THE HIRING OF JUNIOR COLLEGE FACULTY

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To understand the problem of recruiting faculty for a junior college, one should start with a consideration of the junior college as an institution. After that, it would be helpful to consider my own institution, giving information about the Junior College District and Florissant Valley Community College. In this way one can reach some understanding of the environment in which the junior college faculty member finds himself.

To begin with, then, let us take a hasty look at the junior college in general. The complete descriptive name probably should be "Open-door, comprehensive community junior college." By examining the import of each of these words, we shall uncover some of the issues raised by the growth of such institutions.

In the first place, the modern junior college is an "open door" institution. This means that any high school graduate, or any adult with the equivalence of a high school diploma, is eligible for admission. The problems arising from the open door are simply staggering. One not-too-facetious consequence of this open door policy has been, I must admit, what has been called the "revolving door." That is, if anyone can enter the institution, then many will be rejected for academic reasons shortly thereafter. Trying to keep the open door from becoming a revolving door is thus one of the major problems of the modern junior college.

The modern junior college not only has an open door, it is also comprehensive in nature. That is, it can be called a multi-purpose institution, with programs in college transfer work, technical and vocational work, community service offerings of an unbelievable variety, and remedial instruction. This concept is central to the mission of the modern junior college, and it is this quality which impels many junior colleges of today to call themselves "community" colleges, rather than "junior colleges. This is done to distinguish
third and fourth year courses," although I personally am not always entirely sure as to what is a third year course and what is a second year course. I doubt that education can be packaged that discretely.

At any rate, this is the type of institution that we are trying to staff. Before getting to the specific requirements for junior college faculty, I would like to examine the growth of the St. Louis Junior College District and describe how staffing has been handled there. I believe it is important to do this because, as you shall see, the kind of faculty one acquires initially determines in part what kind of faculty will come later.

In April, 1962, The Junior College District of St. Louis-St. Louis County was created to serve a district of 550 square miles, with a population of 1,500,000. In January, 1963, just over six years ago, classes were begun in two high schools, one of them in the north county area, the other in the southern part of the city of St. Louis. In the six short years since then, much has happened. Curricula and courses in college transfer, technical, community service, and remedial areas have been developed. In fact, we have over 45 separate one and two year curricula. A bond issue of over $40 million was passed by a large vote of the community, and the final phase of construction of the three permanent campuses is well under way. Students? We started with a relative handful on the two high school campuses--mostly adventurous people who were willing to take a chance on a new institution. We had, as of September, 1968, over 12,000 students on the three permanent campuses. As an original faculty member, I attended the first faculty meeting, conducted by Dr. Joseph P. Cosand, President of the Junior College District. The entire faculty were seated comfortably in the dining room of a large home that had been leased as the temporary District Office. As of September, 1968, the District had over 400 full time faculty.
The first group of faculty were recruited by the Vice-President for Instruction, operating out of the District Office. That position no longer exists, but I hope that is not a reflection on the quality of his recruiting, because he recruited me. That first faculty came from various parts of the country in response to advertisements in appropriate journals and appeals to graduate schools. Some came from local colleges, universities, and high school staffs. I know of only one who had experience as a teacher in a junior college; he came from California in the wake of the District President.

As the campuses became entities, recruiting shifted to the campuses in the second year of operation. Recruiting was done by administrators, who made springtime recruiting visits to various universities, roughly from the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachians.

Most recently, recruiting has shifted to the divisional-departmental level as these elements of the structure have evolved. At Florissant Valley, for example, I no longer do active recruiting and have not done so for three years. Rather, division chairmen and department chairmen have established liaison with appropriate departments at universities and with the local education world as well as with industry. Referrals from the District Personnel office are funneled to division and department chairmen also. Quality of faculty, thus, is largely controlled by the faculty.

Faculty at my own college, Florissant Valley Community College, have come from a variety of places. Some are former high school teachers. Some came to us directly from graduate school. Some came from industry. Some came from teaching positions in four year colleges and universities. Only three of our 120 full time faculty had previous junior college teaching experience. Since junior colleges have been established in the United States, at the rate of about one per week for the past two or three years, and development of additional colleges appears likely to continue at this pace for some time, I suspect that our experience in recruiting will be typical for some time for the many new colleges coming
into existence.

I should mention here that several of our current faculty were employed originally as part-time staff members. This has served to provide a sort of engagement period before the marriage finally took place. And this has worked out rather well, although the process has its limitations. Acquisition of such faculty could serve to make the faculty parochial, although that is of greatest concern mostly in the college transfer area. There is a genuine advantage, on the other hand, in acquiring technical-vocational faculty from the local community, in most instances, since intimate knowledge of the needs of local industry is critical to the success of much technical-vocational education.

With all of this prologue finished, I feel that we can now discuss what we regard as the qualifications of faculty for our junior college. What are we looking for when we recruit? And by "we," I am referring to the viewpoint of the institution, which varies somewhat from one instructional area to another. Perhaps I am talking about the idealistic view. These won't be discussed in order of importance, by the way, and we will be discussing for the most part the faculty member who will teach transfer courses. Our own District requires the masters degree in the subject matter. The first quality, then obviously, is a certain level of competence in the subject matter. A mathematics teacher, for example, would need to be prepared to teach at least through Differential Equations; but most of his teaching would probably be in college algebra, trigonometry, calculus, or technical calculus, and he probably would be expected to teach technical mathematics or remedial algebra. What this implies, I think, is a broad specialization in a given subject matter area, if you will accept the contradiction in the expression "broad specialization."

I should mention here something worth considering. We have never had a faculty member at our junior college, to my knowledge, who was considered to be inadequate
because he did not have sufficient knowledge of his subject matter. Evidently universities know what they are doing when they confer masters degrees. On the other hand, one might say we do have difficulty because faculty sometimes have too much preparation in their specialty—or at least they have difficulty understanding the mind set of the college freshman, even when teaching good students. Nonetheless, I believe there is general agreement, not just locally but nationally as well, that the masters degree in the subject matter is a reasonable minimum requirement for academic teaching in the junior college.

The second quality, ideally, of the college transfer teacher is his acceptance of teaching as a worthwhile profession. It is at this point that we run afoot of all sorts of human problems. The prestige of the university is a difficult matter for some junior college faculty who feel a bit uncomfortable and even defensive about teaching in a junior college. I suppose there is no need to review at length the conflict between allegiance to one's discipline and allegiance to one's institution, which has been discussed at length in publications of our time. The history teacher will probably refer to himself as an historian, even if he writes no history. The physics teacher will refer to himself as an physicist, even if he does little experimentation in pure science, if there is such a thing as "pure" science. While I have no statistics readily at hand, I have read that most of what goes on in four year colleges and universities is "teaching" rather than "research," and research tends to identify one more closely with the discipline than does teaching. For this reason, I suppose, research has the prestige, teaching does not. It would be helpful if junior college faculty would recognize that life is not a zero sum game in which there is only a certain amount of prestige available.

A further comment is necessary regarding the teaching qualification of the junior college faculty member. He should, obviously, know something about teaching, both as
an art and as a science. I have read articles suggesting that college faculty sometimes think that teaching is a sort of natural gift of the educated man. At any rate, that would appear to be the assumption since the emphasis is commonly on acquisition of academic credentials for college teaching at all levels. With academic credentials, a man or woman can teach. Behind this assumption is the notion that the faculty member absorbs certain information, some of which he develops himself through research. He then passes his information along to the students. I'm doubtless exaggerating somewhat, but I believe this is a commonly accepted notion of much undergraduate education, at least. It is therefore understandable that much undergraduate education is done through the lecture method. We are inclined to forget that the lecture method came into use because there were not enough books for everyone, so that the lecturer, who had access to the books, told his students what he had read. It is curious that even professional education courses do not offer much training in the lecture method, since that is the commonest form of instruction; and much lecturing, as a result of this, is patently bad.

The junior college teacher should be much more knowledgeable about teaching than other college teachers are. The lecture method, so-called, is not enough. If he is an able lecturer, or if he teaches very large classes, or if he is uncovering new knowledge faster than it can be placed into print and made available to his students in books—then he should by all means lecture. But the chances are good that he is going to work with students who are not highly motivated. He is going to work with students whose parents did not attend college. He is going to work with students who have had less than exemplary academic success. It is his job, therefore, to find out how they can be taught. He must for this reason know of various approaches so that he can capitalize on his own strengths as a teacher and on the learning styles of his students. There seems to be growing evidence
that people learn in different ways. The junior college teacher has to be knowledgeable about such opportunities to reach his students. If he doesn’t, he will suffer frustration and anxiety of the greatest magnitude.

To bring the matter of teaching to a more practical level, perhaps I should describe how we attempt to find the teaching potential in a faculty applicant. I believe we are looking for a quality of flexibility. Hopefully, when a teacher discovers that he is not having much success in teaching, he will try to find ways in which he can be successful. If he has had no training in the art and science of teaching, he has a long, uphill struggle ahead of him. If he is a flexible person who cares about his students, he will make this uphill struggle. If he is inflexible and assumes that he need only dish it out, that it’s up to the students to make what they will of his offerings, then he probably will make no effort to improve himself as a teacher. In the absence of training in the art and science of teaching, an applicant has thus, in addition to academic credentials, little more than his personality to offer. And it is on this quality that an assessment of teaching potential is often made.

Let’s be even more specific. Should a junior college teacher have a course in audiovisual techniques? Maybe. In my own experience, such courses have not proved to be too useful, at least not for everyone. Certainly one would expect that a teacher would know something about the tools of the trade. A physician who didn’t know about penicillin would not be much of a physician. Probably if teachers were taught by people who used the various devices and approaches available to teachers, there would be no need to train anyone in the use of educational equipment. At Florissant Valley we use our teaching research budget, about 2% of our total instructional budget, to encourage faculty to experiment with teaching approaches. Much of the money has been used to enable faculty
to determine the strengths and limitations of educational hardware--audiovisual equipment, as it is called. In allocating this money to support various faculty projects, my motive, which I have repeatedly expressed openly and publicly, has been that of enabling faculty to find out what resources are available to the teacher. Which ones a teacher uses, if he uses any at all, is his responsibility to determine. However, I do not feel that a teacher should arbitrarily decide not to use educational hardware because he does not know how or because he does not know what it is supposed to do.

Incidentally, I share the skepticism of faculty about educational hardware. I, too, am wary of predictions that teaching will be relegated to machines, for I do not believe this is going to happen. Moreover, I would not be too happy in the midst of a McLuhan-esque binge within an Orwellian society. You will note, by the way, that my comments are being brought to you by the lecture method, unaided by audiovisual devices.

A final word about the art and science of teaching. Junior colleges are making some headway in effective uses of television, in computer assisted and computer mediated instruction, in dial access audio instruction, in programmed learning of various sorts, in systems approaches and in the use of behavioral objectives. If these approaches are actually being used in junior colleges, then it would appear that the new junior college teachers will have to learn about them somewhere. Perhaps that will continue to happen on the job; maybe new teachers ought to be called apprentices until they do learn such things.

Granted then that the college transfer teacher in the junior college is adequately prepared in his subject matter, knows something about what community colleges are trying to do, and knows something about teaching as an art and a science. What else need he know? He should know something about community college philosophy, and even more importantly, he should accept this philosophy. This is probably the most critical issue in the preparation of junior college faculty. I mentioned earlier that we
have not found faculty to be inadequate because of insufficient knowledge of subject matter. Also, I mentioned that although teachers who come to us without knowledge of educational techniques may have a difficult time of it, they can remedy whatever deficiencies they feel in this regard if they are flexible enough to want to do so. With philosophy there is a different sort of problem.

If a teacher in a junior college, teaching in an academic area, mostly transfer courses, does not understand the value of technical education, he will find himself in an uncomfortable situation. Similarly, if he does not believe in the possibilities of remedial instruction, he will be in a difficult position. If, on the other hand, he accepts the comprehensive community college concept, with its open door attitude towards admissions, he will find satisfaction in teaching the general education courses to technical students, and he will find ways to teach effectively in remedial courses. Some new faculty members embrace the community college philosophy warmly. Those who do not are likely to leave of their own volition or be asked to leave, after a reasonable time has shown that they do not accept the mission of the college.

Most of what I have been saying about teachers in the transfer area applies to those teaching in the technical areas. Where a masters degree is available in a given area, that is the minimum requirement. And since the faculty member with the masters degree often can teach in college transfer, technical, and remedial areas interchangeably, one should not make such a sharp distinction as I have been making. However, in certain areas it is necessary to make the distinction. For example, we offer the first two years of engineering, which are taught by faculty members with masters degrees in various engineering specialties: electrical, civil, and mechanical. The same faculty teach the two year engineering technology courses in electrical engineering technology, civil
engineering technology, and mechanical engineering technology. But in Commercial art, certain commercial art courses are taught by experienced commercial artists, since they are in a better position to do this than are faculty who are prepared in fine art. Similarly, in Hotel, Motel, Restaurant Operation, an applicable masters degree is not available. In junior colleges offering vocational level courses, vocational competence and appropriate experience constitute the academic requirement. The flexibility, teaching skill and acceptance of the community college philosophy are the same as for academic faculty.

Given the time, I could parade before you an endless cavalcade of problems which confront the junior college faculty. Problems about academic rank, problems about requirements for advancement, allegiance to professional societies, isolation in the academic world, repetitiousness of the teaching assignment in some areas, heavy teaching load, lack of time, etc. It seems to me that a knowledge of such problems would be eminently useful to those preparing junior college faculty. However, I hope I have at least given some clues as to what we are looking for when we recruit faculty.

We need, in other words, well-educated, pragmatic, knowledgeable teachers, who understand what the community college is for and are willing to help in the development of this interesting phenomenon of 20th century American education. We are most appreciative that S.I.U. is considering the preparation of such faculty.