

NASULGC 2003 Panel Presentation

Human Sciences Programs: Challenges and Opportunities *Presented to the Members of the Board on Human Sciences*

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During a time of global transformation, higher education leaders must address rapid and significant changes as they lead institutions, units, or programs. Administrators in colleges and universities have the opportunity to advance the institution if they anticipate and respond effectively to the changes that impact higher education. At the same time, administrators at all levels are challenged by fiscal constraints, expectations for accountability, changing demographics, expectations of the public, and transitions in workforce needs.

How do the societal and higher education transformations influence the work of Human Sciences administrators? The presenter proposes ten strategies that are essential for survival and success in the current environment.

1. Mission – Human Sciences administrators must examine our strengths and assets as well as issues, opportunities and threats. To be effective, every faculty member should understand and support the mission, vision and strategic directions of an academic unit. This is especially important in the Human Sciences where some units are unclear about characteristics that distinguish their programs from those in other units.
2. Organizational Structure – institutions are restructuring by default rather than by design, and by convenience rather than by purpose or mission. As we deal with restructuring, administrators can benefit by assuring that the organizational structure is the best way to achieve the mission and goals of the unit. In some cases, collaborations on campus and partnerships with private and community colleges will enhance programs and reduce the cost of delivering programs and services. On campuses where a mandated reorganization is inevitable, the Human Sciences administrator and faculty will benefit if they can recommend alternative organizational structures that will serve their needs.
3. Federal & State Funding (constrained resources) – Budget appropriations from Congress and state legislatures are decreasing or being redirected. Therefore, Human Sciences administrators are often asked to increase enrollments, enhance programs, or engage in research and outreach with less funding than previously supported the unit. Also, administrators are often expected to generate grants and philanthropic gifts to sustain units/programs. Limited base funding often increases faculty loads and forces choices about the mission of a unit. For example, an increased teaching load may diminish productivity in scholarship and research.
4. Infrastructure – Human Sciences units often require state-of-the-art laboratories and studio classrooms for teaching and research. Moreover, it is important for Human Sciences units to keep pace with technological advances in both hardware and software to prepare students for their careers and support faculty in their scholarship and research. Most public universities and colleges cannot obtain new facilities or renovate existing buildings with public funds, and depend on private gifts to support needed repairs and updates. Since deferred maintenance has often been

used as a strategy to resolve budget reductions, many campuses are unable to provide the infrastructure that is important to academic excellence.

5. Graduate Education and Faculty Development – Are we preparing faculty to be scholars beyond their discipline? Are we preparing them to be leaders? Where are our graduate students and faculty members learning about the Human Sciences and issues that face faculty in all of its specializations? Decreased funding has significantly impacted ability to support faculty development activities launched on individual campuses. Also, there are a limited number of Human Sciences graduate students in the ‘pipeline’, pursuing doctoral programs or other terminal degrees. The areas of greatest need are nutrition, apparel marketing, Family and Consumer Sciences education, financial planning, and hospitality management.
6. Faculty roles & rewards –What are the rewards for being successful? On many campuses, teaching loads have increased as units implement new programs and offer additional courses without additional resources. Relief is most often found when new grants are awarded that provides release time and/or funding to hire a replacement. Changing faculty loads require adjustment in faculty assignments, but may not result in parallel changes to the requirements for tenure and promotion. Human Sciences administrators must assure that incentives and rewards reflect the faculty roles and responsibilities.
7. Faculty appointments – As higher education institutions respond to declining budget appropriations, there are fewer tenured and tenure-track faculty. Throughout the sectors of higher education, there is an increase in non- tenure track (temporary) faculty appointments and in part-time faculty appointments. Competition for faculty in some of the Human Sciences specializations makes it very difficult to recruit and retain qualified and productive faculty members.
8. Accountability, Assessment, Accreditation – Legislators, Boards of Trustees, students, and the public are placing higher expectations for assessment and accountability on institutions. In response, there are higher standards for assessment of student outcomes in academic units as well as expectations fro program evaluation and accreditation.

Many Human Sciences units have multiple accreditations, and are well positioned to provide a model of best practices in assessment and accountability. However, achieving and sustaining standards of excellence requires significant time and demands other resources to be most effective.

9. Enrollment management – Human Sciences administrators are expected to support increased enrollments, often without available resources. Some institutions and academic units have responded by increasing the criteria for admission to specific programs. At the same time, competition for the best and brightest students is a continuing challenge.
10. Access and Affordability – As states and institutions respond to budget constraints, there have been record-breaking increases in tuition costs. Many students are denied access to higher education unless they qualify for scholarships, fellowships, tuition waivers, or other forms of financial aid. Others complete baccalaureate, professional, and graduate degrees with large student loans to repay. Human Sciences administrators are challenged to assure that students who wish to enroll in and complete their programs have access to be admitted and have financial support.

Although the ten challenges I described face many Human Sciences administrators, each institution and each unit presents different opportunities and constraints. In the presentations during the next session, administrators who provide leadership in diverse units will share their experiences in coping with transformation and change.

Summarized comments from NASULGC Board on Human Sciences panel presentation given by Dr. Carol Kellett, November 16, 2003