

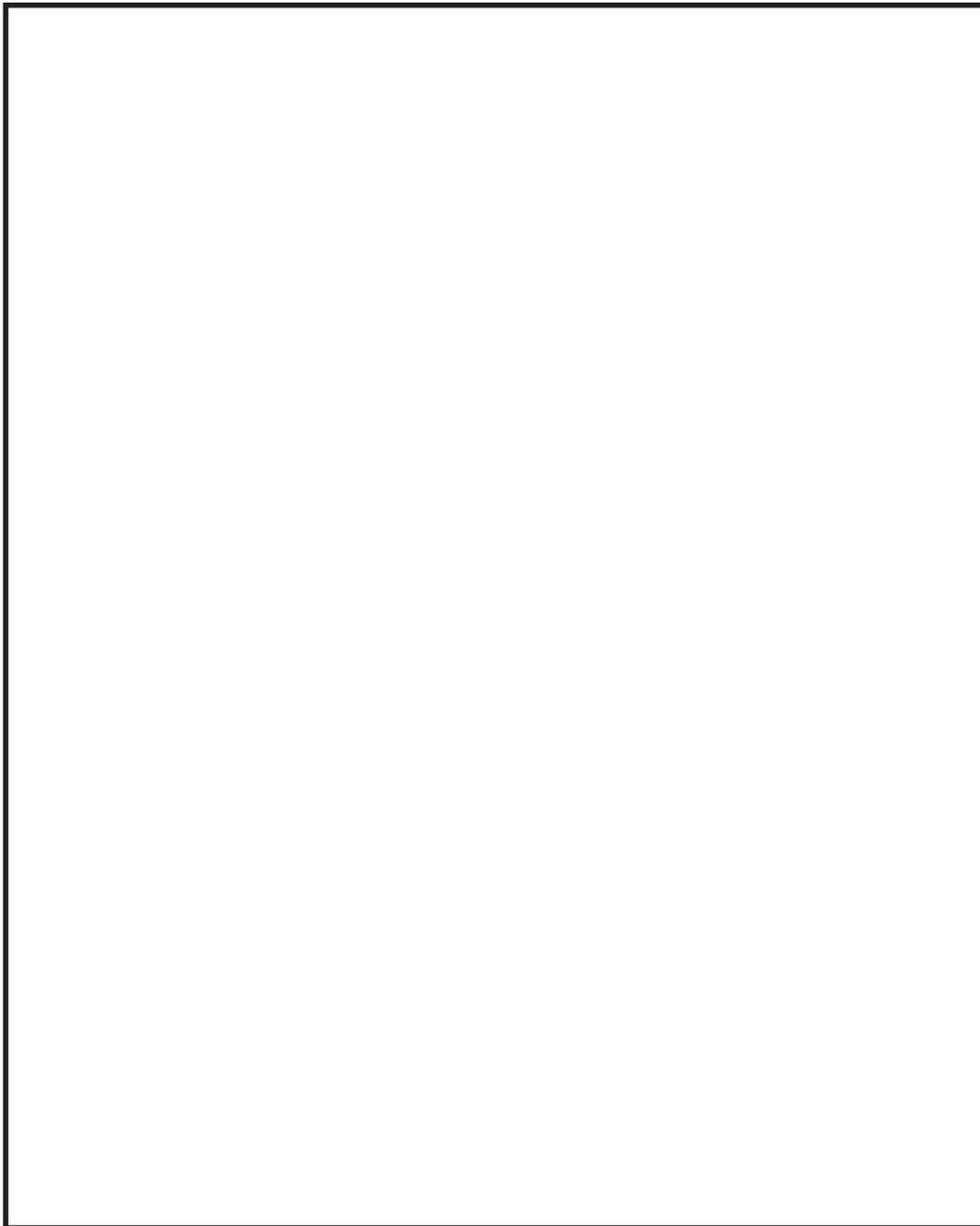
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Volume 12, No. 1 Winter 1999

# MID-WESTERN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER

• Official Publication of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association •



The University of Toledo

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### ***On the Cover***

The history of the College of Education and Allied Professions, University of Toledo, dates back to 1872 when education courses were offered for local teachers. On March 14, 1916, the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences recommended to the University Board of Directors that the Education Department be reorganized as Teachers College. A few years later the name was changed to the College of Education.

From 1920-1950, the infant college developed the continuity and stability sufficient to identify a mission and to build a constituency necessary for the sustained progress and expansion of the college. Quickly, the college assumed a major leadership role in the improvement of education in Northwest Ohio and Southwest Michigan. A large percentage of alumni became local teachers, superintendents, principals, district supervisors, and specialists in schools; other became college professors.

The 50s to 70s was an era of program growth and enhancement. Some of the major accomplishments of the faculty during this period were to undertake the first doctoral program at The University of Toledo, gain full accreditation by the National Council for the Accreditation of Colleges for Teacher Education, and initiate the honorary societies Kappa Delta Pi and Pi Lambda Theta. By this time, the college offered teacher education programs in most all teaching fields then recognized by the State of Ohio.

In 1979, to recognize the breadth and importance of all programs offered through the College of Education, it was renamed the College of Education and Allied Professions. Subsequently, the college further broadened its scope and opened new degree and program options outside teacher training whose core learnings are found in education professions.

In the last several decades the college has flourished. It has reconstructed its teacher preparation programs and revised most other programs as well as adding a variety of additional program options. The curricula has been approved and commended by the Ohio State Department of Education and has been accredited and commended under the revised standards of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

*(continued on inside back cover)*

### ***Information for Contributors to the Mid-Western Educational Researcher***

The *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* accepts research-based manuscripts that would appeal to a wide range of readers. All materials submitted for publication must conform to the language, style, and format of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 4th ed., 1994 (available from Order Department, American Psychological Association, P.O. Box 2710, Hyattsville, MD 20784).

Four copies of the manuscript should be submitted typed double-spaced (including quotations and references) on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. Only words to be italicized should be underlined. Abbreviations and acronyms should be spelled out when first mentioned. Pages should be numbered consecutively, beginning with the page after the title page. Manuscripts should be less than 20 pages long. An abstract of less than 100 words should accompany the manuscript.

The manuscript will receive blind review from at least two professionals with expertise in the area of the manuscript. The author's name, affiliation, mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address (if available), should appear on the title page only. Efforts will be made to keep the review process to less than four months. The editors reserve the right to make minor changes in order to produce a concise and clear article.

The authors will be consulted if any major changes are necessary.

Manuscripts should be sent with a cover letter to:

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1680 University Drive, Ohio State University at Mansfield, Mansfield, OH 44906

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*Kick-off Address*

***Policy Research in Higher Education:  
Data, Decisions, Dilemmas, and Disconnect***

Edward R. Hines  
Illinois State University

***Abstract***

*This address dichotomized academic research and policymaking as two separate, distinct, and often conflicting worlds or cultures. Higher education as a field of study was used as a case example illustrating academic research, and state legislative politics illustrated the world of policymaking. Suggestions were made for finding ways of communicating between the two cultures, and specific recommendations were included.*

The topic of this address is the *disconnect* between research and policy. Each of the four words in the subtitle of this address has particular relevance for policy researchers. Decisions made by policymakers are based on data, often furnished by researchers. Policymakers are oriented to decision making, and as will be discussed in this Address, policymakers have a fundamental orientation to action, to making decisions. Policymakers often deal with dilemmas that are decision situations involving a choice among competing alternatives. It is up to policymakers to sort out the issues and the complexities and hopefully to make the best decision. Finally, and the topic of this Address, why are the worlds of educational research, and policymaking, so far apart, and what, if anything, should be done about it?

The issue of a disconnect between research and policy, while verified in my 30 years of experience as a policy researcher in higher education—was put to the empirical test as I did the library work in preparing this speech. I quickly saw that the research B policy dichotomy has been an issue of continued interest in the research community, and while it exists, less so in the policy arena.

A National Higher Education Data Base

As a way of beginning, I thought you might be interested in my involvement in policy research. I have always been interested in the intersect between politics and higher education. I came to Illinois 20 years ago from New York where I taught at SUNY-Albany and served on the Governor's Commission on the Future of Higher Education. At Illinois State, I worked with a researcher and later became Editor of a report and a national data base of interstate higher education finance data. This data base tracks legislative financial support to all public colleges and universities in the U.S., and is used by governors, legislators, and policy researchers throughout the nation. I have been Editor of the operation for 15 years. In 1995, we went from a hard-cover monthly research report to a World Wide Web Home Page where the higher education data from the 50 states are located. The Web Address of this data base is da, da, da.

This data base originated at the University of Michigan in 1958. Since that time, we have state reports from the 50 legislatures for each of 40 years. Assuming the average number of data points, or cells, is 30 per state, that is a grand total of 60,000 data points or cells. That is a lot of data!

Let me share with you some observations about legislative support of higher education, then I want to continue with the disconnect between research and policy. My 1<sup>st</sup> observation is that “so goes the economy, so goes higher education.” This observation comes from two decades of working with these data. I have found an ample reservoir of legislative good will for higher education, despite criticism about a lack of accountability in higher education, productivity that is problematic, and lack of tangible outcomes in many instances. In my 15 years working with these data, there have been only three years when higher education really suffered from lack of legislative support. The clear reason for this was struggling state economies. The most recent year this occurred was in 1992 when the aggregate state support of higher education in the nation was *less* than it had been the previous year. In 1992, states were reeling from the effects of a national recession and the continued attempts by the federal government to shift policy initiatives to the states, witness health care and welfare reform. When states have adequate resources, measured by the amount of revenue flow from taxes into the state treasury, then higher education is in the position to benefit.

The second most important variable for higher education is not revenue capacity, but, rather, a variable termed “lawmaker willingness.” This means the extent to which legislators and the governor are willing to spend money for higher education. In order to answer this question for higher education, you need an understanding of the structure of state government budgets. Briefly, 2/3 of all state budgets are devoted to the following areas of expenditure, in order of priority going from largest to smallest. First, there are public schools that easily are the largest item in state budgets. The second largest item *used to be* higher education, but since 1994 it is health care, followed by higher education. In last place are corrections and aid to families with depen-

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dent children (welfare). Together, these five areas capture approximately 2/3 of all state budgets.

In the nineties, however, some interesting things have been happening to state budgets. Court decisions, legislative mandates, and other sources of pressure have resulted in four of the five major areas of state government spending being mandated, and, since the most recent wave of public school reform, this now includes K-12 schools. Of the five major areas of spending, only higher education is discretionary. There are no court decisions or legislative mandates requiring legislatures to support higher education at any level of expenditure. Whether or not legislatures support higher education depends completely on their discretion.

People in higher education generally do not realize these aspects of legislative reality. So, therefore, when a university president or college dean goes to a legislative budget hearing and essentially says "You legislators must realize that we need this money, we've always gotten it before from you, and we need it even more this year." This argument is not at all effective. What would be more effective is a higher education representative who goes into the legislature and says "Legislators, we need a million dollars to bring our science laboratories up to standard and if we can do this, we can graduate 15% more science students who are in demand for jobs at corporations x, y, and z." In other words, higher education needs to make its case in legislatures based on mutual benefit, not merely its own self-interest.

This line of argument leads to my 3d and final point regarding trends in state higher education support. Higher education has entered a period when its future will depend on its ability to spend resources wisely, to reallocate resources to areas of strength and demand, and away from areas of weakness and lack of demand. Terms such as strength and weakness are from strategic planning. They don't have to be judgmental. On the contrary, they can be measured. They include student demand, measured by manpower forecasts, need, and student enrollment. Another major variable is cost, and costs can be calculated using personnel salaries, fringe benefits, administrative overhead, and indirect costs such as building maintenance, lighting, heating, and air conditioning. Two other variables found to be important in strategic planning are centrality and quality. Program centrality means the relationship between the program and the mission of the institution, so a high-cost science or professional program in an institution having no mission to support that kind of program is questionable. Quality, despite its inherently "soft" nature, can be measured by such attributes as contribution to the community, money generated by research contracts and grants, and awards won by faculty and students.

The point of this is the need for higher education, now, to show its worth, to prove its merit and value to its supporters which include state legislators and governors.

### The Research B Policy Disconnect

There are scores of examples, in everyday legislative life, illustrating the gap between researchers and policymakers.

While it was evident that this disconnect caused problems for specific individuals, I was not sure about the generalizability of the problem. Was it a recognized issue in the higher education research community? In the political arena? What were the consequences of this disconnect, for academic researchers and for policymakers?

A former Presidential Address delivered at the American Educational Research Association shed light on the issue, along with three Presidential Addresses of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. The 1988 AERA Presidential Address by Richard Shavelson was entitled "Contributions of Educational Research to Policy and Practice: Constructing, Challenging, Changing Cognition." One year later, Clif Conrad's ASHE Presidential Address was entitled "Meditations on the Ideology of Inquiry in Higher Education: Exposition, Critique, and Conjecture." Six years more recent, in 1995, Michael Nettles' ASHE Address was entitled "The Emerging National Policy Agenda on Higher Education Assessment: A Wake-Up Call." And, in 1996 Pat Terenzini spoke on "Rediscovering Roots: Public Policy and Higher Education Research."

What do these four presidential addresses, and other literature, tell us about the disconnect, or gap, between the worlds of educational research and policy? As important, what, if anything should we do about it?

The AERA Address by Shavelson focused on what he termed the "mind frames" of educational researchers, policymakers, and practitioners and on the apparent fact that educational research had not fulfilled its role in school improvement (Shavelson, 1988, p. 4). Shavelson explained that sometimes expectations for research are unrealistic. Furthermore, such expectations can be unreasonable when there is a belief that policymakers will use research results to ensure that benefits, such as "good educational outcomes," will accrue to everyone equally and uniformly. Such expectations promise too much. Shavelson offered that more important benefits of educational research were in challenging and changing how policymakers and practitioners think about problems and potential solutions.

In his 1989 ASHE Presidential Address, Conrad criticized the field of higher education for viewing itself more as a discipline than a broad, applied field of study. As such, inquiry in higher education had become oriented to scholarly peers, more than to practitioners and policymakers. A stakeholder-centered model of inquiry, according to Conrad, would reexamine its research agendas and modes of disseminating knowledge. Developing generalized knowledge, rather than narrow, specialized knowledge should be encouraged, and a broader range of research methodologies should be encouraged that go beyond "a traditional positivist paradigm" (Conrad, 1989, p. 209). Acquiring or producing information through extensive descriptive studies tends to be an exercise only in fact gathering.

Conrad recommended that the following types of inquiry be utilized more by higher education:

- Problem-centered inquiry utilizing interdisciplinary research, such as public policy studies.
- Integrative inquiry using such tools as secondary analysis and meta-analysis
- Interpretive inquiry which attempts to generalize using tools such as qualitative analysis
- Future-centered inquiry where normative scholarship using, for example, philosophical approaches, speculates and idealizes about future scenarios (Conrad, 1989, pp. 206-8).

Two other ASHE Presidential Addresses dealt with the world of policy making. Nettles encouraged higher education leaders to become involved in the public policy process regarding developing new academic standards and assessment of educational progress (1995). Terenzini's ASHE Address was particularly useful because he chastised higher education for becoming preoccupied with "a singular conception of research," thinking of itself as a social science discipline rather than a multidisciplinary, applied field (Terenzini, 1996, p. 7). He claimed that there had developed a "gulf" between higher education research and the policy communities. Higher education researchers increasingly communicate only with themselves; we are publishing material designed more for promotion and tenure, rather than helping policymakers solve real-world problems of practice. Terenzini advocated that the higher education research community should encourage policy-relevant research, open two-way lines of communication between researchers and policymakers, and write for journals of practice and policy, not merely journals emphasizing theory and research complexity.

An even more aggressive posture regarding higher education research was taken by Layzell, who called it "stale, irrelevant, and of little use to policy makers" (Layzell, 1990, p. B1). He claimed that this research focuses excessively on methodology, and the language of research is too technical, esoteric, and filled with jargon. As a result, higher education research tends not to be utilized by policymakers, even in decision making on issues where they need information and advice. Rather than go to researchers, policymakers turn to neighboring states or peer states for advice on what works and what does not.

In an frequently-cited article pertaining to research about higher education, George Keller termed it "unintelligible triviality" (Keller, 1985, p. 7). While he admitted that higher education does not suffer from too little information, the problem is that narrowly-conceived statistics are plentiful, but scholarship and thoughtful commentary are practically non-existent. More recently, Keller asked if higher education research needed revision, and he suggested that there were two prevailing problems with this research (Keller, 1998). First, Keller said that higher education research was dominated by positivist, quantitative approaches. Second, higher education research has neglected policy and planning and, thus, has become less useful to the decision makers who, ironically, have the need for policy research.

## Research and Policy: Are the Differences Fundamental?

Next we examine the question of whether there are fundamental differences between higher education research and policymakers' needs.

We turn to an article by a Michigan state legislator who had been a professor at Michigan State University. He zeroed in on language differences between academicians and politicians. He cited an example of a small college asking for legislative support for economic development funds: a request for \$150,000 to "hire two new faculty members and one secretary to work with the local business community." A major university, on the other hand, requested \$1.5 million to "improve the interface between basic research and private sector high technology initiatives through enhanced technology transfer" (Sederburg, 1989, p. 32). Tongue in cheek, Sederburg hypothesized that the language gap between academia and the legislature increases with the size of the university and the number of deans involved in making budget requests. Higher education faculty, noted Sederburg, value rational argument and the power of ideas. Legislators deal with three dimensions of reality: program substance, comparisons with competing institutions, and politics.

Next, it is noted that some scholars, such as Leslie and Beckham, suggest that more than a research-practice gap, there is really a "dualism between research and practice" (Leslie and Beckham, 1986, p. 126). Further, they said that we need to discover the range of useful knowledge involved in the practical problems of decision making and policy. By uncovering this knowledge, we will identify more precisely the nature of the problems of practice. In so doing, we can examine the extent to which present research methodologies and study designs are a "match" for solving real problems.

In a study of the criteria used by policymakers' in making decisions, the Harvard researcher, Carol Weiss, identified the decision criteria of research quality, action orientation, conformity to user expectations, challenge to the status quo, and practical relevancy (Weiss and Bucuvalas, 1977). Research quality was the most important criterion, and consisted of a cluster of items, such as technical quality, statistical sophistication, objectivity, quantitative data, internal consistency, data support for the recommendations, the comprehensiveness of explanatory variables, generalizability, validity, and addition to knowledge. She also devised what were called truth tests and utility tests. When applying a truth test, policymakers ask "Is the research trustworthy? Can I rely on it? Will it hold up under attack?" The utility test, on the other hand, looks at whether or not the study provides explicit and practical directions on issues that policymakers can take action on, or what could be called an "action orientation."

We come to the question of the difference between researchers' and policymakers' worlds. Shavelson analyzed it as "mind frames" that are shaped by work cultures. He

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cautioned that "our mind frame does not easily translate into the policymaker's." Researchers' mind frames are cautious, careful, somewhat narrow, risk averse, comfortable in working alone, and research results are cumulative or multiplicative. Policymakers, on the other hand, are goal driven, more risk taking, and action oriented.

Wirt and Mitchell, writing about the political uses of social research, argued that policy has origins in matters of interest, not truth. Policymakers are called to action, more than to knowledge and understanding. Further, perhaps the greatest single difference between social scientists and policymakers is "their contrasting perspectives of time" (Wirt and Mitchell, 1982, p. 5). Social scientists have comparatively long timelines, they are skeptical, and avoid rushing to judgment. Policymakers deal with diverse, intense, and difficult pressures, but above everything else they must take decisive action.

More than simply a difference in perspective, language, or use of time, other scholars have labeled academia and politics as truly opposite cultures (Leslie and Routh, 1991). As Table 1 shows, the differences between the cultures of academic research and policymaking are striking. Using a broad range of descriptors, one finds literally opposite orientations of the two worlds.

Recognizing the striking differences between academia and policymaking, one would have to conclude that the differences are fundamental. Therefore, what are the consequences of these differences for each world?

### The Consequences of Living in Different Worlds

The initial issue for consideration, regarding the consequences of academic research and policymakers living in different worlds, is the extent to which each needs the other. If the two cultures have no need for each other, and if there are no consequences of operating in distinctly different, or even incompatible worlds, then the differences have little consequence.

Clearly, academic research needs policymakers if only for financial support. At both federal and state levels, the funding of scientific research, academic programs, and research centers and institutes is dependent on the willingness of lawmakers to provide public money. Even in private institutions, public money funds a significant amount of research. It is difficult to imagine academic research being able to survive without legislators' approval of appropriations bills that allocate funds to institutions, programs, and research centers.

Do policymakers need academic researchers? Less so than the other way around, but one way to identify the extent to which policymakers need academic research is to determine the value that policymakers place on the information they receive from researchers. In this area, academic research comes up short. One study examined the relative influence of different groups on policymakers. Of 18 groups included for consideration, educational researchers ranked

3rd from the bottom (Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt, 1986), but not quite as low as textbook publishers. Most other groups ranked higher as sources of information, and these included lay groups and noneducator interest groups. When policymakers need information, they turn to other states, to colleague legislators or legislative staff, and even to experienced lobbyists.

Given that policymakers can use the products of educational research, although they seem to turn to sources other than academic researchers, and given that researchers need policymakers for financial support, where might be the common ground for establishing some kind of working relationship?

### Searching for Common Ground

Perhaps the best place to begin to seek common ground is with the issues, themselves. Scholars have explained that academic research tends to be crafted on carefully controlled topics of limited scope, and that the methodology of research is given emphasis. Academic researchers might begin by seeking a different balance between topic and method. The topics might be reconceptualized into issues of broader import, even if secondary analyses and meta-analysis techniques are used in order to elevate topics to a higher level of breadth of scope. At the same time, research methodologies might receive a bit less attention. Therefore, the means would be de-emphasized while the ends would receive greater attention.

Next, virtually all of those who have commented on the gulf between the worlds of academic research and policy have identified language as a problem. Researchers communicate in complex, technical language that makes excessive use of statistics. Policymakers, and more broadly the lay public, have difficulty understanding such language. Researchers might try to write for essentially a lay audience. Language should be made more simple by deleting highly technical terms and statistics not readily understood by a non-technical audience.

Academicians might utilize the device of a précis or executive summary that could be used for lay and policy audiences. Supportive "technical reports" could be included as detailed background.

Leslie and Routh cautioned that the differences between these two cultures likely will not be eliminated or even overcome, except by taking small steps that limit and structure the exchanges between the two sides. Examples would include creating a unit, such as a policy research unit in a university or state department, that could work with both academics and policymakers and help bridge the gap between the two. Another example would be to sponsor an individual from one culture who could be assigned a temporary position in the other world, then return and help with communications to bridge the gap between the cultures. One friend of mine, a university research professor, was assigned a two-year visiting scholar position in a state education department in the state capital. During her assignment, she worked on policy papers for the state department, and after

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returning to the university she helped establish communications links between the state department and the legislature. The “other” environment might be scanned by identifying information sources used by those in the other environment and becoming familiar with their content. Still other suggestions are to keep relationships less formal and to encourage collaboration between researchers and policy staff.

### Summary

In summary, what about the future? What recommendations might be made in regard to the two worlds of academic research and policymaking? First, I believe that it is productive simply to recognize that academic researchers and policymakers live and work in essentially two different, not totally compatible, worlds.

Second, does there need to be any rapprochement between the two worlds? Academic researchers need policymakers financial support, and the outcomes of academic research stand to benefit the policy world. The problems are that the languages of the two worlds, the operating assumptions, and communications vehicles and styles are quite different. Academic researchers, it seems to me, might begin to think about ways to adjust their communications modes so policymakers, as a targeted audience, will perhaps be more receptive to the researchers’ messages and communication modes. Policymakers will come into line if their own self-interests are served by research results.

Third, and finally, as former AERA President Richard Shavelson told us, researchers can help the world of practice not only by their research results, but also by the ways in which researchers think about problems and speculate about potential solutions. This is the promise of the world of academic research, not only the hope that research results will actually solve the problems of the real world, but also in framing questions, reflecting on problems, and pointing toward solutions. And this promise more than justifies the time that you and I might spend reflecting on this issue and the effort that we put into bridging the gap and reducing the disconnect between academic research and policy.

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*Keynote Address*

***Western Governors University  
University of the Future***

Robert C. Albrecht  
Western Governors University

***Abstract***

*Western Governors University was initiated by Western governors in response to perceived needs in the marketplace and as a supplement to the traditional institutions. WGU offers competency-based credentials at a distance. Students are required to sit for assessments that measure their skills and competencies. The curriculum for each degree is defined by competencies rather than courses. The programs are particularly suited to non-traditional students who are unable to attend residential institutions.*

The background to the initiation and development of Western Governors University involves changes in post-secondary education that are occurring in the United States and elsewhere. The rapid population growth results in half of the world's population being under 20 years of age. As a consequence, a large campus must open every week to accommodate the growing demand. As a primary provider of higher education, that demand becomes part of the environment for higher education in the U.S.

Yet the cost of higher education in the United States continues to escalate: the cost has increased by one-third in the past fifteen years. Hence a structure which was intended to serve large portions of the public continues to cost more than some segments can afford. The rapid growth in population will be less served rather than more because of these costs. The model for higher education simply is not scalable to the demands placed on it by the population increases.

The need for education increases, and the number of providers grows to meet that need. The "education industry," as some call it, has become financially attractive, and publishers, software companies, and other commercial providers have entered the competition with schools and colleges. Perpetual learning, workplace needs, just-in-time learning and certificates rather than degrees have become parts of the learning demands. This increased demand for education and training has also lead institutions to increase their distance learning activities. Most institutions have distance learning offerings; however, all but a quarter of them offer fewer than 25 courses, according to a recent government survey. With the new demand for distance learning, 75% of all institutions intend to expand those offerings.

These developments occur at a time when the economy and the society are shifting from the industrial age to the knowledge age. For education, the industrial age is marked by residential campuses running on the familiar academic calendar, offering degrees from college and universities in which the curriculum is controlled by full-time faculty members. In the knowledge age, learning takes place at the workplace, in the home or on the campus. The content will be packaged in certificates as well as degrees; the providers will

include publishers and other corporate providers, as well as colleges and universities, and the consumer will determine many of the characteristics of the time, place, and form of the educational process.

Western Governors University was initiated to meet the demands proceeding from these changes. Fifteen governors of the Western Governors Association met in 1995 and 1996 to plan a university that would have the following characteristics:

Market-oriented	Distributed faculty
Independent	High quality
Client-centered	Cost effective
Degree-granting	Competency-based
Accredited	Quickly initiated

Such an institution had seldom been initiated in the United States. Incorporated in 1997, WGU actually opened its (virtual) doors in September, 1998. The University continues to receive support from the governors; eighteen states now support WGU. The governors each provided \$100,000 as one-time grants, and they serve as members of Western Governors University. Each further agreed to establish at least one local center in each State, to work to overcome barriers to distance learning and to support fund raising for this private institution. Strong international interest has also emerged. Memoranda of understanding have been signed with agencies in a number of countries, including Canada, Mexico, Japan, China, Armenia, and the United Kingdom.

The institution which was established by the governors has been realized along the lines of the vision with which it began. The degrees are competency-based; the content is that taught in the provider institutions. As a degree granting institution, WGU must have accreditation. That process began with the establishment of IRAC ( the Inter-regional Accrediting Commission), an organization created by four of the regional accrediting agencies—North Central, Northwest, the Western Association of Senior Colleges and the Western Association of Junior Colleges. WGU was granted "eligibility" status in the spring of 1998 and seeks "candidacy." The accrediting process is essentially that used for traditional in-

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stitutions. The members of IRAC are chosen from the commissions of their regional accrediting agencies; the process includes an institutional self-study and a site visit by a team chosen by the accreditors. WGU, however non-traditional it may be in some respects, will award degrees equivalent to those offered by traditional institutions.

WGU credentials—certificates and degrees—are based on competencies rather than credits. Rather than completing a set number of credit hours which define the curriculum or the degree, the student must demonstrate through third party assessment (i.e., not the assessment of the faculty member who provides the content) the competencies which make up the curriculum. How is the curriculum established? Once a discipline is chosen for the development of a credential, a faculty committee, made up of faculty members on contract from other institutions, is appointed to define the standards for the degree. Depending upon the nature of the certification, these standards are drawn from industry or academic sources. Once these are defined or identified, the committee, called a Program Council, writes the competencies that students must demonstrate to meet the standards.

WGU students can take assessments to demonstrate their possession of those competencies whenever they are ready. They may have acquired the competencies through past course work or through self study; or they may take courses—residential or distributed—to prepare for the assessment. Once the student has demonstrated competencies in all of the domains (a domain is a collection of competencies in an area such as mathematics) required, a credential is awarded to the student. The completion of domains is analogous to the completion of courses; progress towards a degree is measured by “passing” the assessments—similar to “passing” courses.

In the academic structure of the University, the faculty functions are unbundled: that is, the faculty who provide content through their home institutions are generally not the faculty who build the curriculum. The assessments which measure student competencies are created by companies such as ACT or the Educational Testing Service.. The advisor/mentors who are the critical guides to all degree-seeking students are faculty qualified people, and they do not teach courses for WGU (the University is not a content provider) and are not involved in the assessment process.

The initial degree offerings of the University include an Associate of Arts and an Associate of Applied Science in Electronic Manufacturing Technology. The former degree is a typical AA transfer degree based on similar degrees in two and four year institutions. The structure of the WGU degree requires the student to demonstrate competencies in three areas:

**Pre-requisite skills**—communication, mathematics, research and basic work-related skills

**Cross disciplinary skills**—critical thinking, problem solving, information gathering and evaluation;

all applied in the context of natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities

**Distribution component**—natural sciences, physical sciences, humanities, history

Twelve other credentials are now being developed in the areas of information technology, allied health, business and education. These will be available to students during the coming months.

Students interested in the WGU credentials can access the University through its Smart Catalog on the web at [www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu). After browsing the web site and learning more about the University, its structure and its offerings, students may decide to apply for admission. At that time they are assigned an advisor/mentor who works with them to define their academic and career goals, to assess their experience as it applies to those goals, to evaluate their readiness to take the assessments in their chosen curriculum, and to identify sources of content (such as courses) they may need to increase their readiness to take assessments. If distance learning offerings seem appropriate, the advisor/mentor will guide the student through the offerings of provider institutions that are listed in the Smart Catalog. The advisor/mentor will also aid the student in understanding the concepts of competencies and competency-based credentials.

Western Governors University does offer credentials equivalent to that of other institutions. However, the student market it serves tend to differ from those of the traditional institution. The competency-based degrees and the assessment process are especially suited to non-traditional students who have been in the work force. Many of those people find that their educational experience is limiting their ability to achieve academic and career objectives.

Western Governors University, then, is a competency-based, degree granting institution of higher education. A distance learning university especially designed to serve mid-career students, it will soon offer a spectrum of certificates and degrees in fields such as information technology, education, allied health and business. While working in partnership with traditional institutions and other providers, WGU seeks to reach students who often cannot take advantage of the offerings of many colleges and universities. The credentials it offers are particularly addressed to those students.

The knowledge age presents new patterns of learning and credentialing and offers many new learning opportunities. While the typical undergraduate student may still attend the residential institutions, many more learners will seek education from home, from the workplace, from learning centers. Furthermore, they will look for certificates and other credentials that can be earned through technology. Western Governors University will respond to these and other so-called non-traditional educational degrees.

## *Academic Careers in the Twenty First Century: New Options for Faculty*

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### *Abstract*

*The faculty career is changing in response to external and internal pressures. Public calls for productivity and accountability, student demands for access and high quality education, faculty workloads, tenure criteria and processes, and the desire for balance in personal and professional lives are all contributing to change. Today less than 50% of all faculty members occupy tenure-track positions; 26% of full-time faculty occupy nontenurable positions. This paper examines these and other pressures for institutional change, describes current faculty demographics, and explores possible institutional responses including modifications to traditional tenure systems and faculty career alternatives outside tenure.*

Here I am, invited to talk about changes in the faculty career. I sure am an expert on change right now because I am in the midst of changing careers myself! After twenty-five years as an administrator with occasional research and teaching assignments, I am now a full-time professor in an academic department for the first time. I should be listening to you tell me how the system works rather than speaking to you about how to change it! As I learn first hand about what faculty do: figure out how to structure their time to accomplish **everything**, search for parking, beg, borrow and occasionally steal clerical support, and compete for carefully guarded and sacred budget allocations, I am very personally aware of how difficult career change can be.

But, change is a reality we all face. So with heightened personal empathy and understanding garnered over the last several months, I will spend my time today talking about why and how I see the faculty career changing. I do this primarily from the perspective of my own research including my recent affiliation with the American Association for Higher Education's New Pathways Project which has explored many facets of faculty careers and employment arrangements and published 14 different working papers.

Today I want to talk about three key points:

- There are too many public and institutional reasons to continue the same tenure system promulgated by the AAUP in 1940.
- The demographics of the faculty are already changing. The question is whether we are going to manage this change or just let it happen.
- The task before us all—administrators and faculty within institutions—is to explore modifications to tenure and alternatives outside tenure that could better meet the needs of faculty members and their colleges and universities.

Before we begin, let's make sure we share the same definition of tenure. As promulgated by the American As-

sociation of University Professors in their 1940 "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure" (1990), tenure was for the purpose of guaranteeing academic freedom and a reasonable amount of economic security. The tenure system, as defined by the AAUP, was applied to everyone, and it worked fine while the higher education establishment was small and relatively homogeneous. And, as higher education gained in public esteem and prospered financially during the 1950's, 60's and 70's (the era in which today's senior faculty entered the career), the academic profession was attractive to capable and ambitious faculty members (Bowen and Schuster, 1986). A huge demand for faculty gave a freshly recruited cohort of professors the leverage to negotiate their salaries, workloads and rewards. Since the early 1970's, however, the appeal of the academic profession has diminished along with the economic flexibility to offer faculty attractive salaries and working conditions. At the same time, the higher education enterprise has grown enormously and diversified. While the "one size fits all" tenure system, as defined in the 1940 AAUP Statement, is still viewed by some as the model for all institutions, it is no longer accepted by the public or meets the needs of individual colleges and universities.

The question now is how to retain the key features of tenure, academic freedom and some measure of job security, when higher education itself has changed so dramatically since 1940.

### The Current Context

Within institutions tenure policies are undergoing changes brought about by legitimate and pervasive external and internal concerns.

### *External Concerns*

The public widely views tenure as a shelter for underproductive and overcompensated academics, and tenure's

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role in protecting academic freedom with concomitant economic security is poorly understood (Gappa and Leslie, 1997). State legislators and others are insisting on greater accountability and measurement of faculty productivity through workload studies and requirements or post-tenure reviews because of a perceived lack of fit between faculty priorities and institutional missions (Heydinger and Simsek, 1992). The guarantee of life-long employment resulting from the elimination of the mandatory retirement age is viewed as an anomaly.

*Demand for access.* Demand for access is escalating while resources are declining. The public is saying we are the customers and we want our children taught by professors. We want high quality undergraduate education and applied research and service aimed at meeting society's needs (Gappa and Leslie, 1997).

*Competition.* Today, the entertainment industry is a primary supplier of education for our students. A steady diet of engaging, fast-paced information via television and the world wide web has given students and their parents implicit criteria for judging the presentation of material (Heydinger and Simsek, 1992). Students now want learning that is customized—high quality, just in time, life-long. Traditional approaches to teaching and learning are being challenged successfully by corporate entities and for profit educational institutions such as the University of Phoenix.

*Changing work force.* Employees no longer expect life-long employment with one organization or trust major decisions affecting their careers to a "parent" organization. Instead, working under a new covenant, employers give individuals opportunities to enhance their employability in exchange for increased productivity and some degree of commitment to company purpose for as long as the employee works there (Waterman, Waterman and Collard, 1994). This new covenant is in sharp contrast to academic tenure. In addition, employees today are generally members of family units with more than one worker. They seek work-life balance in their careers to meet their dual responsibilities.

### *Internal Context*

Internal concerns about tenure are equally pervasive and legitimate.

*Institutional flexibility.* A guarantee of life-long employment can seriously erode institutional flexibility while a rewards structure that seeks to emulate the research paradigm no matter what the institutions' mission or customers' desires raises serious questions about whether faculty are citizens of their disciplines or citizens of their institutions. Boyer's works, *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Boyer, 1990) and *Scholarship Assessed* (Glassick, Huber and Maeroff, 1997) are serving as important change agents to realign faculty priorities and allow more paths for faculty achievement and rewards.

*The nature of faculty work.* Contrary to popular belief, faculty work hard. A survey of professors at a large techni-

cal university found that the median workweek is 60 hours and 10% of faculty spend 75 hours a week at their jobs (Bailyn, 1993). As faculty we love our jobs because of the autonomy and independence. But we pay a price for them. Our work is fragmented into multiple demands for our time and high expectations for performance. Students expect consistent excellent faculty performance in the classroom, and faculty cannot easily find replacements when they are sick or have emergencies. As good academic citizens, faculty are expected to serve on committees and meet other departmental, campus and professional service obligations. Simultaneously, they must produce research and scholarly work. Yet the mental requirements for research (concentration, uninterrupted periods of time, and meeting productivity schedules for grants or publications) conflict with the expectations faculty face for being available to students and performing various service functions (Gappa and MacDermid 1997; Bailyn, 1993).

The bottom line is that there is not enough time to do everything that needs to be done. Bailyn calls the work psychologically difficult:

The lack of ability to limit work, the tendency to compare oneself primarily to the exceptional giants in one's field, and the high incidence of overload, make it particularly difficult for academics to find a satisfactory integration of work with private life...It is the unbounded nature of the academic career that is the heart of the problem. Time is critical for professors because there is not enough of it to do all the things their job requires: teaching, research and institutional and professional service. It is therefore impossible for faculty to protect other aspects of their lives (1993, pp. 51-52).

*The career path to tenure.* For probationary faculty, the clock is always ticking towards an arbitrary seven-year deadline. Tenure track faculty lack control over their time, and the pressure to meet tenure criteria requires them to pursue research and scholarship that can result in sufficient publications within the allotted time frame.

Experiences during the probationary period are influenced by the culture of the institution and department. Colleges and universities are decentralized entities. Depending on the institution, the culture can be institutionally based, department based, or both! Some departments foster collegiality and pride themselves on mentoring, fairness, continuous feedback, and creating trust. Others are the reverse—the feedback is inconsistent, messages about criteria are unclear or changing, and the climate is competitive, political or schismatic. Changes in committee composition or department heads can lead to changes in departmental environments and discontinuity in feedback and expectations midway through probation.

*Work-life balance.* Increasingly men and women faculty are seeking a more realistic balance between work and life (Gappa and MacDermid, 1997). This is particularly dif-

difficult for faculty on tenure track—and these faculty, both men and women tend to be from more diverse backgrounds and have different expectations. In a decentralized institution, the level of use of work-family programs is, in part, dependent on the perceived career penalties. The lack of widespread acceptance and use of work-life programs by early career faculty and the lack of understanding of work-family conflicts by departments can have devastating effects.

*Use of part-time, nontenurable appointments.* The tenure system exists, in part, because part-timers provide a cheap, plentiful source of labor that does the work tenured faculty do not want to do. But the rising use of part-time faculty to deliver a larger and larger portion of undergraduate education only sharpens the questions the public is asking and raises questions about whether the academic work force may have become too fragmented. Do differences in status now split faculty away from one another and from the idea of a community of scholars (Gappa and Leslie, 1997)?

*Preserving academic freedom.* Academic freedom is critical to higher education. It is the backbone of the tenure system. But, it is difficult to defend tenure for the purpose of preserving academic freedom when only about 34% of all faculty (on a head count basis) are tenured. Some institutions extend academic freedom to members of the professoriate as they define that group (Gappa, 1996), and some scholars have proposed ways of preserving academic freedom short of awarding tenure (Byrne, 1997).

### Faculty Demographics

Now we will look at some faculty demographics to illustrate the extent of changes in the faculty career. These data are head count, not full-time faculty equivalents, and they are inclusive of all institutional types. They are taken from the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty which includes data by institutional type and discipline for those of you who want to examine these demographics in more detail (Zimble, 1994; NEA, 1995; Finkelstein et al., 1995; Leslie, 1995; Kirshstein et al., 1996).

- 42% of all faculty are part-time.
- 74% of all full-time faculty are tenured or on tenure track.
- 64% of full-time faculty hired in the last five years are tenurable.
- 26% of full-timers are nontenurable, either because their institutions do not grant tenure or because their appointments specifically state they are nontenurable.

Therefore, fewer than 50% of all faculty are tenurable.

- 60% of men faculty, compared with 28% of women faculty, have tenure.
- Medical schools use the most full-time nontenurable faculty. By 1981, 75% of U. S. medical schools had nontenurable faculty tracks.

Since part-timers have doubled in numbers in the past two decades and constitute such a large share of the total faculty (42%) (Leslie, 1998), we'll take a quick look at their characteristics:

- Only 4% are tenured or tenure track.
- 44% are in public two-year colleges, 6% are in liberal arts colleges, 22% are in comprehensive regional institutions, 11% are in doctoral universities, and 11% are in research universities. However, if the work of teaching assistants is added to that of part-timers in research universities, it would probably show that proportionately as many undergraduates are taught by nontenurable faculty at research institutions as at other institutions (Leslie, 1995, 1998).
- 77% are employed elsewhere; two-thirds in full-time positions. The part-timers whose primary jobs are outside academe are not interested in full-time tenurable positions. We labeled them specialists, experts and professionals in *The Invisible Faculty* (Gappa and Leslie, 1993).
- Only 13% are aspiring academics, teaching at several campuses simultaneously.
- 54% have worked at their institution for 4 or more years; 21% for more than 10 years.

These data challenge commonly held myths about part-timers. Part-time faculty constitute a valuable resource to institutions; they are generally well-qualified for the teaching assignments they hold; and they are not a transient, temporary workforce. Part-timers themselves do not cause quality problems. Quality issues stem from their overuse in some departments and from policies and practices governing their employment. These are institutional problems that can be fixed!

### Modifications to Tenure

Now let's look at how the current tenure system might be modified to make faculty careers more flexible and attractive for individuals and institutions. As we probe this sensitive terrain, it is important to remember that changes in the academic career will be institution specific, and require faculty involvement and agreement!

#### *Changes in the Probationary Period*

As I have mentioned, the probationary period is characterized by high pressure, lack of control over time, ambiguous and changing criteria, mysterious processes, subtle pressures to conform to preferences and prejudices of senior faculty, and work-life conflicts. These sources of discontent on the part of early career faculty surfaced over and over again in structured interviews with new faculty and graduate students across states and sectors of higher education. Various researchers (Rice, 1996; Tierney and Bensimon, 1996; Trower, 1996) all reached the conclusion that new tenure track faculty are largely an unhappy lot.

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The pre-tenure review process needs to be revamped (Rice, Chait and Gappa, 1997). Measures that could increase flexibility and reduce inconsistencies and randomness junior faculty ascribe to the tenure process are: making the length of the probationary period more flexible (seven years no longer meets the needs of some probationary faculty), better documentation of teaching and public service, clarity and consistency in tenure criteria and processes, "tenure-by-objectives" performance contracts, regular and timely feedback, continuity in committee membership and systematic mentoring.

### *Changes in the Time Base and Duration of Tenure*

*Part-time tenure.* Why should tenure be linked to full-time status? Flexibility in the time base of a tenurable position would open up the traditional faculty career to many individuals seeking to balance work-life conflicts or wanting to pursue other careers and interests concurrently with a tenured appointment.

*Instant tenure.* Some institutions, such as Harvard University, grant tenure at the time of hire and only at the full professor rank. Within the Harvard Graduate School of Education there also must be sufficient funding to support the position, prior authorization for a tenured slot by the senior faculty, and a national search (Gappa, 1996). This policy ensures the tenuring of only senior people in areas of clearly established need.

*Limit the tenure guarantee to a fixed period of time.* With the elimination of mandatory retirement some are questioning whether or not tenure should be a life-long guarantee and are suggesting that a fixed term with other incentives may be more attractive to faculty.

### *Promoting Continuing Productivity*

Outspoken critics cite tenure as the source of most productivity problems since there is no flexibility to remove unproductive people. What might promote increased productivity?

*Redefining what constitutes base salary.* Guaranteeing last year's salary does not promote continued productivity and affects institutional flexibility. Heydinger and Simsek (1992) recommend setting the base salary at a threshold level, for example that of a newly hired assistant professor. The remainder of the salary would be earned each year by achieving specific accomplishments based upon agreed upon objectives, and bonuses could be given for very high levels of attainment.

*Post-tenure review.* Well-conceived post-tenure reviews afford opportunities to enhance faculty development, promote different career emphases, match faculty career goals and institutional priorities, and clarify performance expectations. On the downside, they consume a great deal of time and can convey a punitive image while still not guaranteeing improved performance (Licata and Morreale, 1997).

*Assisting faculty with the transition to retirement.* There are few incentives to encourage faculty to consider total or phased retirement or other career options without coherent, coordinated incentive programs and retirement options (Rice, Chait and Gappa, 1997). Incentive programs and options can guide faculty toward new roles and careers and smooth what can be very difficult personal transitions.

### *Alternatives Outside Tenure*

More than 50% of faculty members are not in tenurable positions. Twenty-six percent of full-time faculty are outside the tenure system. Whether or not a particular appointment is tenurable is becoming less important to many of these faculty who are disenchanted with the rigidities of tenure and pleased with the flexibility provided by a variety of career paths.

*Full-time nontenurable appointments.* In professional schools of medicine, health sciences, business, law and education (and increasingly in other disciplines) the use of full-time nontenurable appointments is expanding (Gappa, 1996). These positions are characterized by: well-defined career tracks, appointment and review systems similar to tenure-track, satisfactory or comparable compensation packages, support and status within departments, membership in the professoriate and inclusion within the scope of academic freedom policies, and sufficient job security.

Professional and disciplinary cultures attach legitimacy to these alternative career tracks because clinical and research skills are so highly valued. Full-time nontenurable faculty are treated considerably better than part-timers for the most part. Faculty occupying nontenurable positions as clinicians, professors of practice, distinguished lecturers or research professors are, by and large, satisfied with their status (though there are important differences between junior and senior faculty).

*Renewable Multi-Year Appointments.* Part- and full-time faculty in nontenurable positions seek some job security. However, these faculty often describe tenure versus nontenure-track status as a lifestyle choice, a trade-off between the short term risk of being denied tenure and the longer term risk of nonrenewal of multi-year appointments (Gappa 1996). Most full-time nontenurable faculty have alternatives outside academe; most part-timers' primary jobs are outside academe. Many of these faculty see five-year appointments as sufficient job security.

*Possible Conversion to Tenure Track Status.* The University of Nebraska Medical Center appoints all new faculty to a Health Professions Appointment (HPA). These are contract appointments for up to five years, renewable indefinitely. Faculty may apply for tenure at any time, but they do not need to do so to remain employed (Trower, 1996). If they are denied tenure they resume their HPA appointment and can reapply later. A survey of the faculty showed that they perceive the new HPA system as having a positive

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effect on recruitment and as preserving traditional academic values while adopting to the needs of a more diverse faculty (Wigton and Waldman, 1993).

*Fair employment for part-timers.* Different and mutually exclusive employment systems in the academic profession can lead to conflict rather than collegiality. The more practical alternative is to integrate part-timers into an academic work force characterized by a shared community of interest in building high-quality programs (Gappa and Leslie, 1997). The concept of one faculty should replace the current bifurcated system. To achieve this, institutions must create and support a set of employment conditions that will attract rather than exploit a diverse and highly capable part-time work force.

Three key employment conditions are essential to achieve an attractive work environment for part-timers (Gappa and Leslie, 1993). First, institutions should decide what kinds of faculty are needed to do what kinds of work and select members of the faculty—regardless of full- or part-time status—because they have the qualifications, experience and motivation to provide the education the institution seeks for its students. This approach to faculty staffing would avoid unplanned, out-of-control use of part-timers.

Second, part-timers should be considered regular members of the faculty. Institutional employment policies and practices for part-timers must ensure that they are treated fairly and consistently, given the tools they need to do their jobs, and offered opportunities for career advancement and rewards for excellent performance. Practices such as last minute hiring, semester-by-semester appointments, and breaking continuity of employment to avoid claims of de facto tenure are unnecessary and divisive. A range of employment choices—from tenure or some other measure of job security for some to truly casual and intermittent employment for others—would benefit individuals and the institutions that seek to retain them.

Third, part-timers must be oriented and integrated into their departments and institutions as fully participating members of the faculty. They should be included in faculty development programs and opportunities and consulted on decisions that affect them. Recognition and rewards for all faculty should be based on performance as individuals not on status (Gappa and Leslie 1997).

### Conclusion

In conclusion, let's go back to the three key points I made at the opening.

- **There is going to continue to be tenure.**

There are simply too many internal and external pressures—political, economic, professional and personal—to continue with business as usual. We need to focus on reforming the current system to make it better rather than on debating whether or not to abolish tenure.

- **The demographics of the faculty are already changing.**
- **The task before all of us, faculty and administrators within institutions, is to find ways to modify the tenure system and open up faculty career options outside tenure to better meet the needs of faculty and their colleges and universities.**

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*Invitation for Proposals for 1999 Annual Meeting*







## ***Free Market Policies and Public Education: At What (Opportunity) Cost?***

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School choice has been called the “most prevalent reform idea of the 1990s” (Witte, 1992, p. 206). Even Boyer (1992), a critic of school choice states, “Choice has, without question, emerged as the single most rousing idea in the current school reform effort” (p. 20). The notion of allowing parents and families the right to choose the school their children will attend is popular among both politicians and the public (VanDunk, 1998) and momentum to develop choice programs continues to grow (Fuller, 1996). The number of charter schools, magnet schools, and alternative schools is increasing at an unprecedented rate, each offering parents additional educational choices (Tucker and Lauber, 1995). School choice programs can take many forms, each of which raises issues regarding the role and scope of public education. Voucher programs, proposals to provide families with public funds to be used at the public or private school of their choice, are undoubtedly the most emotionally debated alternative.

The following sections of this paper discuss questions raised by the voucher issue. Among these are questions related to the impetus for the current choice movement, the nature or structure of existing school voucher programs, and the findings of research on the effects of the voucher programs. It must be acknowledged at the outset that definitive answers about the fundamental goodness of publicly-funded voucher programs are not available and they may never be. The present purpose is merely to promote a better understanding of the issue.

### What are “voucher” programs?

The school choice movement, the notion of providing children and families with options for the school and educational program in which they participate without regard for the neighborhood in which they live, includes a broad range of approaches (Glenn, 1998). Vouchers represent only one of many forms of choice that may be made available to parents regarding the education their children will experience. Greater choice is made possible by providing families with money (in the form of a voucher) that can be used for tuition in any participating school, usually including both public and private schools. As a result, voucher programs differ from most other choice programs in at least three important ways. First, and usually most contentiously, the programs allow parents to use the voucher to select from among both public and private schools. Second, all currently operating voucher programs include schools with religious affiliations. The state-funded

voucher program in Milwaukee was the single exception until recent court rulings allowed the program to expand to include both secular and religious private schools. Third, unlike other choice approaches, 14 of the existing 16 voucher programs in the U.S. operate on private rather than public funding (Beales, 1994). It may be in this regard that they present their greatest threat to public education.

### What are arguments for voucher programs?

The case for greater parental choice and voice in their children’s education is made by those of all political stripes and persuasions, from far-right to far-left, liberal and conservative, ethnic minority and ethnic majority, from the wealthy and from the poor, from the religious and secular. Not surprisingly in light of this diversity, the underlying rationale for the importance of choice and the likely benefits such programs will affect cross a broad range of perspectives. Thus, it is difficult to state precisely a single case that represents the position of choice advocates, particularly advocates of vouchers. For some, the importance of vouchers lies in providing poor families, particularly those living in the inner cities the opportunity for educational choice that more affluent families have always possessed (e.g., McGroarty, 1994; Ravitch and Viteritti, 1996). By this argument, families with even moderate income routinely choose their children’s school by the school district or neighborhood in which they live. For families with somewhat greater income, additional choices are available through personally funded private school enrollment. Poor families have little or no choice in where they reside, often being forced to live in neighborhoods near the most dangerous and least effective schools. Voucher programs would diminish the inequality of available choices by providing more options for poor families.

Other advocates believe that allowing parents choices in the schools their children attend would promote greater competition among schools and, thus, would improve the quality of schools and encourage innovative approaches to education (Chubb and Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1962). The current public monopoly on education reduces or eliminates incentives for school improvement or experimentation because there is no “market share” to be gained or lost. Ineffective schools, no matter how effectiveness may be defined, suffer no ill consequences and highly effective schools receive no tangible benefits. Such a system not only fails to support success but, combined with highly regulatory bu-

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reaucracies, promotes maintenance of the status quo. Change and innovation are implicitly discouraged through unnecessary “red tape” and the difficulties associated with obtaining official sanction or approval.

According to advocates, voucher programs would allow, even force, all schools to be as effective as private schools have been (Gintis, 1995; Glazer, 1993). Private school students routinely achieve at higher levels than public school students, students behave more appropriately in private schools, and parents are more satisfied with the quality of their children’s education in private schools (e.g., Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore, 1981; Martinez, Godwin, Kemerer and Perna, 1995). These valuable outcomes of private schooling result, at least in part, from the competitive market-driven context within which private schools must survive. Unlike public schools, private schools must meet the needs of a sufficient number of students and families to remain financially viable. As a result, private schools focus more on students’ needs, on the interests and input of parents, and on ensuring that clearly defined goals for student learning and behavior are reached. Voucher programs would force every school, whether public or private, to become more accountable in order to remain viable. Parents would choose to send their children to schools which best met their needs, and less desirable schools would be forced to change or close (McGroarty, 1994).

#### How strong is the voucher movement and what is its impetus?

While many of these arguments seem extreme and perhaps a bit naïve, they reflect the perceptions of a huge proportion of parents in the U.S. (Carlos, 1993). Over 95% of adults in the U.S. believe that parents should be allowed greater choice regarding their children’s education. When asked whether they would support the redirection of some current education funding to provide vouchers with which parents could enroll their children in the public or private school of their choice, 50% of *public school* parents said yes (Matthews and Hansen, 1995). Further, approximately half of current public school parents would send their children to a private school if they were awarded a publicly-funded voucher (Lowell and Gallup, 1998). Among minority families and those living in the inner city, over 80% of parents believe that state-funded vouchers are a desirable and important approach to improving education. It is clear that school choice in its many forms, and particularly voucher programs supporting enrollment in both public and private schools, is likely to continue grow (Jones and Ambrosie, 1995).

Underlying this movement are at least three factors that reflect the unique contemporary context of education in the United States. The most obvious of these is widespread and continuing concern over the quality of public schools. Clearly, and in spite of a small number of researchers who present evidence to the contrary (e.g., Berliner and Biddle, 1995; Bracey, 1995), many Americans are convinced that

the public schools are not effective, that they must be changed, and that radical measures are probably justified (Lowell and Gallup, 1998). A second factor that seems to undergird pressure for greater educational choice is a general societal movement toward egalitarianism and decentralization (see Morgan, 1997). Public respect for authority, belief in government, attitudes about the value of regulation, and acceptance of a uniquely “American” culture have eroded, probably not without cause. Within the realm of education, this trend can be seen in decentralization of school governance, site-based management, school and teacher autonomy, school improvement committees, and increased parental input in the functioning of their local schools. A third and probably related factor that seems to support the movement toward school choice is growing disagreement over the goals of mandatory public education. Public education in the U.S. was developed largely to enculturate the citizenry, particularly newly arrived immigrants, and to promote a common core of values, attitudes, and knowledge. Over time and as the sheer amount of information available has grown and ideas about culture and society have changed, there is increasing divergence on what should be the primary purpose of our schools.

#### What is the current extent of voucher programs in the U.S.?

To date, only two publicly-funded voucher programs are operational: in Cleveland, Ohio and in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. However, privately-funded voucher programs currently operate in 14 cities across the country, and new programs, both publicly and privately-funded are in varying stages of development in at least 33 other cities. None of these programs serves more than a small percentage of eligible students within their region, and most have been operating for only a few years. In spite of this, the nature of these programs and the threat they pose to the longstanding nature and status of public education have raised the visibility of the issue and intensified the already emotional debate over not just the future of voucher programs, but of public education in this country (Tucker and Lauber, 1995).

#### What do we know about voucher programs?

There are few definitive answers about the effects of voucher programs as too little evidence is available. Each of the currently available studies of publicly-funded voucher programs is reviewed below. The goal of this endeavor is not to critique the research, but rather to make the reader aware of what has been done and what remains to be done as the voucher debate continues.

#### Research on Publicly-Funded Voucher Programs

Privately-funded voucher programs outnumber publicly-funded programs and are much more limited in size and scope. In addition, very little research is available on these

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programs and all of it has been conducted by sponsors of the programs. For these reasons, the current review is limited to studies of the two publicly-funded voucher programs: The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program and the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program.

### *The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program*

The Milwaukee Parental School Choice Program, was created in 1989 and initiated in 1991, provided up to \$2,500 in private school tuition for children in families whose income did not exceed 1.75 times the national poverty level, with funds used to provide vouchers deducted from state general equalization aid to Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). Originally, qualifying schools were to be non-sectarian but in August, 1998 the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that the program can be structured to include religiously affiliated schools without violating the state's constitution.

To date, three studies have been conducted of the Milwaukee voucher program. The original and most extensive was that of Witte, Thorn, Pritchard and Claibourn (1994) who were selected by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to conduct a multi-year evaluation of all aspects of the program. Shortly after release of Witte's fourth-year report, Greene, Peterson, and Du (1996) and Rouse (1997) released studies of the program in which the original data were reanalyzed.

*Witte, Thorn, Pritchard and Claibourn (1994).* The most comprehensive evaluation of the Milwaukee voucher program was conducted over a multi-year period by John Witte of the University of Wisconsin. Beginning in 1991, Witte and his associates collected data on the students, schools, and families who participated in the choice program. The fundamental effectiveness of the program was judged by comparing data from participating students and families with those from non-participating Milwaukee Public School (MPS) students and families.<sup>1</sup> The primary data sources were student school records (including achievement test scores, eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, etc.), records maintained by the voucher program office (e.g., student attrition, etc.), and surveys of parents and students conducted by the research team

The voucher program in Milwaukee successfully met its goal of providing private school educational opportunities for the children of economically disadvantaged, inner-city families. Further, students attracted to the program were not, as many had feared, among the higher achieving public school students, but were instead among the lowest achieving. However, and interestingly, the families of the voucher children were better educated and more interested in their child's education, both before and after entering the program, than families of Milwaukee Public School students, though their involvement with the school was lower before entering the program. Perhaps most notably, the voucher program did not affect any consistent change in students' academic achievement. Voucher students' adjusted reading

achievement was greater than that of MPS students in year one, lower in year two, and roughly the same in years three and four; adjusted mathematics achievement was roughly the same during years one and two, significantly higher in year three, and significantly lower in year four.

The Witte evaluation remains the most thorough study of the Milwaukee voucher program to date and, as the first study of a publicly-funded voucher program, was greeted with substantial attention. Voucher opponents hold up the study as evidence that such programs do not result in the desirable outcomes that advocates had suggested, particularly improved student learning. Supporters of vouchers note that the program effectively serves poor families, does not draw high achieving students from public schools, and improves parent involvement and satisfaction, even if it does not clearly increase student learning.

*Greene, Peterson and Du (1996).* Shortly after the original data were released, researchers at Harvard and Princeton independently reanalyzed the Milwaukee data using the "natural experiment" afforded by the voucher applicants who were not selected in the random voucher assignment process. Greene, Peterson, and Du (1996) argued that not only did Witte et al. (1994) fail to analyze the data available for randomly assigned students, but that they also failed to apply necessary blocking and hierarchical techniques. Thus, in a series of analyses, Greene et al. compare ITBS scores of voucher students with their randomly assigned public school peers over each of the first four years of the program. Each hierarchical analysis is blocked on three variables: ethnicity, year of entry (into the voucher program), and grade level. The results of the subsequent analyses indicated that when achievement scores are adjusted for gender, voucher students outperform their public school peers in mathematics during year four (estimated standardized effect of 11.59 using 2-tailed tests of significance) or years three and four (estimated standardized effect of 4.98 using 1-tailed tests of significance);<sup>2</sup> however, no significant differences were found in mathematics for years one or two, or in reading for any year. When achievement scores are adjusted for gender, family income, and mother's education, there are no significant differences in mathematics or reading for any year. However, when achievement scores are adjusted for gender and prior test scores, voucher students significantly outperform their public school peers in both reading and mathematics during year three, but not in years one, two, or four. Thus, Greene, Peterson, and Du were led to conclude that, "Students who remain in the choice experiment for three to four years learn more than those not selected" (pp. 5-6).

*Rouse (1997).* Independent of Greene et al. (1997), Rouse (1997) reanalyzed the Milwaukee data comparing voucher students with randomly non-selected public school students and a separate random sample of Milwaukee public school students. Rouse estimates the effects of program participation controlling for individual fixed-effects and reports that participation in the voucher program increased mathematics scores by 1.5 - 2.3 percentile points per year, a

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statistically significant and positive program effect. However, she finds no significant program effect on students' reading scores. Rouse notes several caveats to her analyses and cautions that "these are average effects that do not necessarily mean all of the choice schools are 'better' than the Milwaukee public schools" (p. 33).

Across the three studies, it seems clear that the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program is effective in enhancing choice for low-income, predominately African American and Hispanic families. Children of families who pursue the vouchers may be somewhat more "at-risk" than the typical MPS student in that they are: more likely to live in a single parent home, poorer, are achieving at lower levels, and have parents who are less involved in their education. Conversely, these children are somewhat less "at-risk" in that: their mothers are slightly better educated and they have fewer siblings. What is much less clear is whether participation in the voucher program leads to greater student achievement.

### *The Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program*

The most recent publicly-funded voucher program was implemented in Cleveland, Ohio in 1996 and provides private school tuition scholarships (i.e., vouchers) to poor families within the Cleveland public school district. Vouchers are awarded to families primarily on the basis of income, but with an attempt to ensure that the relative ethnic enrollments of Cleveland public schools are maintained within the program. First consideration is given to families whose income is at or below the federal poverty level, then to families with income of between 100% and 200% of the federal poverty index, and then, if any scholarships or tutoring grants remain, families with greater income are eligible. Within each income range, scholarships are awarded through a random lottery process, structured to ensure that 75% of the scholarship recipients are African American. In its first year (1996-97), the program enrolled 1,801 children in 41 private schools, three of which these schools were non-religious.

As in Milwaukee, the focus of the program was on providing educational choice and assistance to low-income, inner-city families, including the option of using state funds to pay for private education. However, the Cleveland program differed from the choice program in Milwaukee in three significant ways. First, the Cleveland program focused on children in grades kindergarten through three during the first year with a grade added each subsequent year through grade eight. Second, the Cleveland program provided state assistance to families who wished to continue to enroll their children in public school, but who wanted additional educational assistance from state-approved tutors. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the Cleveland program allowed parents to choose private schools with religious affiliations.

The legislation which established the scholarship and tutoring grant program required the Ohio Department of Education to conduct an independent evaluation of the pro-

gram during the first three years of its operation. Through a competitive bidding process, the Indiana Center for Evaluation at Indiana University was selected to complete this work. In addition to the state-sponsored evaluation, Greene et al. (1997) have completed studies of two non-religious schools (HOPE schools) which were established by an active supporter of vouchers and have conducted a reanalysis of the first-year results of Metcalf, Boone, Stage, Chilton, Muller, and Tait (1997). These reports provide the limited source of empirical information on the Cleveland voucher program.

*Metcalf, Boone, Stage, Chilton, Muller, and Tait (1997).* Beginning in April, 1997, the independent research team at Indiana University implemented the first of a multi-year examination of several elements of the Cleveland voucher program. During the first year, primary focus was given to evaluating the effects of the voucher program on students' academic achievement and to establishing a dataset and procedures that would allow longitudinal evaluation of the program's effects for at least three years. Because all students who had applied for a voucher had been offered one, the ideal comparison group (consisting of students whose families had applied for a voucher, but who had not been selected in the random lottery) was not available. As a result, it was critical that the impact of the program take into account other relevant variables which might impact students' academic performance. Previous literature had suggested that students who participated in choice programs were likely to be among the most successful public school students, the evaluation team felt it particularly important to obtain a measure of students' academic performance prior to entry into the voucher program.

In May, 1997, the Terra Nova Survey, Form 13 (CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1996) was administered by independent proctors who had been trained and were supervised by the evaluation team. It should be noted that the two HOPE schools refused to allow their students to be tested, however they agreed to provide students' scores on a different achievement test administered as a part of the Greene et al. (1997) study.

The findings of Metcalf et al. (1997) seemed to support those of Witte (1994) in that the voucher program did not promote increased student achievement, at least in the first year. Achievement of participating students was not significantly different from that of non-participating public school students after other relevant variables were accounted for. Similarly, Cleveland voucher students were more likely to come from single parent households, usually headed by a mother. However, Metcalf and his colleagues report somewhat different results related to the characteristics of the participating students. Voucher students in Milwaukee were of lower income and somewhat more likely to be non-minority than their public school peers, but students in Cleveland were of very similar income and ethnicity to students in the public schools. Further, whereas voucher students in Milwaukee were among the lowest achieving students prior to their entry into the program, voucher students in Cleve-

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land were achieving at slightly higher levels than their public school peers before they entered their voucher schools.

The first-year results from the Cleveland program were noted by Metcalf et al. (1997) as tentative, based only on the first of a multi-year evaluation and subject to the limitations of the evaluation. While the study addressed the concerns of Rouse and others related to control of the achievement testing process, it did not control for at least two important variables. First, no measure of parental education level was obtained, a factor related to students' academic achievement. Second, the study did not make use of a randomly assigned comparison group of students, thus leaving open the possibility that the voucher and non-voucher students were different in important ways. The release of the first-year report provoked a flurry of attention from both advocates and opponents of vouchers and, like the evaluation efforts in Milwaukee, prompted reanalysis by Greene (1997) and his colleagues.

*Greene, Howell, and Peterson (1997) and Peterson, Greene, and Howell (1998).* Greene, Howell, and Peterson (1997) provide two additional evaluations of the Cleveland voucher program during its first year. In their first study, Greene et al. (1997) collected data on the effects of participation in the voucher program on parents' satisfaction with their children's schools and the effects of the voucher program on students' academic achievement. This was done by conducting telephone surveys and by examining fall to spring changes in the academic achievement of 263 voucher students attending the two private HOPE schools.

Parental interviews were conducted during the summer of 1997 with response rates (number of parents agreeing to be interviewed) of 74.1% for recipients and 48.6% for non-recipients. Green et al. (1997) report that recipients indicated that the primary reason for their interest in the voucher program was improved academic quality (85%), followed by safety (79%), school location (not reported), and religion (37%), and that they were much more satisfied with virtually every aspect of their children's schools than were non-recipients. Minority recipients were slightly less satisfied with their private school than were non-minority recipients (3% difference indicated, but not reported), whereas there were no differences between minority and non-minority non-recipients.

In the second portion of their study, Greene et al. (1997) examine fall to spring changes in academic achievement test scores of children attending the two HOPE schools. These schools were newly established specifically to accommodate voucher children for whom sufficient space might not be available in other private schools and are of particular interest. These schools announced from the outset that they would accept all students who applied for admission including "many of the poorest and most educationally disadvantaged students" (p.10), a fact that is borne out by examination of second grade test scores. Further, the HOPE schools enroll nearly 15% of all voucher students.

From their inception, the HOPE schools integrated a program of self-evaluation which was to include administration of the California Achievement Test, Form E (CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1985) in the fall and spring of each year. Classroom teachers proctored each administration of the Complete Battery over a week-long period. The investigators found that the students improved significantly from fall to spring testing in math and reading. Upon collection of fall, 1997 data, the investigators found the gains made by students during the previous year continued, though they diminished somewhat.

Greene et al. (1997) note that "definitive conclusions about the effects of the scholarship program on academic achievement depend upon the collection of additional data" (p.10). However, they suggest that the generally positive and statistically significant gains made by these students are particularly impressive when contrasted with "the 1 to 2 point decline that is typical of inner-city students" (p. 10). Across the parental attitude and student achievement data, the investigators find substantial evidence in favor of the voucher program and little evidence to support those who argue against it. They further conclude that the results indicate the need for choice programs to be structured to provide special funding arrangements when necessary and to ensure that students with special needs are not overlooked.

The second study conducted by Peterson, Greene, and Howell (1998) was a reanalysis of third-grade achievement data collected and then made public by Metcalf et al. (1997). Peterson et al. were critical of several aspects of the initial study, noting particularly the decision of the original researchers not to include in their analyses the unique test data for students in the two HOPE schools (see above) and suggesting that the second-grade test scores used as covariates in the original study were "dubious" (p. 2). Thus, Peterson and his colleagues transformed students' scores to a common metric (they use the term "percentile points" when referring to these scores, but they appear to be NCE scores), producing a larger sample, and then reanalyze the achievement data. They found that after covarying on gender, ethnicity, family income, and family structure, but without including the measure of prior achievement, voucher students' third-grade achievement is significantly higher than that of their public school peers in language and science ( $p < .01$ ), but not significantly different in reading, mathematics, or science. The investigators note that the differences in reading and social studies, which favor voucher students, are significant when a one-tailed test with  $p < .10$  is applied. When prior achievement is included in the covariates, the differences in language and science, both favoring voucher students, are significant at  $p < .10$  in a one-tailed test.

Summarizing their report, Peterson et al. (1998) indicate differences in methodology between their study and Metcalf et al. (1997), but that "Both studies find positive choice school effects in some subject domains among third-grade students" (p. 5).

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The results of evaluation of the Cleveland voucher program are tentative and early; much more time and data are needed before conclusions can be drawn with confidence. Perhaps because the program is so new and data drawn from it limited, the findings of three studies conducted to date appear to provide somewhat conflicting results. In general, parents whose children participate in the voucher program seem to be pleased with the opportunity they are provided and feel satisfied with the private schools their children attend. They based their decision to pursue a tuition voucher primarily on their interest in improving the quality of their children's education and concern over the safety of their children's public school. The effects of the voucher program on children's academic achievement are unclear. Students who participate in the program were achieving at higher levels than their public school classmates before entering the program. When these initial differences are taken into account, the voucher program appears to affect no significantly greater improvement in students' academic achievement than they would have experienced had they continued to attend public school after one year.

### Summary

Surprisingly little research has been conducted on publicly-funded voucher programs. And, in many ways, the findings have been subjected to interpretations based as much on ideology as on scholarly detachment. Unfortunately, there remains considerable misunderstanding of the results of research on vouchers and confusion is exacerbated by highly public commentary from those on both sides of the issue. Nonetheless, examination of research related to school choice and particularly of publicly-funded vouchers reveals some consistent, though undoubtedly tentative patterns. A multitude of factors will impact the direction, extent, and nature of school choice in coming years. Still, some "predictions" are possible.

Families will continue to press for a wider variety of choices for their children's education and policy makers, both conservative and liberal, are likely to respond. Public schools have and must continue to develop programs to attract and retain families who now expect at least some range of choices. As forced busing for desegregation continues to decline while non-public alternatives become more prevalent, metropolitan school districts are presented with both a challenge and an opportunity. Students and funds which have previously been moved from these districts to suburban schools now provide an increased market for public school education. Further, whereas previous attempts at desegregation relied on imposed school assignment, most efforts (e.g., the federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program) now focus on developing programs which attempt to improve racial balance by attracting targeted minority or non-minority students. It seems, then, that at least one impact of the choice movement has been and will continue to be an

increase in the number and variety of options public schools will provide.

If a substantial number of families are provided with and take advantage of alternatives to public education, the effect on public schooling as it has been conducted will be negative as resources for public schools would diminish if funds are redirected. It could be argued that if public schools fail to provide a service that is desired by enough people (i.e., customers) to remain viable, they should be forced to redesign themselves or close. However, even though U.S. public schools must deal with greater competition than ever before, there is no evidence to suggest that non-public competition will ever be allowed to reach a point at which the public school system itself is endangered. Public education employs millions of people, many of whom belong to a well-organized professional union with substantial political clout, it generates substantial income for businesses that supply services and products to the schools, and it touches literally every citizen. To date, no choice programs, public or private, have the potential to destroy the well entrenched monolith that is public education in this country.

Fundamentally, greater family control over education, within obvious parameters, should be encouraged. Many in the education establishment would argue that the parameters within which choice should be allowed should be relatively restrictive to minimize differences in the outcomes and benefits students derive. However, I would argue that the widest possible range of choice should be made available and that, though it will not be popular, the educational market should be allowed to operate.

Educational choice will continue to be the most contentious issue in U.S. education for the foreseeable future. As educators, particularly university-based educators, we have a unique opportunity to use the educational choice movement to promote innovative, creative approaches to schools and teaching. In order to draw students and maintain enrollments, schools will be seeking assistance in developing and improving programs to make them more attractive to greater numbers of families. If we take advantage of this opportunity, we have to potential to make schools more inviting and supportive places for children.

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<sup>1</sup> Two related facts are noteworthy. First, the comparison sample of non-voucher public school students is open to question due to selection bias. Although Witte and his colleagues attempted to control for many relevant, non-program variables (e.g., prior achievement, gender, income, etc.), it must be assumed that participating students and families were substantially different from non-participating families at least in their motivation, interest, willingness, or ability to pursue the voucher. Second, because comparisons of students' academic achievement were based on the results of tests administered by the schools, no control of the conditions of testing were available to Witte et al.

<sup>2</sup> See Abelson (1996) for a humorous discussion of the "one and a half tailed test."

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# *Conference Highlights*

## *The 1998 Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association*

Jeffrey B. Hecht, Program Chair  
Illinois State University

From October 14<sup>th</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup> of this year members of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (MWERA) gathered at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza in Chicago, Illinois for MWERA-98, our annual conference. Over 325 people registered for this four day meeting, attending and presenting at a variety of sessions including papers, symposia, roundtable discussion/posters, invited speakers, meetings and socials. MWERA-98 represented the culmination of over a year of hard work by a number of people. First, though, lets review the conference.

MWERA-98 began on Wednesday afternoon (the 14<sup>th</sup>) with a number of people attending pre-conference workshops. This year several additional workshops were also held Thursday through Saturday, giving attendees the opportunity to participate in more than one interesting event. Initial feedback from this scheduling was positive, and suggests that members might want a greater variety of in-depth experiences held throughout future conferences (something that will be looked into for the 1999 annual meeting).

Ed Hines, University Distinguished Professor from Illinois State University, kicked-off the meeting with a Wednesday evening address titled "Policy Research in Higher Education: Data, Decision, & Dilemmas". Ed's talk presented information on the changing nature of policy development and funding over the past several decades for state-supported institutions of higher education. His insights

into what might come in the next few years evoked interesting discussion among session attendees, and gave everyone food for thought for the next few days.

Thursday morning began bright and early at 8:00 am with the first paper presentation sessions. Then, at 9:30 am, Bob Albrecht, the Chief Academic Officer from Western Governors University, presented an address titled "Western Governors University: New Challenges, New Technologies, New University". This presentation described the nature and mission of WGU, its support being received from numerous states and companies, and its relationship with traditional institutions of higher education. Talking with many session attendees after the talk revealed that folks did not know a lot about WGU, with many thinking it was another University of Phoenix (known for its distance education initiatives). The actual mission of WGU, addressing competency evaluation and assessment together with cooperative agreements with other institutions, raised folks understanding in and interest about this new model of higher education delivery.

The day continued with additional paper sessions, symposia, and workshops. This year division meetings were held throughout the day on both Thursday and Friday, with the result being a reported increase in meeting attendance and division interest across all divisions! Thursday afternoon saw everyone in the Sauganash Ballroom East for 50 minutes of roundtables/posters. Participants were able to move from

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table to table, meeting and discussing with presenters from a variety of different topics. The number of table-top posters were a big hit, providing another way for presenters to convey their work. Also new this year were a number of table dedicated to "Hot Topics" discussions. Rather than presenting a formal research paper, these presenters engaged participants in a lively discussion concerning many of the hottest issues facing educators today. Special thanks to Tom Parish, then MWERA President-Elect, for suggesting and organizing these innovative presentations. Thursday concluded with the traditional Cracker Barrel social!

In addition to continued presentations, Friday brought attendees a catered luncheon with an invited address by Judith Gappa, Professor of Educational Administration from Purdue University. Following an excellent meal, Judy presented information about the changing nature of the higher education professoriate. Her talk highlighted issues that are affecting many of the MWERA membership: increasing numbers of non-tenure appointments, changing work loads and expectations, and pressures for modifications to the traditionally held values of academic freedom and tenure. The follow-up session provided attendees the opportunity to examine these issues in greater depth. Another roundtable discussion/poster session highlighted Friday afternoon's activities, along with additional paper sessions and division meetings. That evening MWERA President, Kim Metcalf, hosted the President's Reception, where everyone talked and relaxed to good food, drink, and music.

The final day of the conference, Saturday, saw additional paper presentations and workshops. The highlight, however, was the Presidential Address given by MWERA

President, Kim Metcalf, Associate Professor from Indiana University. Kim's talk addressed his work on the use of private tuition vouchers, a movement gaining in popularity across the United States. Early results from his evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship Program has produced interesting data on the usefulness of vouchers, and sparked a lively interest and follow-up questions from the packed room of attendees! The conference officially ended at Noon following the last sessions.

Overall, the conference was a great success. Attendance was up, and both presenters and attendees reported generally good experiences throughout the meeting (full feedback details are being compiled by Member-at-Large Mary Ann Wham). I want to again thank all of the Division Senior and Junior Chairs who worked so hard coordinating the submissions, review, and session organization for their respective divisions. Sharon McNeely, Thomas Parish, and Jean Pierce deserve special praise for their extra efforts on various parts of the program, insuring that everything came together just the way it was supposed to. Deb Bainer, Richard Smith, and Gene Kramer, the co-editors of the *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, deserve special thanks for all their assistance and extra efforts in promoting the meeting, and making sure that the inserts and journal looked fantastic! Finally, student volunteers from both Illinois State University and Northeastern Illinois University staffed the registration table, and made sure that the sessions rooms were all well staffed throughout the conference. Preparing for MWERA-98 took an enormous amount of personal time and effort; however, it was time and effort that paid off handsomely. I am looking forward to next year's conference already!

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# *Electronic or Paper?*

## *Comparing Submissions to MWERA-98*

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The World Wide Web is being used by many professional organizations and societies to provide general information, details of upcoming meetings and events, and membership specific resources. A recent addition has been to provide the means to submit proposals, and view upcoming meeting programs, as a part of the web site. This past year's efforts by the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (MWERA) have taken this concept one step further. In addition to static program information (i.e., basic program details, host city information, and invited speaker profiles), the MWERA-98 conference web site supported both traditional paper and on-line submission of presentation proposals. An on-line database allowed proposers to query the review and scheduling status of their submissions. This same database provided the entire meeting program, including paper abstracts, in an on-line search mechanism designed for locating both sessions, and individual presentations, of interest.

Did proposers for the MWERA-98 conference take advantage of the electronic submission option? Were there differences in the kinds of people who submitted electronically versus on paper? Were certain kinds of presentation types, or certain divisions, more or less likely to receive proposals in a certain format? Finally, was the method of submission related to when the presentation was submitted, the completeness of the proposal package, or its acceptance or rejection? These questions were framed as part of a research study connected with MWERA-98.

### Background

The Mid-Western Educational Research Association (MWERA) is an organization of scholars and practitioners, researchers and instructors, and educators from all level and perspectives. Each years MWERA hosts a four-day conference where participants share research findings and opinions in a collegial atmosphere. Like most regional professional meetings, MWERA's annual conference provides a variety of presentation formats (traditional paper presentation, roundtable/poster, symposium, workshop, and alternative format) interspersed with invited speakers, special events, and socials.

In the past individuals interested in presenting a paper at the annual meeting were required to submit their application on paper. The packet typically consisted of: six copies of the official submission proposal form, three copies of a 100 to 150 word abstract, six copies of a two to three page summary (three with author identification and three with-

out), two 3 by 5 index cards with certain information, and four postage-paid, self addressed return envelopes. These materials were used by the Program Chair, Associate Program Chairs, and Division Chairs for the proposal's blind peer-review, and the preparation of the meeting program and abstracts book.

The MWERA Board of Directors decided to allow proposals to be submitted either on paper, in the traditional way, or over a World Wide Web site for the 1998 conference. For a variety of reasons it was decided not to allow e-mail proposal submissions (the most important being the inability, through e-mail, to insure a uniformity of submission materials). Instead, a web form was created (and tested in both Netscape Navigator version 4 and Internet Explorer version 4) to be used as the primary means of proposal submission. This form was linked (via ODBC) to a Microsoft Access 97 database, the result being that electronic submissions were entered directly and immediately by the web server into the appropriate fields in this database. This process, it was hoped, would greatly reduce the need for reformatting, retyping, and the bulk (but not all) of the error checking typically associated with processing paper submissions. Microsoft's IDC/HTX technology, using under Internet Information Server (IIS) version 4.0 on a Windows NT 4.0 server, was used for this purpose. This technology provided a straightforward and efficient means of entering and retrieving information between the database and the web browser. Active Server Page (ASP) technology was added later for database searching and program retrieval.

The Call for Proposals, circulated on paper and on the web site, provided information about both methods of submission, and interested parties were encouraged to try using the electronic submission alternative. Electronic submissions were enabled 120 days prior Call deadline (April 1, 1998). This deadline was eventually extended to the end of April, with the final proposals being received by the Program Chair in early May.

### Method

The on-line database contained all of the information submitted by each proposer, including: the principal presenter's name and address, the names and institutional affiliations of any co-presenters, the title of the proposed presentation, detailed information about the proposed presentation, and the proposal abstract and summary text. Proposals submitted electronically were automatically entered into this database; those submitted on paper were typed into

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the database (all items except for the longer summary text) by the Program Chair's staff. The system automatically recorded the date of initial proposal receipt, how the proposal was submitted (on paper or electronically), and whether or not the proposal was eventually accepted for presentation at the conference. Additional data fields detailing the paper and session scheduling, chair and discussant information, and presenter information was added later to the database, allowing the single data file to contain the full information for the entire conference.

Selected fields, minus any personal identifying information, were extracted from the database in mid-July immediately following the finalization of the meeting's program. These data were transferred to SPSS for Windows (version 8) for analysis.

### Results

A total of 193 proposals were submitted for the MWERA-98 conference: 108 (55.9%) on paper and 85 (44.1%) electronically. Slightly more than half of proposers still preferred the traditional paper method of submission, although a sizable number had opted for the electronic form.

Cross tabulations were run to see if differences existed between the on-paper proposers and the electronic proposers on a number of characteristic proposal elements. The first of these considered the division to which the proposal was submitted. Division K received the largest number of proposals both on paper and electronically, while Division F received the fewest. There was not a statistically significant difference between the rates of submission to the different division ( $\chi^2 = 10.208$ ,  $df = 11$ ,  $p = .512$ ). The desired format of presentation (paper, roundtable, symposium, workshop, or alternative session) was also examined. Traditional paper presentations were the most desired format, forming 72.5% of the total submissions, although there were also no statistically significant differences related to method of submission ( $\chi^2 = 4.477$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .345$ ).

The status of the proposer, whether a member of MWERA or a student, was next examined. More non-MWERA members (38.8%) than members (27.8%) submitted proposals electronically, although this difference was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 2.639$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .104$ ). The number of student electronic proposers was split, with 52.1% preferring the paper format and 47.9% using the electronic format ( $\chi^2 = .389$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .533$ ).

Statistically significant findings were only discovered in two of the comparisons that were made. The first examined proposals by state address of the principal presenter. MWERA-98 received proposals from principal presenters residing in 20 different states. Only electronic proposals (14 total) were received from individuals living in Colorado, Georgia, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas, while only on-paper proposals (16 total) were received from individuals in Kansas, North Dakota, South

Dakota, Tennessee, and Virginia. Proposals were received in both formats from the remaining seven states. This difference is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 33.512$ ,  $df = 19$ ,  $p = .021$ ). One possible explanation for this is the location of the MWERA annual conference, held for the past several years in Chicago, Illinois. The electronic only states tended to be those the furthest geographically from Chicago, while the paper only states are located somewhat closer. Why this geographic distance should matter to proposers is puzzling, given the number and reliability of overnight mail services available.

The second statistically significant finding concerned the date the proposals were received. The first proposal (which was submitted on paper) was received 55 days before the Call deadline. Two distinct peaks of proposals were then received at eight days before the deadline (7 proposals) and two days before the deadline (20 proposals). Additional proposals were received on paper over the five days following the deadline, with most coming in the next day (16 proposals) or five days later (17 proposals). There was then a sharp drop-off of paper submissions until the 29<sup>th</sup> day after the call (the day before the extended call deadline) when another group of submissions arrived (7 proposals). This is in contrast to the electronic submissions, 29% of which (25 proposals) arrived on the deadline date. Only six additional electronic proposals were received as the largest group on the 26<sup>th</sup> day after the original call deadline. This difference was significant ( $\chi^2 = 139.723$ ,  $df = 333$ ,  $p < .000$ ).

Length of proposal titles, number of words in the abstract, number of co-authors, proposal descriptor(s) selected, and proposal acceptance rate were also compared between proposals submitted on paper and those submitted electronically. No other statistically significant differences were found.

### Discussion

The experiences of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association 1998 Program Planning committee show that electronic submission is a viable means to receive proposals for a regional meeting. While it required additional work to set up and maintain the web site used to collect the electronic submissions, the results seem well worth the extra effort. A large number of the MWERA-98 proposers chose to use the electronic proposal format, a method that saved meeting planners considerable time as these submissions' critical information did not have to then be hand entered into the meeting database. The electronic submissions were essentially indistinguishable from those submitted on paper, except for the states from which they came from and the dates on which they arrived. These two significant differences may have some implications for future program planners as they consider both marketing their regional meetings outside of their traditional geographic boundaries, and scheduling the staffing of the processing of received proposals.

An additional benefit to the program committee was evident at the production of the Program (a special issue of the *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*) and Presentation Abstracts book (a compilation of all abstracts accepted to the conference). In prior years the information for these two items had to all be typed into a computer, or cut and pasted together by hand, by program committee staff. This year due to the number of electronic submissions, which went directly into the database, that work was cut almost in half. Further, since the information was in a database (as opposed to a word processing file) it was very easily sort, selected, and merged into the necessary formats for both printed items. It is estimated that this alone saved almost four weeks of production effort by the program committee staff. This also allowed the final production of these items to be put off several additional weeks each while still meeting their respective deadlines, resulting in fewer changes necessary for the Program Addendum handout.

Unsolicited comments concerning the electronic submission process received from electronic proposers were uniformly positive and encouraging. Most indicated that they enjoyed being able to “cut-and-paste” from their word processor directly into a web form, not having to type cover sheets and index cards, and being able to use the web site to check on the status of their proposal. Only one person reported experiencing a difficulty in submitting electronically, and that was eventually tracked down to their use of an extremely old version of a web browser (one that did not sup-

port form processing completely). Comments from paper proposers were also positive. Many reported having used the web site to check on the status of their proposals even though the original submission was made on paper. During the months following the close of the Call for Proposals the site has received over 4,600 “hits” of users searching the database for locate sessions and papers of interest.

Other state and regional organizations will be considering providing electronic proposal submissions in the years to come. The results of this research should reassure those meeting planners of the popularity of this alternative to traditional on-paper submissions. Its relative ease of implementation, time saving features, and power to provide additional on-line information will make electronic submissions and databases more popular in the coming years. Program Chairs and committees, and Association Boards of Directors, should be reassured that proposal quality appears not to be affected by the type of submission medium, and that the rates of submissions by different constituencies to different divisions are likewise not different. There are numerous reasons why electronic submission would be inappropriate as the sole means of proposal submission; however, a parallel system of web-based and paper-based proposal submissions does seem to meet the needs of many MWERA members while simultaneously easing the burden of program production (for the Program Chair and Committee) and providing additional immediate, up-to-date information for potential meeting attendees.

### *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* *Call for Special Editors*

The *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* is a scholarly journal that publishes research-based articles addressing a full range of educational issues. The journal also publishes literature reviews, theoretical and methodological discussions that make an original contribution to the research literature, book reviews, and feature columns. There are four issues of the journal published annually. The Summer issue is the program for the Annual Meeting.

Recently, the editorial advisory board recommended that the Autumn issue each year should be devoted to a special topic. Specifically, all articles in the Autumn issue should explore a topic of general interest in education and research, each focusing on a different aspect of the topic.

The journal is now seeking individuals interested in serving as special editors for Autumn issues for 2000–2002. In order to be considered as a special editor, please provide the following information in a 1-2 page proposal.

- 1) The special topic you wish to explore, and different viewpoints or perspectives which contributed articles may take. Include an explanation for why this is an important topic for the journal to explore and why it would appeal to the readership.
- 2) How you plan to solicit manuscripts for the issue. If you expect to invite manuscripts, from whom will the manuscripts be solicited? Do you expect to run a call for manuscripts in an issue of the journal?
- 3) Your background experience in authoring educational research and in editing, reviewing, and publishing journal manuscripts.

Each special issue should contain 40 typeset pages of copy, or about 6-8 manuscripts depending on length. Final manuscripts should be submitted to the editorial team in hard copy and on disk no later than July 15 of the year of publication for processing and printing.

The editorial team, in conjunction with the incoming editors, will make final decisions on the appointment of special editors. Questions regarding the journal or the roles of the special editor should be directed to the current editors.

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# *The History of MWERA and the Role and Scope of Its Historian*

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## Background

The Mid-Western Educational Research Association (MWERA) has an exciting history which commenced in the 1970s through the concerted efforts of those educational researchers who were instrumental in founding our association. About two decades later, MWERA was still up and running, but memories of its early and middle developmental years were in danger of gradually fading.

To address this situation, the MWERA Board of Directors commissioned Theresa (Terri) Strand and Charles (Andy) Anderson, former colleagues at ETS and long time members of MWERA, to conduct an historical study of the association. Early on these individuals identified the need to establish MWERA's archives. The extensive collection of association documents gathered and maintained by Charles Anderson, who served as MWERA's Treasurer/Executive Officer from 1980 through 1994 underwent systematic review and restructuring into the current MWERA archives, and eventually served as the basis for the completed historical study.

*Historian/Archivist's Role.* As MWERA's first historian/archivist, Dr. Terri Strand served as project director in organizing and assembling MWERA's archives and preparing the final report of the Association's historical study. Ensuing responsibilities include collecting, maintaining, and analyzing relevant documents; updating the documentation of the MWERA archives on an ongoing basis; and providing products and services targeted to the information needs of the association, including preparation of periodic historical documents and studies.

*Scope of the Archives.* Holdings of the MWERA archives are classified within the following content categories:

- 1) Archives Guides and Summaries
- 2) Official Documents
- 3) Constitution/Bylaws
- 4) Governance, Operations, and Membership
- 5) Minutes of Governance Meetings
- 6) Financial Statements and Budgets
- 7) Annual Conferences
- 8) Journals and Newsletters
- 9) Historic and Other Important Documents
- 10) Association Relationships
- 11) Election Mailings
- 12) Multimedia Holdings

The collection of documents in the Archives Guides and Summaries were prepared to provide a historic record of the many MWERA members who have served MWERA over the years. The documents include chronological listings of all MWERA presidents, secretaries, members-at-large, treasurers/executive officers, editors, council members and the years they served.

Additionally, detailed information was assembled concerning MWERA's annual conferences, including: dates, cities, and co-sponsoring organizations, invited speakers and their topics, and the titles of numerous professional training workshops and their presenters. Multimedia holding include a variety of photographs, audio cassettes, and videotapes.

## Accomplishments

The major accomplishments of Terri Strand, our current Historian/Archivist, have been the preparation of the historical study and the assembly and documentation of the MWERA Archives. The study, *MWERA: Promise and Fulfillment-Historical Study of the Association from Its Early Years Through 1994*, was initially published in the fall 1997 issue of the *Mid-western Researcher* (Volume 10, Number 4).

Related accomplishments include preparation of a detailed MWERA timeline, which covered the pioneering spirit of the seventies, challenges of the eighties, and organizational changes occurring during the nineties.

Other accomplishments by Terri Strand include analysis of MWERA membership data generated by Charles Anderson for 1984 through 1994; content analyses of historic documents, including MWERA's articles of incorporation, constitutional changes, and correspondence; and supportive services for MWERA's presidents, executive officers, association journal editors, and the 1994 conference videotape producer. Planning activities for 1999 and beyond are currently underway.

Obviously, Terri has already done some very important things for MWERA, and her fondest wish is to continue doing so for the foreseeable future. To do this, however, she really needs everyone's help. So if Terri contacts you requesting information, or if you believe that you possess valuable information that may assist her in her historian/archivist role, the Board of Directors of MWERA implores you to provide her with such information in a timely fashion. Truly, if we will all do our share, Terri will do hers too, and MWERA will certainly benefit as a result.

## *The Mid-Western Educational Research Association* *Gift Membership*

A gift membership has been given to you, \_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_

Your name is now included as a member in one of the most recognized, well respected, educational research groups in the United States and Canada. Your **one year membership** includes a subscription to the ***Mid-Western Educational Researcher***, the Association's journal that highlights research articles, features, interviews, and Association news. Members pay reduced registration fees for the annual meeting held in Chicago in October. This conference attracts many nationally recognized leaders in educational research. Enjoy your membership.

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Thank you for providing your colleague, student, or friend with a special one year gift membership to the Mid-Western Educational Research Association. It is a gift of professional involvement that is sure to be appreciated throughout the year. To give your gift membership fill out the top portion of this card and use it to inform the recipient of the gift membership; then fill out the bottom portion of this card and mail it with your check to: **Jean W. Pierce - Dept EDCSE - Northern Illinois Univ. - DeKalb, IL 60115**

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*(continued from inside front cover)*

As one reviews this history of the College of Education and Allied Professions, it becomes evident that three factors influenced its history. First is the focus. What stands out is the consistency of the mission centered on collaboration with local schools and agencies to prepare teachers for area schools with an urban emphasis. Second, the college has a continuing succession of strong faculty who have provided leadership and vision. Third is success in faculty research and service.

From very humble beginnings, the College of Education and Allied Professions has evolved into a college of over 4,500 students spanning 80 programmatic options at four separate degree levels. It has been recognized for quality of instruction and cutting edge in programming. The faculty, staff and students of the college are proud of their heritage. By all objective criteria the college has never been stronger in terms of quality of its programs, quality of its faculty, quality of its students, support from the university, support from the community, sponsored research, service activities and national reputation.

As the new millennium is approaching the College of Education and Allied Professions is poised to accept the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> Century teacher preparation. By requiring a strong liberal arts foundation, coupled with rigorous teacher training, the College has taken its place among other distinguished institutions that produce tomorrow's educational leaders.

## *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*

### *Call for Feature Writers*

The *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* is a scholarly journal that publishes research-based articles addressing a full range of educational issues. The journal also publishes literature reviews, theoretical and methodological discussions that make an original contribution to the research literature, and feature columns. There are four issues of the journal published annually.

The journal is now seeking writers interested in contributing to three of its feature columns.

- 1) The **Conversations** column involves an in-depth, focused interview with a prominent person. Columns are generally up to 3000 words in length and must be accompanied by a photograph of the person interviewed.
- 2) The **Book Review** column focuses on a notable book, either a new publication or a "classic." Columns are generally up to 2500 words in length.
- 3) **Voices in Education** is a column which assembles pithy quotes or opinions from prominent persons or representative groups of individuals. The column addresses a range of topics with wide appeal to the education community and readership. Use of telephone or e-mail to assemble quotes or opinions is recommended for accuracy. Columns are up to 2000 words in length and assume a casual format.

The editors of the journal make final decisions on the acceptance and publication of feature columns. Questions regarding the journal or the submission of feature columns should be directed to the editors.

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