

Academic Enterprise in Nursing Faculty' practices

Claire Martin, Research Assistant

W. George Kernohan, Professor of Health Research

School of Nursing, University of Ulster

Summary

Background: Academic Enterprise is a recent development of Faculty engagement with their communities in the higher education field of Life and Health study. Its origin lies more in the fields of business and engineering. Academic Enterprise development has been typically perceived to be in areas of management and technology which have a more business orientation .

Aim: To explore the more business and community-orientated element of Academic Enterprise within one UK School of Nursing and, to raise awareness of and establish a benchmark of such activities. A strategic objective for the Faculty and therefore one purpose of the study was to empower more of its academic, research and academic staff to engage in Academic Enterprise projects (FLHS, 2006).

Design: A two-part descriptive study whereby Phase 1 involved a facilitated questionnaire with School of Nursing staff in all three campuses of the University of Ulster. Phase 2 involved an additional more in-depth questionnaire which was given to staff to complete independently and return within a three week time frame.

Findings: In total there were 85 members of available staff asked to participate in the study, 64 staff were interviewed as part of phase 1 giving a total response rate of 75%. Overall whilst 41% of participants were familiar with the University's definition of Academic Enterprise only 16% of participants stated they were involved in such activities.

Conclusions: Academic Enterprise appears to be a relatively text bound concept for academic staff. Many of the participants were familiar with the concept but did not feel there was a distinct relationship between the concept and their working roles within the University. Therefore it is apparent that if Academic Enterprise is to develop within the University the necessary support mechanisms for staff need to be firmly put in place.

Introduction

University of Ulster's definition for academic enterprise

'The term academic enterprise refers to innovative activities and partnerships that result in the exploitation and transfer of knowledge and expertise. The outcomes of Academic Enterprise will clearly enhance the relevance of teaching and research activities within the subject area.'

What is Academic Enterprise?

Academic Enterprise is a term used to describe a wide range of activities that go beyond traditional "Teaching" and "Research". These can include:

- technology and knowledge transfer to business, industry, the community and public sectors; consultancy and professional training
- the commercialisation of research outcomes, through technology-licensing; the creation of "spin-off" campus companies or joint ventures with existing companies
- outreach and networking activity with local development stakeholders, business & community sector representative organisations
- innovative non-research project-related activity focused on economic, social and/or cultural development, with external organisations (Office of Innovation and Enterprise, 2006)

Engagement with relevant communities: faculty practice

Community engagement can take many forms, including community based teaching, research, clinical care and service. (Coldrake & Stedman, 1999). Since Ernest Boyer's landmark 1990 report *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, (Boyer, 1990) leaders in higher education, including academic medicine have advocated that faculty members apply their expertise in new and creative ways in partnership with the community. Boyer (1990) stated 'The scholarship of engagement means connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social civic and ethical problems'.

A universities engagement with the community is also widely termed as faculty practice. Sadler (2002) views faculty practice within nursing as a mode of scholarship. He

describes it as 'dynamic scholarly endeavour that bridges the gap between education, practice and theory'. (Sadler, et. al., 2002). This view is also shared by Huff (2002) who emphasized the need for faculty practice in nursing. Huff recommends developing faculty practice through a practice model of serving vulnerable sections of the community in a correctional facility environment. As research revealed this practice proved a beneficial learning exercise for both faculty and community members. Overall research indicates that the connectedness between clinical facility and an academic institution offers opportunities for the development of clinical practice as well as a viable research and teaching arena. (Sadler, et.al., 2002)

Challenges of community engagement/ faculty practice

Despite the positive aspects of community engagement and faculty practice, the mission of teaching, practice and research for a faculty member often seems an impossible task. (Gibbons, 1998). Calleson views that generating support for faculty work in communities is a challenge for both external and internal reasons. (Calleson, et.al., 2005). Externally the survival of clinical departments and their faculties are dependant on the ability to maintain a combination of clinical and research revenues. Community based activities are often not consistent with these demands for generating extramural sources of support. Internally faculty are more likely to receive promotion for publishing articles in peer-reviewed journals than for demonstrating an active commitment to addressing community problems.

Overall the latter enterprise is frequently perceived as professionally risky for faculty to apply their expertise to. (Calleson, et.al 2005). Weiser, (Weiser, CJ. 1998), attributes this to a lack of recognition within the university structure towards community engagement. As a university's values are most clearly described by its promotion and tenure policy and by the criteria used to evaluate faculty members. Weiser (1998) feels that community engagement does hold an adequate place within this criteria.

However Gibbons (1998) recognises the difficulties involved in developing change within the university structure. As universities are subject to a variety of external constraints, which may at times be contradictory. Gibbons outlines that they are exhorted by government to be more flexible, independent and entrepreneurial, while remaining compliant with various government regulations. Universities work within still rigid industrial frameworks, which surround even relatively minor change within complex and at times hostile, relationships between university management and staff unions. These constraints are viewed as major obstacles to achieving change within the university structure.

The ever-changing demands of faculty roles are also perceived as an obstacle to engaging in academic enterprise activities. Faculty are increasingly working in teams for both research and teaching. Most universities now have detailed processes for the development of new courses and subjects, which require 'academics to provide unprecedented justification in terms of market demand and economic viability' (Gibbons,1998). In addition to the overall changes in university culture Gibbons (1998) also recognises the

practical difficulties involved for faculty to participate in academic enterprise activities. As many academic staff are already stretched with teaching, research and management demands.

Impact of community engaged academic enterprise / faculty practice

Despite the difficulties entailed in merging teaching, practice and research Sadler (Sadler, et.al, 2002) believes that when the three are combined the process is beneficial and the expectations of practice and research can be accomplished. Measures of impact in the community as a result of community engaged academic enterprise can include changes in health policy, improved community health outcomes, improved community capacity and leadership and increased funding to the community for health related projects. (Calleson et. al., 2005). In addition research indicates that faculty who incorporate service-learning into their teaching for example, can contribute to a wide range of educational outcomes including changes in student attitudes, career choice, skills and knowledge related to working in communities (Calleson et. al., 2005).

Huff (2002) outlines the clear benefits to faculty and community as a result of faculty practice. Huffs states such benefits include, expansion and reinforcement of faculty member's own knowledge, an opportunity to provide altruism and a pathway to meeting university requirements. Further to this within the community Huff views the main benefits of nursing faculty practice as; raising awareness of health care issues and methods to increase health behaviours and providing an opportunity for guided interaction with faculty and the community.

Overall recommendations for community engagement

Boyer (1990) states 'faculty work should be framed within the context of the institution's missions', and measures of assessments should be developed based on the actual work in which the faculty are engaged to and to which they are committed. Further research recommends that faculty committed to community engaged scholarship need to generate products that balance 'community priorities and university requirements for knowledge generation transmission and application' (Calleson, et. al 2005). Calleson proposes three primary types of products of community –engaged scholarship: peer reviewed article, applied products and community dissemination products.'

Overall a common recommendation appears to be the requirement of a united goal between community and faculty. In total Couto (2001) emphasizes that in order to create sustainability, community engagement requires the 'students, faculty members and community partners to listen to one another..... and work together to implement solutions'.

Method

The method of the study was a facilitated one-to-one questionnaire. A total number of 85 School of Nursing staff were approached to participate and 64 staff responded. The analysis method includes descriptive and summary statistics.

Results

Each of the 64 participants were asked the following question at the beginning of the questionnaire: 'Are you familiar with the University's definition for Academic Enterprise'; results are as follows:

Yes: 26 No: 38

Therefore in total 41% of participants stated that they were familiar with the University's definition of academic enterprise. Question two asked participants to confirm if they were involved in specific academic enterprise activities. Table 1 outlines how many participants answered yes to the relevant activities.

Table 1 Academic Enterprise Activities participants stated they were currently involved in

<i>Academic Enterprise Activities</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Collaborative research involving both public funding and funding from business	24
Contract research	29
Consultancy contracts	20
Facilities and equipment related services offered to organisations for income	1
Courses for business and the community(excluding NHS funded)	16
Innovative curriculum design relevant to business and the community	25
Regeneration and development programmes	6
Business improvement projects	4
Disclosures and patents filed	1
Early stage exploitation of research with commercial potential	5
Spin-off activity	2
Social, Community and Cultural Engagement	26
Outreach through active involvement in Student Placement visits	45
Outreach through active involvement in Professional Bodies	41
Outreach to promote services offered by the University to Business and the Community	24
Outreach to bring expertise and potential clients for services offered by the University onto campus	23

In the third question participants were asked to outline to what degree they felt they were involved in academic enterprise activities. Participants were asked to choose from five different levels of involvement, ranging from heavily involved to not at all involved. Table 2 outlines the total number of participant responses to each level. A summary of the participant response rates reveals that while 6% perceived themselves to be heavily involved in academic enterprise activities, 20% felt they are not at all involved. The largest percentage of participants at 34% placed themselves under the remotely involved category.

Table 2 Participants responses to question 3

<i>Question: To what degree do you feel you are involved in 'Academic Enterprise activities'</i>	<i>Heavily involved</i>	<i>Involved</i>	<i>Somewhat involved</i>	<i>Remotely involved</i>	<i>Not at all involved</i>
Number of participants	4	10	15	22	13

Following this question 4 asked participants of their awareness of Academic Enterprise activities within the University, their Faculty and finally their School. Again participants were asked to choose from five different levels of awareness, ranging from very aware to unaware. Table 3 outlines the total number of responses from the 64 participants to each level. In addition a summary of the responses below presents the percentage of participant's awareness of academic enterprise activities within the three sectors.

The University:	Very aware: 5%	Somewhat aware:44%	Unaware: 9%
The Faculty:	Very aware: 3%	Somewhat aware:41%	Unaware: 11%
The School:	Very aware: 13%	Somewhat aware: 31%	Unaware: 11%

Table 3 Participants overall awareness of Academic Enterprise activities

<i>Question: How aware are you of Academic Enterprise Activities within:</i>	<i>Very aware</i>	<i>Aware</i>	<i>Somewhat aware</i>	<i>Remotely aware</i>	<i>Unaware</i>
The University	3	12	28	15	6
Your Faculty	2	13	26	16	7
Your School	8	20	20	9	7

Overall 13 out of 64 participants stated they were not involved in academic enterprise activities resulting in a total of 20%. Following this participants were asked if they would like to be involved in academic enterprise activities. An examination of the answers revealed that 10 participants stated yes, 1 stated no and 2 participants stated that they were unsure whether they would like to be involved in academic enterprise activities. In addition to this participants were then asked to provide reasons why they

were not involved in academic enterprise activities. Eight participants provided reasons which are listed below:

1. Heavy workload x2
2. New to University and the post x3
3. 'The opportunity didn't seem to arise'
4. Time limitations
5. 'Heavily involved in other projects including pre-registration teaching and administration'

Conclusion

This study provides a baseline status of Academic Enterprise in Nursing. There is a clear need for clarity, further study and concept analysis in this field. Appropriate facilitation, support and management are also required. The Faculty of Life and Health Sciences recognises that staff potential in academic enterprise 'lies dormant due to lack of time, support and skills' (UU, FLHS, 2006). Therefore future training and support for staff is intrinsic to the development of Academic Enterprise Activity within the University.

References

- Boyer, E.L. (1990), *Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate*, Princeton, NJ, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Calleson, D. Jordan, C. Seifer, S. (2005) *Community – Engaged Scholarship: Is faculty work in Communities a True Academic Enterprise?* *Journal of Academic Medicine*, 40, 80:317-321
- Coaldrake, P. & Stedman, L. (1999), *Academic work in the 21st Century*, 99H Occasional Paper series, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
- Couto RA. (2001), *The promise of a scholarship of engagement*. New England Resource Center for Higher Education. *Acad Workplace*
- Faculty of Life and Health Sciences, U.U, (2006) *Determining levels of expertise and participation, and knowledge of support mechanisms and programmes in 'Academic Enterprise', Phase 2.*
- Gibbons, M .1998, *Higher Education relevance in the 21st Century*, UNESCO World conference on Higher Education, Paris, Oct 5 9
- Sadler, C, Huff, M, Harrigan, A (2002) *Faculty Practice and Health Promotion Community Correctional Facility*, *Journal of Holistic Nursing Practice* Volume 14(2), 38-47
- Sternas,K, O'Hare,P, Lehman, K, Milligan, R, (1999) *Nursing and Medical Student Teaming for Service Learning in Partnership with the Community: An Emerging Holistic Model for Interdisciplinary Education and Practice*, *Holistic Nursing Practice*, Vol, 13(2), p66-77
- The Office of Innovation and Enterprise, (2006), University of Ulster, <http://oie.ulster.ac.uk/caes.html>
- Weiser, C.J. (1998), *Scholarship unbound for the 21st century*. *J Extension*. 36:1-5