



*Barbara S. Fuhrmann with
John F. Berglund, Robert D. Holsworth,
and Mary Snyder Shall*

Leadership in metropolitan universities is clearly a shared responsibility. In this discussion, faculty leaders at Virginia Commonwealth University discuss the role of faculty leadership in realizing the unique missions of metropolitan universities. Faculty leaders need to be exemplary role models of university citizens and involved community participants, to encourage other faculty to get out of their offices and laboratories and to get involved in the common enterprise, to nurture new faculty into the role of faculty in an urban institution, and to incorporate the urban mission into interactions with students, thus engaging them in the community as well.

Leadership Issues for Faculty:

A Round-Table Discussion

Metropolitan universities continue to develop their unique mission of interacting with their many community partners in a rich, varied and often electric environment. They are challenged to build on their metropolitan presence to utilize fully their varied resources in order to enhance the educational experiences of their students and to fulfill their responsibilities to their urban neighbors through their educational, research, and public service missions. Metropolitan universities both enrich and are enriched by their communities.

The diversity within a single metropolitan university, combined with the new challenges of using and serving its community, create new challenges for faculty leadership as well. Unlike faculty in traditional, small, liberal arts colleges, for example, faculty in metropolitan universities are called upon not only to teach highly diverse students but to provide them with marketable experiences in the real world of the city, to address societal needs through service to the community, to work on metropolitan issues through both community involvement and research into unique urban and metropolitan problems, to interact with colleagues with highly diverse professional and disciplinary interests, and, perhaps most of all, to create, develop, and further the urban mission of the university itself.

To personalize the issues of faculty leadership in metropolitan communities, I explored these challenges with three faculty leaders from Virginia Commonwealth University, a public, urban, research university serving 22,000 students, and the largest single employer in the Richmond, Virginia community. All three were members of a twenty-five person Commission on the Future of the University, which was charged with developing a blueprint for the future of a university that includes in its mission statement the following: "As an institution of higher learning in a metropolitan cen-

ter that is also the capital of the Commonwealth, the university enjoys unique resources that enrich its programs and offer special opportunities for contributing its intellectual and creative expertise in the development of innovative approaches to meet the changing needs of our society." All three discussants also have provided significant leadership not only to the university, but to the Richmond metropolitan community and to their respective professional and disciplinary associations.

John F. Berglund is Director of the Honors Program and Professor of Mathematical Sciences and has been at VCU over 20 years. He currently chairs a university task force charged with creating a new general education curriculum for the university, serves the community on the K-16 Mathematics Colloquium, and has been a member/chair of a variety of curriculum and faculty issue committees and task forces.

Robert D. Holsworth, Chair of the Department of Political Science and Professor of Political Science, has been at VCU 15 years. He served as president of the Faculty Senate and vice-chair of University Council, and was named VCU's Outstanding Teacher in 1992. Bob is best known regionally for his role as political commentator for local television and radio stations.

Mary Snyder Shall, Assistant Professor of Physical Therapy, has been at VCU only four years, but has already served as president of the Faculty Senate and as a faculty member on the Commission on the Future of the University. Mary is an active member of the neurology section of the American Physical Therapy Association, and maintains a healthy balance among her teaching, research, and service responsibilities in a highly complex urban university environment. She has developed an almost surprising commitment to the entire university for a young, as yet untenured faculty member.

I am Director of Academic Planning and Professor of Education and have been at VCU for over 20 years, 15 as full-time faculty and five as an academic administrator. I served as president of the Faculty Senate, faculty fellow in VCU's faculty development center, and member and/or chair of numerous committees at the school, university, state, and national levels.

The following is an edited version of our conversation:

Barbara: What do you see as the major challenges for faculty leadership at VCU, with its clearly stated urban-oriented mission?

Mary: As a young faculty member, the major challenge for me has been seeing the university as one institution rather than as a loosely-organized collective of individual and unrelated programs and people. And VCU is especially responsive, in my view, to the community.

Bob: Faculty themselves have so many different interests, experiences, and conceptions of what the university is about that it's hard to pay attention to what the organization as a whole is trying to do. Some faculty, for example, are very involved in general education while others may not do any teaching at all but are out serving patients or are totally involved in a major research grant. Diversity of interests leads to difficulty in creating a unified identity.

John: Maybe it's because we're a young university, but I don't think we yet have a strong, even symbolic, identity as a university that the various branches can find a niche within. Consequently there is a tendency for each unit to go its own way. The real challenge for the faculty is to get in there and pull together and provide leadership in the face of the absence of a single identity.

Bob: I'm not sure that we're unique in that. University faculty are very libertarian in nature. They like to be left alone. The order, particularly in a university

like ours, needs to come from the top and largely is not faculty generated. Our job is to encourage faculty to get involved in our common enterprise when they would prefer to be in their lab, the library, their office, or with their patients or students. Most like the theory of a sort of community of scholars working together, but they really would rather be left alone to pursue the interests that got them here in the first place.

Mary: You're right. We got into this job because of our disciplinary interests as well as our desire to teach or do research, not because we wanted to become part of a larger organization that has a mission that includes serving the community.

Barbara: How essential is that faculty leaders try to find ways to create that commitment to the university and its urban mission?

John: I think it's crucial to develop an identity, but it's not only among faculty that we have a problem. The students don't have a cohesive identity either. The diversity of students, as well as their many obligations and interests outside of the university, makes it hard for them to be integrated into academic life at all, let alone developing a commitment to the university mission.

Bob: It also appears to me that external forces, particularly economic ones, are forcing us to develop a clearer identity as an institution. As we learned through our work on the commission, we have to have a clearer purpose in order to handle budget reductions that are unlikely to be reversed.

Mary: So I guess we're saying that all of us, faculty, administrators, and students--all would benefit from developing a clearer identity and building commitment to that identity. And we're being forced to demonstrate our accountability too. The public apparently isn't satisfied with the message we've given about who we are and what we do.

Barbara: Are you saying that we have to be better focused and more responsive to our various publics too?

Bob: It occurs to me that, in some ways, metropolitan universities may be ahead of the curve here, largely because for so long our constituency has not simply been 18-21 year-olds in broad liberal arts programs. We have always had professional constituencies in the community. Furthermore, because we're in a state capital, I think we've always been a little more sensitive to the response and reaction of the people in the political arena. We're different from more isolated universities in that we've always been monitored – commented on by outside constituencies to a greater extent.

John: Responsiveness is demanded by our students too. Since they often have considerable experience, they're more demanding about our programs being useful. We're not allowed to pat them on the head and tell them "You'll understand the relevance one day."

Mary: In my program (physical therapy), we're also forced to be responsive to our community in providing the "best" program in the state. Faculty are already motivated to be responsive in terms of educating excellent physical therapists for the community; what they're not prepared for is responsiveness as a university.

John: That's true in other areas as well. Because we're in an urban environment, my department (mathematical sciences) long ago went out into the community to talk about mathematics education. We reached out to become involved in mathematics education right from the earliest grade levels. VCU has been a leader in developing partnerships to influence the entire spectrum of education. Faculty leaders can do more, but it also is one area where we can argue that we're already the best at this.

Bob: The urban area, and being a state capital, provides us with enormous opportunities for students to put what they're learning into practice on a regular basis.

Barbara: You're saying that a particular role of faculty within metropolitan universities is being active in the community, helping to identify community needs and to work within the community to meet those needs, and also to prepare students to do the same?

Bob: Yes. And our students find it fascinating, get the bug, and then continue to do it. Our location gives faculty more opportunities for involvement too. But I'm not sure that we, either faculty or administrators, as a whole, have done a very good job of articulating the mission and purpose of the university or of higher education in a metropolitan university. The dilemma is that being a metropolitan university with a community focus, we are extraordinarily vulnerable to both politicians and the media, both of which are choosing right now to focus on what they perceive as our weaknesses. In terms of faculty leadership, we need to do a better job of defining our roles and demonstrating accountability, especially in the realm of faculty work.

John: I agree. The public will always focus on one bad example, and we've not done a good job of demonstrating that faculty as a whole do a lot of jobs and do them very well.

Mary: But it's especially difficult for the majority of us who are not used to dealing with public perceptions of our role. Faculty in my department teach our students very, very well, and we treat our patients very, very well, but we're not good at teaching the public or the legislature. That job, I think, belongs to the administrators. We faculty can assume leadership in terms of defining our jobs, but our presidents need to take the lead in relating to the public what our roles are and how well we perform them.

John: I agree. Faculty shy away from using anecdotal evidence, yet the cumulative power of the anecdotal needs to be utilized. Each of us knows of several good examples of how we serve the community, but no one has amassed all these to demonstrate what it means *collectively* to be an urban university. Maybe that's where shared responsibility comes in. Faculty need to take the leadership in using the metropolitan community for its fertile teaching opportunities and for serving the community in ways that are relevant to their academic interests, but top administration needs to assume leadership in defining to our external publics both our mission and the responsibilities of faculty within that mission.

Barbara: You clearly are saying that leadership in a metropolitan university needs to be shared among administrators, faculty, and students. We also know that many of the current faculty will be replaced by new faculty within the next fifteen years or so. What do you see as our responsibilities as current faculty leaders to ensure that new faculty appreciate and can become committed to our unique mission and roles as a university with a clear urban mission?

John: Since new faculty are socialized in their graduate institutions, which generally are not urban in nature, they almost need to have our metropolitan focus pointed out to them. They are naturally oriented to their disciplines and to scholarship, not necessarily to diverse students, and certainly not to service to an urban community. It's very difficult to get the mission of the university into the hearts of faculty.

Bob: This may vary somewhat from department to department. In political science we have recruited, over the last six to eight years at least, in a manner that acquaints people with what VCU is about. It's entirely possible that we would

conclude that a candidate could be a fine faculty member somewhere else, but is not going to be a good faculty member here. We do let them know both what kind of students we have and the benefits of being in an urban, community-focused university. One way that faculty leadership can help to develop commitment to the urban mission is to consciously recruit with the mission explicitly in mind.

Mary: In the medical arena we've not been so deliberate about it. Young faculty know that they will practice with urban patients, but I don't think we've focused on the urban mission.

John: I agree, and we need to go much further than having the urban mission articulated in recruitment literature. Faculty being recruited need to know all about the university and what their role will be. We need to do a lot more to build university cohesion, and we need to demonstrate that a commitment to the entire university and the metropolitan community is expected. This is hard when so many older faculty remain in their individual fiefdoms. The mentors also need to demonstrate university citizenship.

Barbara: Are you saying that every faculty member should assume leadership responsibility in developing commitment to the urban mission?

Bob: I'm not sure that every faculty can or should be a leader. In part, that's why we have an administration. The dilemma is not so much that 15% of the faculty do 90% of the committee work (which, I presume, happens at most institutions), but that so many faculty can opt out of doing anything for the university without penalty. I was shocked when I was president of the Faculty Senate and the provost would write letters to faculty asking for their service on committees and many, many of these faculty would simply say no. I never knew you could do that!

Barbara: Clark Kerr, in his new book entitled *Troubled Times for American Higher Education* (Suny Press, 1994), points out that faculty across all kinds of institutions are increasingly unwilling to serve their colleges. He identifies their increasing willingness to say no as a major challenge for higher education in the 1990s and beyond.

Bob: If we have a system that doesn't encourage people to participate by using their expertise to help the university and the community, we have a very serious problem. Some people will do it because they like meeting people from other disciplines and from outside the university, and some will do it because they value service, but we have a real problem if the university loses its capacity to require the vast majority of faculty to participate in some way in the university's business.

John: And we do have a problem here. For example, we're having more and more trouble recruiting advisors for undergraduate students. And we're looking at that fact even with summertime advising which is paid. Even when there's extra pay involved, faculty don't see it as part of their job. I think we must do a much better job of being explicit about the total job of a faculty member, including not only teaching and research, but university citizenship and community service too. I think we need to evaluate people on the whole job, which includes supporting the university in whatever way is best for the individual faculty member. Really professional jobs can't be defined in terms of percentage of time devoted to different activities, but rather must be taken in the gestalt of the whole rather than a summation of parts. Being a good university citizen goes beyond defining specific tasks.

Barbara: If a young faculty member came to you and asked how to evolve into a university citizen and a faculty leader, what response would you have?

Bob: I've never had anybody ask the question!

Barbara: You're right, of course. Young faculty don't think of it in that way,

but let me reframe it and ask if you were to consciously groom (I guess the popular term right now might be "to grow") new faculty leaders, what kinds of advice would you offer?

John: Well, interestingly, given the conversation we've had up to now, I'd say to pay no attention to what we've said. Young faculty must first establish themselves as faculty of the type that could be successful at any university, and that means meeting the high ideals within the disciplines, primarily in the areas of teaching and research. It's when they stop there that we have a problem, that we've failed in the vision that we have for the university. Senior faculty, who usually are the faculty leaders, need to encourage them to take the next step, to look carefully at the entire university and to identify where they fit, where they might make a real contribution.

Bob: I think you're right. The first thing young faculty must do is establish themselves as faculty, first within the department, then within the school, and finally within the university. They can't start by focusing on being university leaders without first establishing a solid reputation as serious scholars and teachers. Interestingly, I got into university involvement in an odd way. I was in a very small department, so had an early opportunity to participate on university committees. I imagine that's a lot harder in a department as large as yours, John. And so what happened is that I just got to know many people and got interested in them and the university. I had an opportunity to learn a lot about the university. That, I think, is the second ingredient for a future faculty leader. Faculty who are curious about how the parts work together to form a whole might then want to think seriously about faculty leadership. Those that don't should be encouraged to be content with doing a good job as a university citizen.

Mary: I agree. Young faculty members don't often have any idea about how they might (or even if they should) fit into the university as a whole. I too am in a small department, so I had an early opportunity to serve on university committees. The exposure then leads to other interests and opportunities.

Barbara: It seems to me that what you have said over the last hour actually defines the role of faculty leaders in advancing metropolitan universities quite well. We seem to agree that several important tensions define the context within which we all work. There is, of course, the tension among the various faculty job responsibilities. Not only have we not been consistent in rewarding all faculty contributions, but we have not done a good job of negotiating our traditional priorities with the expectations of our various publics. The perceived conflict between our responsibilities to our academic fields and those to our institution provide a second tension within which our leadership occurs. And finally, there is the inevitable tension between the need to reshape our vision and the need to work within the confines of budgetary constraints. In particular, this dilemma is one which is poorly handled by faculty governance groups, which can be effective only when they can represent all of the faculty on issues of global importance to faculty.

Recognizing these tensions, we nevertheless agree that leadership is clearly shared. Senior administrators need to take strong leadership in defining and articulating the unique mission of the metropolitan university and in clearly articulating, both within and outside the university, the university's expectations for faculty within that mission. Our job as faculty leaders is to contribute to a unified identity through four primary means. First, we must continue our own involvement in the common enterprise and thereby demonstrate the totality of the faculty role in our university. Second, we need to encourage other faculty, once they have established themselves

as teachers and researchers, to get out of their offices and laboratories and to get involved in the common enterprise in whatever manner they are most likely to contribute. Third, we need to nurture new faculty into the role of a faculty member at an urban institution and to define the faculty role clearly, especially as it relates to the urban mission of the university. And fourth, we all need to incorporate the university's urban mission into our interactions with students, so as to engage them in the common enterprise as well.

As metropolitan universities mature, it is clearly faculty leaders like the three of you that will have the greatest influence in helping them to realize their exciting missions. Thanks for your contributions today.

Is your institution a metropolitan university?

If your university serves an urban/metropolitan region and subscribes to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities printed elsewhere in this issue, your administration should seriously consider joining the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities.

Historically, most universities have been associated with cities, but the relationship between "the town and the gown" has often been distant or abrasive. Today the metropolitan university cultivates a close relationship with the urban center and its suburbs, often serving as a catalyst for change and source of enlightened discussion. Leaders in government and business agree that education is the key to prosperity, and that metropolitan universities will be on the cutting edge of education not only for younger students, but also for those who must continually re-educate themselves to meet the challenges of the future.

The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities brings together institutions who share experiences and expertise to speak with a common voice on important social issues. A shared sense of mission is the driving force behind Coalition membership. However, the Coalition also offers a number of tangible benefits: ten free subscriptions to *Metropolitan Universities*, additional copies at special rates to distribute to boards and trustees, a newsletter on government and funding issues, a clearinghouse of innovative projects, reduced rates at Coalition conventions. . . .

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