

2013 Academic Summit Roundtable

Notes

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ROUNDTABLE TOPIC: The Changing Faculty Role

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Summary Notes:

The Role of Open Source Information:

- Print journals switching to online format when the Internet became prominent
- Open access (e.g., PLOS) is both positive and negative
- Libraries must have journals in order to function, while journals are increasing prices indefinitely; prevents ability to provide in-house; danger in pushing technology to solve educational problems
- Model of Virginia math lab; large lab with undergrad and grad students who help others with mathematical problems; many resources available; can be replicated for other departments
- Many examples in the summit have been STEM disciplines and how technology can help those disciplines; but what about the humanities (e.g., English) and how they need to teach important skills (e.g., close reading)
 - May be because humanities are not well publicized and represented
 - In Education, however, it is known that there is more to learning in both STEM and humanities than is publicized
- Right now, MOOCs are the “new thing”
 - Open access to information transfer
 - MOOCs may need to further evolve

The Role of the University in Today's Society:

- Debt crisis in higher education is in the mainstream media
- Knowledge economy v. Industrial economy
 - Difficult to get to the knowledge economy model because US is based in the industrial economy
 - May be a marketing issue: Marketing is the action of placing your service in the client's interest; want to make sure that you are conceptually based so that you are achieving your client's expected output
- Higher education has never had to justify itself to the world, and now states are cutting budgets and still wanting 100% control of state universities; may be because we do not go out and say what we do
- Polling of graduates important phrase "finishing school" – the college is known as a finishing school and giving students social skills vs. domain specific knowledge
 - Employers expect students to be able to communicate effectively and know how to present themselves, this is not marketed by colleges
- Interdisciplinary nature of universities: taking humanities in STEM majors allows students to refresh their brain and think in newer ways
- Higher education went from something for elite individuals to training students to get better jobs
 - Education is important for the common good (e.g., even if you do not have a child going to college, you would want your nurse to have gone to college, and so you approve of college funding)
 - Entire point of higher education is to give people job skills
 - Higher education does not really do this; they help to teach people how to think and the universities not market themselves this way
- Feels like professors are forced to be job-trainers, even though that's not what universities do; professors are forced to state that this is their goal, particularly in the humanities
 - Solution can be a double-major (e.g., Italian and Fashion Design as a double major)
 - However, the humanity major always falls second to a "real" one
 - We must find a way to sell ourselves, but the goods that we deliver is not what is being pushed
 - Forced to fit a business model; though this may go back to the mission of the land grant

- Though in land grant universities, the point of the university was to create agricultural workers in the work force; though this changed after WWII with the GI Bill

Humanities vs. STEM:

- STEM is getting all of the money; and if you are not part of a STEM or STEM related discipline you are part of the infrastructure
 - From STEM's point of view, this is not the case (e.g., lack of ability to hire full time faculty, smaller faculty over time)
- If the needs of the future student are related to humanities, why aren't we pushing them? If students cannot critically think, we need to train them to, and this happens in the humanities
 - If students are coming in with deficiencies in humanities, we need to market that humanities will fill those gaps
- The Field of Digital Humanities
 - The future of humanities; both positive and negative (e.g., just dumping information online does not make a digital humanity)
 - The field is self-aware: is humanities a production only field, or can it include study?
 - Ex: University of Richmond integrated information from 1863-1867 to see what events occurred and where; created an integrative timeline for use of all ages
- Encourage the humanities and the library to get their message out there about the importance of humanities in education
 - Many professors never imagined that they would have to market as much as they do; this should be the job of alumni relations
 - The important use of media and social networking; mobile phone campaign; Facebook pages