still "pass" in their specific area of concentration.

In an environment where faculty are teaching large numbers of students, and do not view the administration as acting fairly or involving faculty in decision making (a "top down shop floor model" as several faculty put it) there is little enthusiasm for research. Faculty's lack of research expertise and publishing credentials mean that in many departments it is difficult to establish a research program with university researchers. While there have been some areas in which the practical expertise of the college faculty and the academic research experience of the university have fit together well (particularly in highly technical college programs), the above-mentioned deficits impede progress outside of the college environment. Attempting to set up a research project with York University, it soon became abundantly clear what barriers to collaboration existed. While all of the university faculty had research and refereed publications, only one of the college administrators/faculty of the ten attending the meeting could make the same

claim. I am not here criticizing the lack of research experience of college faculty in general but rather reflecting the funding priorities and attitudes of granting agencies. The colleges' attempt to address this deficiency in light of the new B.A.A. programs was to relieve *some* newly hired faculty from one course per term or roughly three hours of classroom time. Thus, these faculty members would be expected to teach for 12 to 13 hours per week, attend to other duties, mark, and conduct research, in contrast to the usual course load of university instructors of 6 to 9 hours per term (based on a 2-3 half course load).

Academic Freedom in Colleges: Forestalling the Promise of Research

The issue of academic freedom in Ontario colleges, or the lack thereof more accurately, is one that represents one of the two most significant impediments to the development of a research culture. College faculty unions have brought this issue to the table for literally decades with no success. This reflects the fundamental nature of college working environments. First, as "shop floor" academic institutions, colleges have the ability under the collective agreement to assign courses and subject areas for faculty. Second, college faculty have no guarantee of tenure to protect them from termination. In college environments cordial relations with corporations and business partners is stressed. Most programs have community advisory boards with active business appointees. This is also true of the Board of Governors of colleges. College faculty's positions are entirely dependent on enrollments. To clarify, if student numbers drop, faculty may be suspended. If the suspension continues for an extended period of time the faculty may be made redundant.

In an environment where colleges are focusing on strong partnerships with business, and wherein faculty have no tenure it is impossible to promote a meaningful and sustained research culture. The colleges' interdependency with stakeholders makes it particularly vulnerable to outside trends and opinions. While this can be a very important exchange of information and networking, it can also create, for college administrators, a tendency to embrace stakeholder priorities when it is not beneficial to the institution or the faculty. This is particularly lamentable at a time when more and more faculty entering colleges have graduate credentials and an interest in academic research. Secondly, there are a large number of existing faculty within the college system who have graduate qualifications and are active in publishing despite the restrictive structure of colleges. These efforts take place on personal time given the fixation of colleges with ownership of intellectual property. Since universities typically make no such claim on the work of their professors, there is another roadblock that makes collaboration across "the great divide" difficult. Why should the university professor in a research effort profit while the college professor does not?

But academic freedom is a far more broad ranging issue than simply acting as a catalyst to research. It extends through the depth and breadth of the professional life of academics and effects classroom teaching, selection of course materials, and teaching style.

A second major factor is the very nature of college missions and approaches to education. Without merit pay, promotion, tenure, sabbaticals, internal seed grants, and significant periods of time throughout the year for research it is difficult to envision the development of a research culture in colleges, much less a growing capacity to engage with universities in collaborative projects. There is a substantial extant literature on the evolving nature of college missions. While colleges have retained a fundamental focus on "practical" skills, and new aspirations as a "portal" on the way to university experience for students, they have also branched out, and also retreated from various new areas of interest. Corporate training, seminar facilities, conference hosting, apprenticeship programs, specialized training programs for graduates, advanced diploma programs, international programs, training and campuses in other countries, internet-based courses, on-site education and training, esl centres, summer camps, and various other programs have at times been adopted by colleges as potential revenue sources.

While this continuing reconfiguration of colleges is to be expected in times of declining government investment in the sector, it is unclear despite ongoing efforts to refine the mission of colleges whether there is a clear sense of where the future lies. Cross (1989:35) asks, "…can any college perform all of those functions with excellence — or even adequately in today's climate of scarce resources and heavy compliment of students?" Can they compete especially with for-profit private colleges which are able to offer more specialized programs, and rapid movement into the workforce? How will colleges cope with growing numbers of faculty with graduate degrees who expect to continue to be active learners, and researchers who are rewarded for their efforts? I contend that this is the most significant and far reaching issue colleges will confront in the very near future. Whether as a feeder institution for universities, institutions that can support research and innovation in the corporate world, or as an institution that can contribute to the growth of knowledge in our society, it is clear that academic freedom must become a corner stone of college culture. The recent joining of university and college faculty associations nationally is a clear sign that there is a need to refocus the agenda of colleges to embrace an academic model. This fits well also with government plans and student ambitions to move from college diplomas into university degree programs.

Emerging College Forms and the Research Enterprise

There has been much written to support the functional role of colleges in preparing students for occupations in the skilled trades and allied professions (Clowes & Levine, 1989) while questioning the ability of colleges to meet high standards in multiple programs (Cross, 1985). I have already alluded to the increasing fiscal constraints colleges are experiencing. There are fundamental tensions which are readily apparent given the foregoing discussion between the roles of colleges as academic institutions versus their role as vocational institutions. This tension is reflected, at the base level, in the rift between vocational and general education programs. This rift in colleges is reflected in a number of recurring issues; (1) a fundamental disagreement over the value of general educational subjects, (2) the ongoing fight between programs for teaching hours and teaching positions; (3) concerns regarding maintaining, and increasing teaching

hours so that full-time faculty positions in any school or department are secure, (4) the educational deficit of many existing faculty with regard to educational qualifications, (5) union attempts to remain relevant in an environment that is experiencing rapid transformation particularly in the entrance of faculty with graduate qualifications; (6) increasing pressure from professions for a minimal B.A. qualification for entry; (7) concerns over possible differentials in working conditions, teaching load, status and rewards resulting from faculty involvement in B.A.A. programs and applied research. While not exhaustive, this list gives readers some appreciation of the difficult task which lies ahead.

Constructing the New Millennial College: Prospects for Innovation and Transformation

> "…the faculty's disengagement from disciplines spawns a progressive, if silent drift away from rigor, toward negotiated anemic practice." (McGrath & Spear, 1992:142).

I begin this section, despite the critical tone of the preceding sections, with confidence that a vibrant, dynamic research culture can be established in Ontario's community colleges. I acknowledge that there are a variety of research projects currently ongoing involving college and university partners. It is not our intention nor is it within the scope of this paper to review them. I would now like to sketch a roadmap which can lead to the new millennial college, an institution which encompasses both traditional missions of vocational training with an increasing focus on transferability and a vibrant research culture. I contend that the first two of these goals is entirely dependent on investment in the third.

First, colleges must adopt a policy of academic freedom. To achieve this goal colleges must relinquish part of their corporate identity; i.e. an exclusive focus on "applied" research and over control of faculty research agendas. In universities, applied, pure and so-called "mixed" forms of research which encompass both of the former types are balanced. Corporations have a vested interest in encouraging groundbreaking research even when it may question some aspect of their business interests. False investment in simply placating corporate interests in the short term will limit the ability of colleges to respond to change, and ultimately to retain corporate partnerships.

Second, colleges must redraft intellectual property sections of their collective agreements to encourage faculty involvement in research, and to ensure their ownership of the product of their research.

Third, union agreements governing faculty workloads have to find the flexibility to take into account the changing nature of education, student's aspirations for lifelong learning options rather than terminal diplomas as well as the research aspirations of both colleges and both existing and incoming faculty. It may be that the slow progress of developing a research culture also reflects an administrative structure that is not highly adaptive to a research environment given the diverse missions that now preoccupy colleges. In some

instances, a lack of credentialing amongst administrators has translated into fears concerning their relevance in an emerging millennial college with an active research culture.

Fourth, colleges must begin to redefine research and their mandates in much broader under categories if they hope to achieve wide-reaching recognition and collaboration with their efforts. Levin (2001:5) has referred to "boundary spanning", that is the obsolescence of traditional barriers and the need for new models which permit true transferability and interlinking of education. Whether constituted as "vertical" institutions pushing and pulling students through the traditional system or "horizontal" institutions which reach out to the community with diversified educational and community-oriented services, the question has to be what are colleges capable of doing well and how can an research environment be created? Expansion across both areas can have the impact of stretching resources very thinly as colleges literally try to "crystal ball" gaze creating and jettisoning programs constantly in an attempt to find the new employment waves for students and for funding. A good example is the collapse of computer tech education which colleges invested in heavily only to discover decimated enrollment and empty classes in the wake of the collapse of high tech in 2003/4. While applied research has significant value it must not be the sole purview of college research agendas. There is a real need for colleges to embrace a new vision encompassing applied, pure and mixed research with attendant internal financial support that can lead to external funding opportunities. There is a need as Levin, (2001:37) for colleges to reflect on constructing an overarching framework for development and research that can inform change, "…better measures that will help us understand the costs and tradeoffs involved with combining or separating the varied activities and functions now being carried out by community colleges. Unless researchers and educators develop those measures, the colleges will continue to evolve into even more complex institutions that house an expanding number of more or less independent activities." As Breneman and Neilson (1980:3) so aptly put it, "by trying to do many things, the quality and effectiveness of any single activity must decrease." By trying to please all its constituencies and expand into a multitude of programs, colleges may compromise the core of their effectiveness.

Fifth, I concur with Bailey & Morest (2004) that Ontario's community colleges are not currently academic institutions. Colleges are a form of higher education that address a need for education beyond high school and for individuals seeking upgrading of specific skills. Therefore, colleges "cannot win the academic battle." (Bailey & Morest, 2004:83) and by this I interpret Bailey and Morest to mean that they cannot transform themselves without embracing radical change. Given their long history of adaptation within the limited sphere of practice-based training and education this transition will not be easy. Bailey and Morest argue, and I would agree that transfer programs from college are very limited successes to this point since they generate few actual successful transfers. Bailey, Hughes and Moore (2004:194-196) have further explored the limitations of the transferability of knowledge and skills between academic settings and particularly the challenges of moving work-based knowledge (which varies with college programs) into a more rigorous academic environment. Obviously college programs with a greater emphasis on general education will provide not only more readily transferable credits for

university transition, but also skill sets and critical analytical skills which may be weaker in programs that are heavily vocationally based. Further, universities are reluctant to increase the number of students transferring from colleges given concerns about the quality of their preparation for advanced studies. Currently, research is investigating the progress of transfer students at one Ontario university which will yield some data on this issue. For colleges, transfers are a much valued enticement for parents and students which open up the possibility of access to universities through a different route.

Sixth, colleges must consider what missions they are capable of carrying out successfully, even if this means jettisoning some existing initiatives in order to create a research culture. There is a need to invest in libraries and research materials even if this might mean a centralized facility shared by colleges to benefit faculty, students and the community. It is important to understand however that a research culture cannot be "ordered from on high", that is, dictated to faculty or simply administratively mandated. College decision making must move from an administrator-centred structure to one which embraces collective decision making with faculty. Under the previous Rae New Democrats there was a brief flirtation with this model in colleges. However, the election of the Harris Tories in 1995 brought about a top down decision-making structure emphasizing performance management, accountability, self-sufficiency, the generation of non-governmental funding sources, and returned faculty to shop floor employee status. It is little wonder that faculty are skeptical of administrative efforts in any area since so much mistrust was generated by this brief experiment in faculty input into decision-making.

Finally, college administrators must make a significant effort to support and engender an environment supportive to research encouraging professional engagement in the academic disciplines represented in colleges through colloquia, lecture series, brown bag seminars, debates, the formation of research clusters, and providing funding for initiatives.

Towards a Research Culture

The question which concerns us is how can a research culture which has academic freedom as a cornerstone be forged in Ontario's community colleges? Above I have argued for the initiation of substantive efforts on the part of Ontario's community colleges to engage faculty. There are several substantive changes which will provide the platform to support real change. First, there must be a recognition that research commitments will require substantive reductions in teaching loads for faculty undertaking research. A two-tier system which streams faculty into teaching versus research streams, or provides flexibility based upon research output would promote research. As currently constituted research in colleges, for most faculty, must be viewed as an additional duty undertaken by faculty for little course release and no possibility of career advancement or financial remuneration. I contend that a research culture predicated upon self-sacrifice will soon self destruct. This said, there is the need for a paradigm shift in the way colleges approach research productivity by faculty.

But faculty must also play a role in redefining their duties within colleges and both parties must find a way to resolve the conflicting objective of vocational versus academic programs and pursuits.

Again, while some faculty will prefer to adhere to some version of the current state of affairs, embracing a limited view of their role as classroom teachers, there are many existing, and an increasing influx of faculty with advanced qualifications whose academic imagination will blossom in an academic environment, and this will positively impact upon faculty, their students, the college and the wider community.

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