

**Leadership in faculty evaluation and development: some thoughts on why and how  
the “meta-profession” can control its own destiny.**

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**Introduction:**

In previous work (Theall, 2002a, 2002b; Theall & Arreola, 2001), I have discussed issues that impact on the professional lives of faculty and presented guidelines for effective leadership of faculty evaluation and development activities. The essence of these discussions is as follows.

What is a profession?

Standard definitions of the word profession do not provide much insight. “Profess” stems from the roots ‘pro’ (before) and ‘fateor’ (to avow). A “profession” is a calling superior to a mere trade or handicraft. “Professional” is a term often applied in opposition to “amateur” or to persons who make their living in arts in which non-professional engage; a rather tautological definition. In common use, however, the term has come to mean anyone who does something for profit rather than as an avocation (e.g., professional athletes) or anyone who regularly engages in any kind of work (e.g., professional cosmetologists, exotic dancers, or even members of the American Association of Professional Psychics). What differentiates faculty from this ever-widening range of so-called professionals? The long-standing answer goes beyond the traditions of education and higher education, and has historically been found in the realm of service to the greater good or to knowledge or to humankind. But in contemporary life, the weight of these definitions has paled. If education and the professoriate are to regain their rightful place and status, new and more complete definition are required, and the roles and responsibilities of faculty must be more clearly identified.

Characteristics of a true profession:

Beyond the rather general definition above, can professions be identified through some set of shared characteristics. True professions are internally controlled and the prefix “self” plays a major role in their definitions. Interestingly, in his definition of a “meta-theory”, Scriven (1991) said the following:

It deals with matters such as the definition of the field’s boundaries, its differences from neighboring fields or disciplines...It is often very informal, sometimes entirely implicit, but its existence is a prerequisite for the existence of a discipline, since it is the self-concept of the discipline, and a discipline without a self-concept is just practice in one place rather than another...” (p.232)

Indeed, a profession requires its own self-concept because without it, its work becomes just practice: a mere trade or handicraft. Here are some other characteristics that apply.

- Self-defined: the members of the profession determine its boundaries and scope
- Self-directed: the members of the profession influence its mission and direction

- Self-regulated: the members of the profession establish and maintain its rules
- Self-evaluated: the members of the profession review its, and their performance
- Self-corrective: the members of the profession take corrective actions when necessary
- Self-governing: the members of the profession exercise willing control over their professional behaviors
- Self-maintained: the members of the profession provide for its support
- Self-protective: the members of the profession stand up and argue for its principles and practices

While no profession is totally autonomous or free from appropriate oversight, **the overarching characteristic of true professions is their members willingness to take part in a unified effort to establish and maintain the quality and distinctiveness of their shared roles and responsibilities.**

### **The ‘meta-profession’ of college faculty**

The roles of faculty have been discussed in depth over the past dozen years, particularly as spurred by Boyer (1990), Glassick et. al. (1996), and the efforts of the Carnegie Commission and the AAHE (e.g., Shulman & Hutchings, 1998). The thrust of much of this dialogue has been based on Boyer’s redefinition of the “priorities of the profesorate” with an emphasis on four forms of scholarship (discovery, integration, application, and teaching). More recently, Bess and associates (2000) discussed in more depth, the roles of faculty within the realm of teaching. They identified three categorical roles (preparatory, contact, & facilitating) containing a total of seven sub-functions, and they suggested that no single person could effectively or completely carry out these functions semester by semester. Their proposed solution was to create teams of teachers with rotating responsibilities.

However, Arreola (1999) has argued that the responsibilities of faculty go beyond their disciplinary expertise, scholarship activities, and teaching responsibilities, and that view has been expanded (Arreola, Aleamoni, & Theall, 2001; Theall & Arreola, 2001) into a conceptualization of faculty as “meta-professionals” who are responsible for possessing and using a multi-faceted set of skills. An outline of these areas includes the following:

#### Elements of the base profession including:

- knowledge of the field and its content
- specific expertise in one or more sub-fields within the base field
- expertise in the methods of the discipline
  1. the processes and operations of the field
  2. practices of the field including applied and clinical practice
  3. the epistemology of the field
  4. methods of investigation of the field
  5. documentation techniques and publication
- networking within the discipline
- knowledge of professional organizations and activities
- participating in peer review

#### Elements of the teaching profession including:

- designing, developing, and delivering instruction
  1. knowledge of systematic instructional design process
  2. developing instructional objectives
  3. producing instructional materials
  4. choosing delivery methods
- assessing and evaluating instruction and its outcomes
  1. conducting classroom assessment
  2. testing and grading
  3. knowledge of teacher and course evaluation literature and practice
- knowledge of teaching and learning theory and practice
  1. understanding classroom, lab, clinical, distance, and other instructional settings
  2. knowledge of motivation

3. knowledge of individual differences
  4. knowledge of the dimensions of college teaching
  5. using sources of information
- managing learners and instructional processes
    1. sequencing, pacing, organizing
    2. using group process in small and large groups
    3. adapting methods to situations
  - using instructional tools, methods and technologies
    1. using new technologies
    2. using techniques such as collaborative methods
  - advising, mentoring, and related roles

Other elements of the college teaching profession including:

- understanding of higher education organization and operations
- knowledge of institutional policies and related regulations
- hiring, selecting, and evaluating faculty and staff
- knowledge of local promotion and tenure policies and practices
- participating in student and faculty recruiting efforts
- using leadership skills
- managing people and finances
- developing faculty and staff
- carrying out administrative duties
- goal setting and planning
- participating in various roles in team efforts
- participating in institutional governance
- participating in interdisciplinary curriculum development
- representing the institution, department, or discipline
- providing service of several types
- participating in outreach and community efforts

The irony of the situation is that **faculty receive little or no training or support for any roles except those of disciplinary expert and researcher.** In effect, the expectation of meta-professional productivity essentially contradicts the unilateral training of most college faculty and the restricted support provided by higher education institutions as faculty try to meet these expectations. The stress of such efforts has been well documented (Boice, 1992; Machell, 1989; Menges & Associates, 1999), and many of these same writers and others (e.g., Moxley, 1992; Schoenfeld & Magnan, 1992; Schuster, Wheeler, & Assoc, 1990; Sorcinelli & Austin, 1992) have proposed ways in which to help faculty meet the obligations of their positions. An additional irony lies in the fact that **expertise in every one of the areas noted above lies within literally every higher education campus. The potential to support and train faculty exists and the processes can be internally developed and provided.**

While the notion of a faculty meta-profession and the implications which it carries are being developed (Arreola, Aleamoni, & Theall, in progress) the many aspects of the idea have not yet been fully articulated. Nonetheless, one underlying concept has been identified: that **change within the profession (and thus throughout higher education) must emanate from within the ranks of the meta-professionals.** Given that most academic administrators rise from the ranks of the faculty, and that faculty influence the ideas and opinions of those whom they train (the future faculty), it is imperative that a meta-professional identity be developed and that the standards and behaviors expected of meta-professionals should be both largely defined, developed, maintained, and safeguarded by the members of the profession. **Self-support, self-development, self-evaluation, and self-governance are the hallmarks of strong professions and the case should be no different here.**

**Leadership in evaluation and assessment**

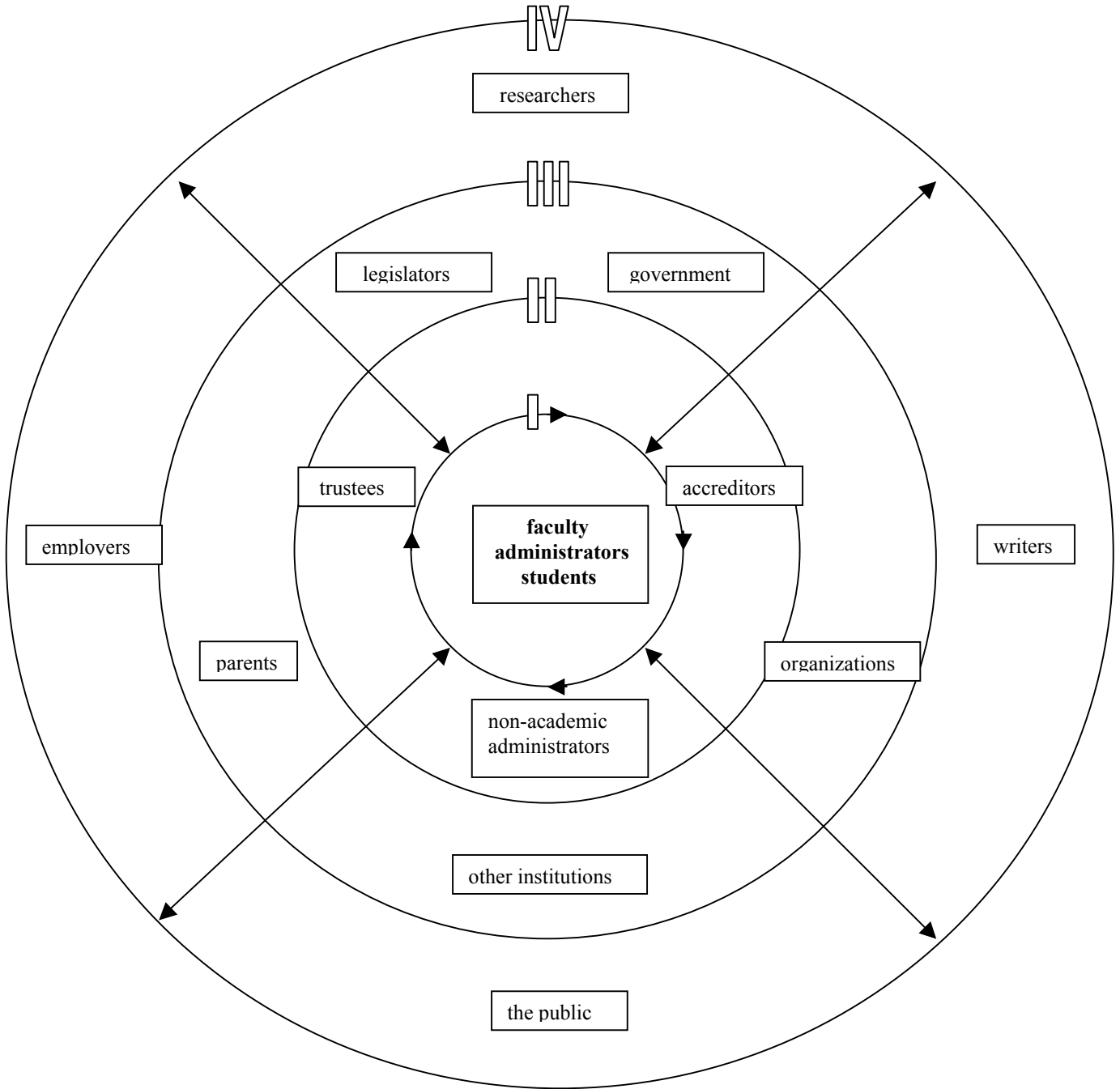
Leadership in higher education has been discussed in many contexts, but nowhere as deeply as in Birnbaum (1988, 1992, 2001) or as broadly in Diamond et. al. (2002). Birnbaum's work concentrated on research

into institutional, individual, and organizational characteristics and behaviors, while Diamond's explores applied guidelines for leaders. Not that the importance of leadership in evaluation and development has been ignored. Arreola has noted (2000 2<sup>nd</sup> ed) that despite the importance of faculty acceptance, the support of the administration is critical, saying,

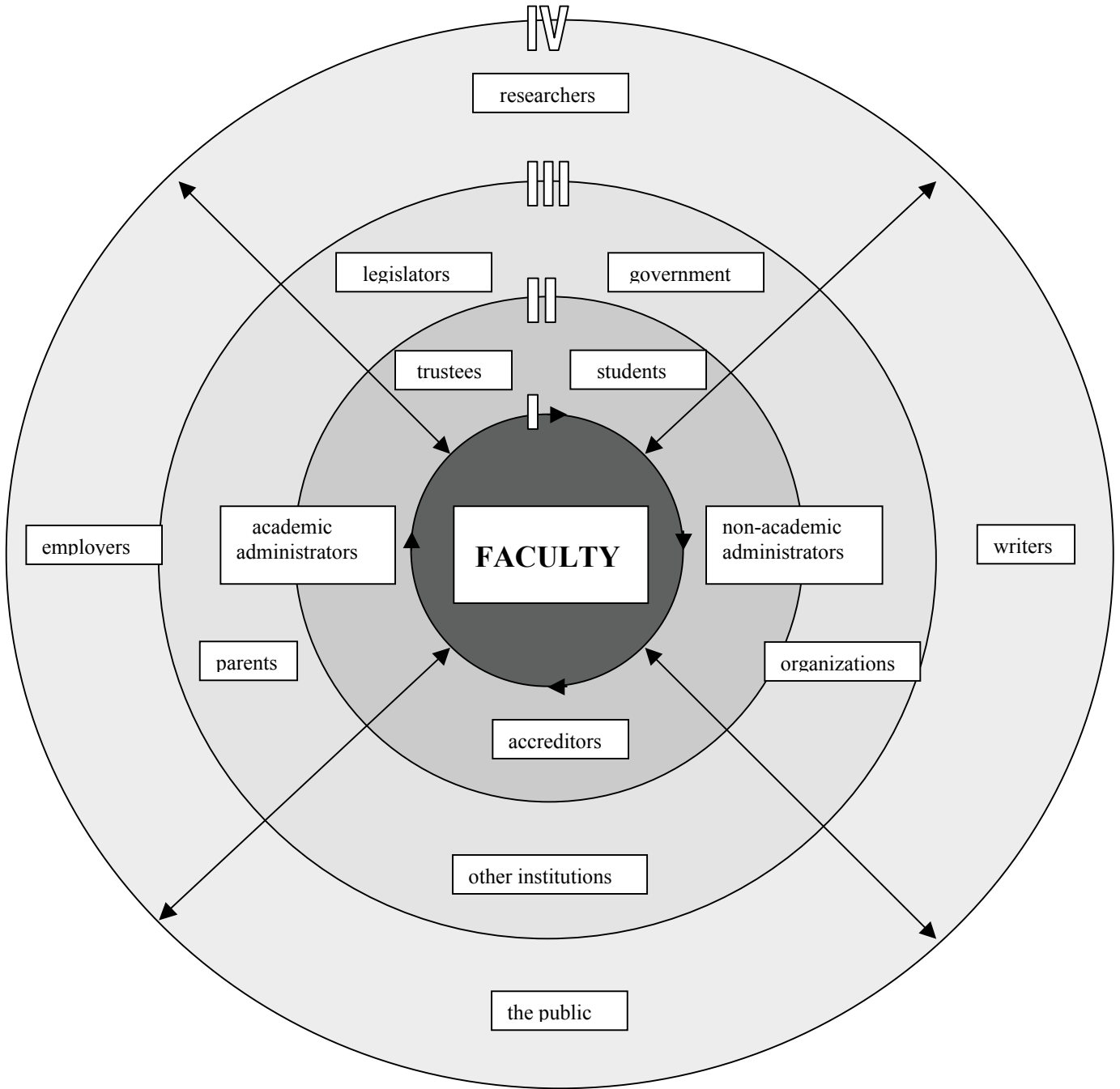
Faculty evaluation and development programs can fail for primarily two reasons: 1) the administration is not interested in whether it succeeds, and 2) the faculty are against it. ...Of the two threats to success, administrator apathy is the more deadly. (p. xxi)

In an attempt to move toward the development of the meta-profession and in recognition of the importance of leadership from within it, I will attempt to construct a model that displays the factors important to the overall context and that can be used to suggest the impact of each of these factors on the establishment of a professionally led meta-profession. The model is based on similar descriptions of leadership in evaluation and assessment from Theall (2002a, 2002b). The original is presented as Figure 1 and the meta-profession model as Figure 2.

**FIGURE 1**  
**ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION STAKEHOLDER MODEL**



**FIGURE 2**  
**META-PROFESSION STAKEHOLDER MODEL**



The stakeholders in both figures are the same but they differ in their relative weights and influence. Additionally, the two models, while similar, can be described in different ways. Figure 1 suggests the central roles of faculty, students and administrators in evaluation and assessment, particularly by virtue of their degree of involvement with ongoing policy and process. However, even at the more distant levels of the model, the stakeholders can exert influence on evaluation and assessment policy and practice. A single piece of research from anyone on a topic (like grade inflation) can result in press coverage in widely read publications (like the Chronicle of Higher Education or Time ) that lead parents legislators, trustees, or others to demand changes that must be operationalized by the central stakeholders. Such demands often have an effect given that both process and policy are fluid and changeable despite internal resistance or opposition. A metaphor for this model could be that of a ball floating in water. Within each level, are operational elements such as policies and processes, that are not permanent or fixed in place. When a weight is added to an outer layer, external gravity will take effect and the ball will tend to rotate in response. The weight will move toward the bottom with likely changes at other levels as well. The individual operational elements will move and perhaps change as a result but there may be slower and smaller motion at the center. Thus, influence is largely balanced in this model even though the degree of involvement of the stakeholders is not.

In Figure 2, the shading indicates relative weight of influence. Some stakeholders (students and academic administrators) have moved outward and the influence of the faculty is much heavier (as it is in any profession led and governed by its membership). Both involvement and influence are at the center. This model is more planetary in nature with the center of gravity being within the ball. Thus, when weight is added to an outer layer, it has much less influence because the internal gravity keeps the ball stable. The field is both defined and controlled from the center as in the definition from Scriven (1991) provided at the outset of this paper. The “self-concept” of the profession guides its definition and its activity and distinguishes it from other professions.

In addition to the relative positions and weights of the stakeholders, we must also consider the activities and how often and to what degree the stakeholders are involved. Table 1 and Table 2 present matrices of activities and the participation of stakeholders.

**Table 1: Stakeholder degree of involvement, responsibility, or input into evaluation**

<b>Responsibility &gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;</b>	<b>inclusion of stakeholders</b>	<b>evaluation roles &amp; goals</b>	<b>knowledge of literature</b>	<b>developing process</b>	<b>insuring standards</b>	<b>data use &amp; interpretation</b>	<b>resources for improvement</b>
<b>Stakeholder v v v v</b>							
<b>LEVEL 1</b>							
<b>faulty</b>	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>administrators</b>	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>students</b>	4	3	2	3	4	3	4
<b>LEVEL 2</b>							
<b>trustees</b>	4	3	2	2	4	3	4
<b>accreditors</b>	3	3	4	1	4	3	2
<b>other administrators</b>	3	3	2	2	3	3	4
<b>LEVEL 3</b>							
<b>local / state legislators</b>	2	2	2	1	2	1	2
<b>other institutions</b>	1	2	3	1	2	1	2
<b>parents</b>	1	2	1	1	2	1	1
<b>federal government</b>	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
<b>organizations</b>	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
<b>LEVEL 4</b>							
<b>employers</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>researchers *</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>journalists / writers</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>the public</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
		<b>5 = extensive</b>	<b>4 = frequent</b>	<b>3 = regular</b>	<b>2 = occasional</b>	<b>1 = infrequent</b>	

\* = researchers in fields other than evaluation



**Table 2: Stakeholder degree of involvement, responsibility, or input into the meta-profession**

<b>Responsibility &gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;</b>	<b>inclusion of stakeholders</b>	<b>definitions &amp; roles</b>	<b>knowledge of literature</b>	<b>developing process</b>	<b>insuring standards</b>	<b>evaluation &amp; assessment</b>	<b>resources for improvement</b>
<b>Stakeholder v v v v</b>							
<b>LEVEL 1</b>							
<b>faulty</b>	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>administrators</b>	3	3	2	3	3	3	4
<b>students</b>	2	2	1	1	1	3	2
<b>LEVEL 2</b>							
<b>trustees</b>	1	2	1	1	2	1	3
<b>accreditors</b>	1	2	2	1	2	1	1
<b>other administrators</b>	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
<b>LEVEL 3</b>							
<b>local / state legislators</b>	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
<b>other institutions</b>	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
<b>parents</b>	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
<b>federal government</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>organizations</b>	3	1	1	1	2	1	1
<b>LEVEL 4</b>							
<b>employers</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>researchers *</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>journalists / writers</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>the public</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
		<b>5 = extensive</b>	<b>4 = frequent</b>	<b>3 = regular</b>	<b>2 = occasional</b>	<b>1 = infrequent</b>	

\* = researchers in fields other than higher education

Again, the stakeholder list is the same, but there are changes in both the degrees of involvement and the activities. Role definition for the profession becomes more important than the roles of subset activities such as evaluation or assessment. The global evaluation and assessment of the profession becomes more important than the specifics of individual institutional data processing. Equally important, the involvement of stakeholders beyond the core is drastically reduced. Indeed, though Table 2 suggests “infrequent” participation by stakeholders at the outer levels, in many cases, these persons will have no involvement at all. **The salient characteristic of Table 2 is the predominant responsibility for faculty to lead in the conceptualization of the profession as well as in its development.**

### **The shared role of the professoriate**

The meta-professional construct acknowledges the base profession and the many other roles of faculty, but **the meta-profession will only become a reality if its self-concept is rooted in an acknowledgement of the common bond among its members.** Teaching and scholarship are the two common activities of faculty and the primary responsibilities of all faculty no matter what discipline. Is it important and necessary to note the critical nature of disciplinary identity in the base profession. Individuals must trained in the base profession, and to be successful they must identify with its principles, process, and epistemologies. But over-emphasis on the base profession isolates faculty rather than providing them a common cause. Diamond and Adam (1995, 2000) demonstrate this consistent and powerful theme in their reports of the opinions of members of various academic disciplines. **Only teaching provides a sufficient and necessary role for the development of a shared professional identity for the faculty.** The responsibilities of teaching cut across disciplines and the triumphs and tragedies of the classroom resonate with all teachers. Though many faculty have developed unique skills and “curricular knowledge” (Shulman, 1986), there is much to be gained from sharing that knowledge. Boyer’s (1990) definition of “the scholarship of teaching (and now) learning” focuses on the public presentation of such knowledge, but it does not go further into making it the basis of a more robust and respected identity for the professoriate.

### **A “systematic approach” to establishing the meta-profession:**

The term “systematic approach” has been used for many years to describe a process for instructional design that considers all the elements in a teaching and learning situation. This instructional ecology allows the development of instruction that is responsive to the needs and characteristics of the teacher and learners, as well as historical/social context, the needs of the curriculum and content, and the realities of available resources. Systematically designed instruction also considers the nature and demands of the tasks at hand and the extent to which existing knowledge and skills, time, and resources either provide sufficient basis for growth or require alternative approaches for compensation or remediation.

In the same sense, faculty development requires a systematic approach that is ecological. The creation of a meta-profession for the professoriate is a kind of meta-development project requiring consideration of numerous and dynamic factors. A great deal of effort, dialogue, and consensus is necessary. Such work can not be imposed from outside nor can it be delegated to others by the members of the profession. What steps might be necessary to lead the work? The following outline, though very broad and general, suggests activities that might support such an evolution of the profession to a higher level.

- Public dialogue sponsored by professional organizations
  - Delineation of the nature, extent, and variety of faculty work
  - Exploration of the commonality of the teaching role as a meta-professional basis
  - External support for investigation, dialogue, and building consensus
  - Multidisciplinary study of the factors affecting the profession and their effects on it
  - Creation of new forums and/or organizations specifically addressing the meta-profession
  - Individual institutional efforts to develop cross-disciplinary projects that capture the synergy embedded in the shared teaching role
  - Changes in the structure of reward systems for faculty work, and use of motivational and other methods to develop a “supportive teaching culture on campuses.
- [[NOTE: Since most academic administrators come from the ranks of the faculty, it is pointless to accuse “the administration” of failure to support such efforts. The administration is the faculty

with altered responsibilities. Meta-professional faculty will become meta-professional administrators.]]

- Emphasis on reconsideration of the preparation of college and university faculty
- Development of processes and methods to support faculty in their meta-professional roles
- Provision of evidence of the scope and complexity of faculty work
- Creation of documentation about the mission, direction, focus, and plans for meta-professional development
- Dissemination of information about the meta-profession to all stakeholders

Of all these possibilities, **perhaps the most important is changing the ways in which individuals enter the teaching profession.** Given that the faculty control the preparation, they have the ability to change the tradition of unilateral disciplinary training to a more complete preparation for those who wish to teach. It is critical to avoid the imposition of such an agenda on those who wish to enter other fields. But for those considering the post-secondary teaching profession, there would be no greater service than to prepare them for the meta-professional requirements they will surely face. It will be important to keep in mind, issues related to motivating both faculty and graduate students (Theall, 1998) in order to promote and maintain this process.

In 1992, Jack Schuster asked, “Whatever Happened to The Faculty”. He suggested that for many senior faculty, the cohesive and collegial nature of the profession had gradually disappeared, and he quoted Burton Clark’s (1987) title “Small Worlds; Different Worlds” to point out the growing personal and professional isolation caused by the retreat into disciplinary specialties. I propose here, that we return to basic definitions of a college (a body of persons having a common purpose or common duties) and a colleague (one chosen to work with another) in order to regain a sense of the life of The faculty. The changes we propose will not be immediate: they are evolutionary. But they are nonetheless necessary if the professoriate is to return to its status as a profession dedicated to the highest pursuits, providing unique and valuable services to individuals, the community, and the nation, and a profession worthy of respect. We will be a “nation at risk” until we value education and those who provide it: not by continuous testing or by imposing semi-annual “reform” agendas, but by elevating teaching and learning to the level of important human activities that have meaning, relevance, and the power to change and improve our lives.

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