Risks and Rewards: Good Citizenship and Technologically Proficient Faculty

Scott R. Sechrist
Old Dominion University

Dorothy E. Finnegan
College of William and Mary

INTRODUCTION

One of the more often cited objectives found in university and college mission statements is the goal of promoting future good citizenship among students. Indeed, American higher education institutions have been improving society by educating its community leaders since the founding of Harvard in the early seventeenth century. Beyond the direct training of future leaders, college administrators also have recognized the societal need for volunteers to fill gaps that community resources cannot cover. Volunteers enable organizations to thrive beyond their means and their members to receive otherwise unavailable benefits.

This case study describes the role of good citizenship that is performed by two technologically proficient faculty (techno-profs) who are approaching crucial career evaluations at Suburban State University (SSU), a public institution in the mid-eastern area of the United States. It explores the conundrum that faced the SSU Dean of the College of Arts and Letters as she speculated about the outcome of the evaluation of these two faculty members as a result of the existing promotion and tenure criteria. The case also considers the impact of the incorporation of technology into the contemporary role of faculty in a situation in which necessary resources are not provided by those who mandate changes in the existing reward structures in higher education. And, finally, this case study illustrates the existing and potential impact of these mandates on the careers of two techno-profs who act as good citizens for their organizations.

CASE QUESTIONS
- To what degree is good citizenship rewarded in higher education institutions?
- How does acting as a good citizen affect the careers and opportunities of faculty?
- Why do technologically proficient faculty volunteer their efforts to others in their institutions?
- How has the diffusion of technology into academia changed the faculty role?

CASE NARRATIVE

Background

Suburban State University (SSU) is a public university that was established 105 years ago and is located on the outskirts of a moderate-sized city of 130,000 inhabitants. A Doctoral II University, SSU serves approximately 10,000 students, half of whom are residential. Five colleges comprise the University: Education, Sciences, Allied Health, Law, and Arts and Letters. The largest unit, the College of Arts and Letters, is headed by Dean Patricia Rogers. The institution maintained a modest regional reputation throughout its history and has been an attractive choice for local commuting students in addition to those wishing to live on campus.

Employee attrition, program curtailment, and spending reductions eased declining enrollments and diminished resources from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s. In 1995, SSU's President together with the new Provost, established an institutional goal of achieving national stature in the field of technology-delivered education. As part of the strategy to ensure the outcome, Provost Tom Savant directed the university to expand its offerings by reaching out to a new niche—students who were unable to attend classes on campus. In particular, Provost Savant guided a recent redefinition of the university mission statement which now includes several new goals:

> The university is committed to gaining a leadership role in both synchronous and asynchronous technology-delivered education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The university also seeks to incorporate technology into the existing curriculum as well as expanding our offerings to include new, innovative degree lines.

Fleshing out these goals during his monthly meeting with the deans of the University, Provost Savant outlined the strategy:

> The incorporation of technology into the existing curriculum provides the groundwork, the backbone upon which the future of this university lies. Technology will make a profound impact upon the mission of the university, the role of the faculty, and ultimately, the extent to which we measure our successes. We must therefore redirect our resources, both monetary and personnel alike, through policy and procedure to the immediate incorporation of technology into the classroom. Our strategic initiatives for the next three years are to: increase class sizes, increase the number and scope of our distance and asynchronous offerings, and increase the presence of technology throughout the curriculum when and where appropriate. With this as our focus, we can achieve the president's vision of a University of the 21st Century.

Each dean was charged to implement the strategy by devising their own tactics that would be applicable to their college's culture, resources, and needs. The Provost's directive to "increase the use of technology" within the College of Arts and Letters, however, was accompanied with only a modicum of resources. The Dean, Patricia Rogers, could only augment the budget enough to upgrade the hardware and software for some of the faculty as money was not available to allocate for personnel.

Related Content

Innovation on a Shoe String: High Impact Space and Technology Updates in a Low-Funding Environment
Joan Petitand Thomas Bielavitz (2013). *Cases on Higher Education Spaces: Innovation, Collaboration, and Technology (pp. 248-264).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/innovation-shoe-string/72680

Critical Factors Influencing Instructors' Acceptance and Use of Learning Management Systems
Kamla Ali Al-Busaidiand Hafedh Al-Shihi (2012). *Higher Education Institutions and Learning Management Systems: Adoption and Standardization (pp. 116-140).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/critical-factors-influencing-instructors-acceptance/56271

Invention in Two Parts: Multimodal Communication and Space Design in the Writing Center
Sohui Lee, Christine Alfanoand Russell G. Carpenter (2013). *Cases on Higher Education Spaces: Innovation, Collaboration, and Technology (pp. 41-63).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/invention-two-parts/72670

The New Chalk and Slate?: Public Online Video in Higher Education
Christopher Barnatt (2011). *Streaming Media Delivery in Higher Education: Methods and Outcomes (pp. 293-310).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/new-chalk-slate/55032

Enhancing Electronic Examinations through Advanced Multiple-Choice Questionnaires
Dimos Triantisand Errikos Ventouras (2012). *Higher Education Institutions and Learning Management Systems: Adoption and Standardization (pp. 178-198).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/enhancing-electronic-examinations-through-advanced/56274