

institutional ‘future shock’ in extension

Charles Koelling

Richard Lee

Institutions, their employees, managers, and benefactors are facing a serious, if not catastrophic, identity crisis. Institutional “future shock” is taking an enormous toll in wasted energy, programs immobilized by frustration, and by directional paralysis and indecision. Universities are particularly vulnerable to these. This is due to the university and to the nature of the pressures that extend the limits of this diffusion to a maximum stress.

These stresses affect all aspects of institutional life. And, to the extent that the extension function is a significant part of the total institution, the stresses will show in the Extension program. Some of these stresses are indigenous to the extension function; others are a part of the stresses on the larger institution.

The way these major stresses are faced will be extremely important, not only for Extension and for universities, but for higher education in particular and society in general.

Mission Stress

The first and most overriding stress concerns the mission—or missions—of the university. It’s assumed that University Extension is a part of the total institution, and that its mission isn’t independent of the institution.

Many references in literature indicate the importance of coming to grips with the notion of mission. Stiles says that “if the involved university is to be preserved, its mission must be made clear to all—attackers and defenders alike.”¹

Charles Koelling: Director and Professor, Office of Continuing Professional Education, College of Education, University of Missouri—Columbia.
Richard Lee: Director of Extension Information, University Extension Division, University of Missouri—Columbia.

A University of Illinois study on Extension and public service indicates that

. . . anybody, and any group, may make university demands, and probably will, if special competence is thought to reside in the university. But the university, with limitations in both personnel and finance, cannot be all things to all people. It has to decide, therefore, on what things it wants to be to what people. It cannot escape making a selecting response. The difficult task is to make such a response so as to be publicly understood and publicly defensible²

A comprehensive evaluation team on Extension indicates that "there is always danger of trying to be all things to all people."³ And so it goes.

But, these kinds of statements are easy to make. The nitty gritty of it is more difficult. For example, what things are universities going to be to what people? How will the total university respond to this question? What will be the implications of this response for that function called Extension? What are the consequences for day-to-day and year-to-year priorities with a more clearly delineated mission?

Then, look at the implications of the answers to these questions as they deal with the allocation and re-allocation of funds to carry out activities related to these missions.

Institutional "future shock" is taking an enormous toll in wasted energy, programs immobilized by frustration, and by directional paralysis and indecision.

Several significant factors must be taken into account in dealing with the phenomenon of mission in 1975 and beyond. First, the vantage point is major university extension, not extension from other kinds of institutions.

Secondly, new questions are being raised about the unique missions of a *university* in juxtaposition to the missions of other educational institutions, not to mention various social institutions.

No longer can a justification for an activity rest on being a land-grant college. This is begging the question. Too much water has gone under the bridge since 1862 to ignore it.

In fact, an evaluation team for Extension pointed this out when it said that

. . . to be effective, the university should relate its resources to *those in* other institutions and in the community to provide a wide range of knowledge base services and educational opportunities for lifelong learning.⁴

The issue, however, is more fundamental. "Those resources" in other institutions won't be appropriately deployed unless they also serve the identified missions and

the *institutional* interest of those *other* institutions. Certain educational facts must be faced.

Stresses can be minimized and progress made. However, progress depends on how well universities are able to define—or redefine—their mission to complement those missions of other institutions of higher education, particularly higher public education. Progress also depends on the ability of Extension, as a function of the university, to tie its goals directly to overall institutional missions.

The obvious conclusion is that University Extension must increasingly be more elite in its mission and move toward continuing education of the already educated, with training and consultation for other institutions of education. This isn't to minimize the importance of other missions, but it's to question whether they're appropriate to a *university* in the 1970s and beyond.

Virtually every state has community or junior college districts. There are also public school and vocational districts, as well as state colleges. These institutions are concerned with "community service," "adult education," or "field services." Each will likely be more aggressive in providing extension-type services.

As difficult as the stresses are within the university as they relate to program development, those stresses are minimal compared to the total stresses created by the entire higher education system in any one state.

Intra- Institutional Cooptation Stress

This stress relates to where continuing education (Extension) should be housed: (1) under respective academic units, operating independent of the university's extension network or (2) under the control the Extension division, separate and apart from university academic units.

Federal agencies with federal dollars have consistently bypassed the extension mechanism. Universities themselves have been largely responsible for this.

Will such factors as hard times, leveling off and declining campus enrollments, and a growing popularity for extension and continuing education (particularly with the availability of federal funds for problem solving) cause different academic units of the university to coopt Extension and carry out independent extension activities?

So what else is new!

This has always been the case. The only thing new about it is the relative degree, not the kind. However, care must be exercised to avoid an either/or situation. Rather, a scheme must be developed that has the maximum benefits from both points of view—an integrated system with a carefully protected functional integrity. Evidence indicates that an increase in participation by academic divisions and departments will

enhance both affinity and acceptance. Hale found a significant difference in perceptions about continuing education between high and low participating departments.⁵

This creates certain substresses. There is a need to define, on an operational basis, what an extension or continuing education function is. Certainly, it can't be defined in terms of sources of funds. If such an operational definition isn't forthcoming, then there's no way to identify, promote, or protect the integrity of the extension and continuing education function.

No one will be able to accurately identify and report a particular activity in terms of its inherent nature. The result will be the subsuming or bootlegging of activities that really are extension activities under other labels, or other activities under extension labels that will effectively misrepresent both the costs and the benefits of all activities.

An adequate faculty and institutional reporting system can do much to enhance the integrity of the function.

The development of an adequate operational definition of the extension and continuing education function for faculty reporting would make it possible to identify the costs and outputs of all faculty activities whether or not a faculty member was being paid a part of his salary from extension funds. This would also help identify the portion of the faculty member's time devoted to extension activities and that portion of his salary could be reallocated through the extension mechanism back to the department. That same staff member would carry out the same activities, *but now accountability for the function performed* would be built-in.

These protective devices would help ensure the integrity of the function as related to the funds made available to carry it out.

Basic Programming Responsibility Stress

The third stress is that of the basis unit of authority and responsibility for programming. The fundamental concern here is the question of whether the responsibility for the programming functions will be based primarily on a clientele base, a subject-matter base, or a methodological base and the relationship of responsibility and authority to the organization of the university's knowledge base—divisions and departments. Each of these is further compounded by the question as to whether they'd be a client-geography base, a subject matter-geography base, or a methodological-geography base.

These questions are of paramount concern, in the short run, to the organizational structure of the university and, in the long run, to the development of the best quality programs of which the university is capable.

Much time, effort, and expertise is wasted in well-intentioned efforts to find a new clientele for whom a method, subject, or

solution can be delivered. For the most part, this comes from a burning desire to enlighten a presumably unenlightened group, but sometimes it comes from a power complex or an empire extension syndrome. Whatever the motivation, the net result is often too many cooks in the broth. Confusion, wasteful duplication, and/or client overkill occurs.

For example, the problems city councilmen deal with are complex, and their need for information may range widely—planning, zoning, water pollution, sewage treatment, transportation, ordinances, law, fire protection, police protection, and so on. However, if every university unit that has information to disseminate tried to provide programs for this clientele at the same time, councilmen would be bombarded with literature encouraging them to attend programs nine evenings a week—confusion and overkill.

While this example admittedly overstates the point a bit, the principle is valid. The same thing could be said of other groups, with other topics. The *basic question* is where the responsibility is to be put.

Perhaps the fairly successful experience of the pre-service divisions on the campus could be used to deal with this stress. For example, a college of engineering assumes the responsibility for its students, but at the same time, certain educational experiences are provided to its students by other divisions on the campus. These, however, are for the most part those kind of experiences that the faculty of the college of engineering deemed necessary or desirable in the education of an engineer (both professional and general education). Thus, the arts and sciences divisions may provide educational services to engineering. The same is true with other divisions.

Extension and continuing education may be coming of age in higher education. However, the next 15 years will probably determine whether this maturity will be sensible.

To the extent that clientele groups are identifiable as appropriate clientele to be served within the institutional mission, and to the extent that the clients being served fit reasonably well into an existing academic division, the major program development responsibilities and authority could be placed in the appropriate units by clientele categories.

This doesn't mean that all of the education would be provided by that division. It does mean that the division would have the responsibility for developing it, and for calling on other divisional expertise to help provide those educational experiences.

However, specific provisions (another stress) would have to be made in the reward system for providing educational services to other divisions. There's nothing particularly new

in this, since this stress is going to have to be faced forthrightly anyway if interdisciplinary work is going to be substantial in the institution.

**Stress of
Multiple
Loyalties**

This fourth set of stresses relates to cooperative program development in a setting with multiple loyalties. Among these are loyalty to the citizens of the state; to the profession or occupation in which the faculty member is engaged; to his own campus, division, and department; and to the university. Very often these loyalties make conflicting demands, and the relative priorities of which loyalty to serve in the face of conflict becomes a very traumatic one. It also results in building all kinds of defense mechanisms.

**Defense
Mechanisms**

For example, when an institution has somewhat autonomous campuses in more than one location, or when two or more institutions have similar programs, such as education, it would seem to be a very simple matter to try to develop programs, attend to legitimate educational needs, and do other worthwhile things on some kind of a cooperative basis using the best resources available in each location. However, the matter isn't so simple.

First, there's the matter of campus identity to be dealt with. Secondly, there's the matter of program ownership and control. Thirdly, there's the matter of the allocation of relatively scarce resources for carrying out needs assessment, program development and execution, supervision of the activity, and the relative acceptance or rejection of responsibility for it on the basis of the respective academic departments on each of the campuses, each of which is somewhat independent of the other.

Identity and "credit" or "blame" also play their roles. This also creates serious stress for the faculty members who may be asked to provide inputs in one framework but know at the same time that their rewards are coming through another, not only in short-term rewards such as salary considerations, but also long-term awards in the career ladder of the individual.

Academic departments are not enthusiastic, not even content, to be told that they have the final say on the *technical subject matter* related to something. There will be full involvement only when the respective departments and divisions are given substantial total responsibility not only for technical subject matter, but also for program development, execution, and evaluation albeit with full accountability for the stewardship of resources on a functional basis.

**Cooperative
Efforts**

Would it be unthinkable to assume that it might be possible for cooperative efforts to be developed between campuses based on a new kind of organizational thinking, developed from the grass roots, and without guidelines from the top but with various levels of review?

For example, in the field of education, would it be possible to bring together the science education people from campuses, confront them with an agenda related to the development of ways to function together concerning residential instruction, research, and extension and to have them develop a set of recommendations related to these agenda items? This could be duplicated with other academic endeavors of a college of education and ultimately, perhaps, various inter-campus operational councils could be established in each of the subdivisional areas.

These units could function as policy and administrative councils under the jurisdiction of a council of deans of education, for cooperative endeavors, including cooperative endeavors in Extension! It might even then be possible for them to agree on the apportionment of some percentage of a person's time to administer, let's say, the extension efforts in *educational administration* on a statewide basis under the jurisdiction of the intercampus council. This would mean a program of cooperative program development, execution, and evaluation, divorced from any *close* system of university-wide administration.

Campus-Field Staff Relationships

Another dimension of this stress involves the campus-field staff relationship. It's very important for the relative roles to be delineated and clarified. It's also important that they be monitored. From the campus viewpoint, and from the overall long-run viewpoint of the welfare of the university and the people; the expertise to engage in educational endeavors comes from the research and teaching base on the campus.

This expertise is further nurtured by the close colleague relationships among the faculty members in the respective departments and divisions. This nurture is absolutely essential to maintain the kind of university level quality befitting a university program. Whenever program development, execution, and evaluation take place, independent or aside from the control of the appropriate academic units on the campuses, the educational project is viewed by campus faculty (and perhaps by others) with a good bit of skepticism about whether it's really a university activity.

Then, the question is raised again about whether Extension is primarily the extension of the nurtured academic resources of the institution on a functional basis or whether it's an organization looking for something to do.

There is another very important consideration for a central responsibility for campus divisions and staffs in program development, execution, and evaluations. This is the contribution that this kind of responsibility makes, particularly in professional schools, to keeping faculty in touch with reality and the corresponding influence on the direction of research.

An anonymous education dean indicated that one of his major concerns was trying to devise ways to keep his staff in touch with practice.⁶

And, in the health field, Duth recognized this when he indicated that

. . . in securing or maintaining a status of health and competence, man is partly dependent on the knowledge available to him through his universities. University research programs traditionally have not been closely related to the community and the posture of aloofness is not a realistic one for universities today.⁷

Field staff can play very important roles in the extension function. Being closer and in frequent touch with clientele, they can help measurably in program execution. However, these roles must be supportive to the campus programs, catalytic in nature, and advisory and expeditive. In no way should they serve to separate or provide buffers for professors to insulate them from the people.

For as indicated by Sponberg,

The professors are not limited to a cloistered life far from the crowd in the market place. They are constantly renewing their strength by returning to the springs from which the sources of strength flow. They are constantly measuring themselves by the extent to which the life of ~~the people whom they are serving has been changed and~~ improved.⁸

To be meaningful measurements, they must be direct—to be visceral, they must be substantial.

Soft Money Stress

A fifth stress, and a very practical one, relates to soft money and its short- and long-run impact on the institution.

For example, the question can be raised about the relative benefit to the institution and society where the availability of soft money for temporary purposes results in hiring staff members in undue proportions in some areas. Then, when the soft money dries up, the allocation of funds from vacant positions in other areas (no matter how badly needed) becomes redirected to cover the salaries of faculty members whose soft money has been depleted. Again, this gets back to mission of the institution in some ways, but it becomes a real stress in an era of level budgeting.

Two primary questions should be raised with respect to the acceptance of soft money. The first is whether the project is of sufficient importance and interest within the mission of the institution to warrant reallocating existing resources (staff) to it and dropping the present activities of the staff to be reallocated. The second is whether the activities can be appropriately carried out by a temporary staff recruited for a clearly *understood short-term assignment*.

If the answer to both of these questions is “no,” the soft money should be passed by.

Resource Equity Stress

The matter of equity of resources with respect to the extension function is a sixth major stress, particularly for faculty who perform the extension function. This stress evidences itself in several ways. First is the question of the parity of resources made available for the extension function. The question isn't only what's the percentage of the total university resources allocated for executing the extension function, but also the relative percentage of the various divisional budgets devoted to that function. This tells something about the relative importance of function in the department, the division, and, more particularly, in the university.

In that same vein, there's considerable question about the relative equity of salaries for people who engage in extension functions compared to those who engage in residential instruction and/or research functions.

Justified by the facts or not, the feeling exists that salaries are generally lower for people engaged in the extension function, that promotions are more difficult to achieve, and that tenure isn't as readily available.

Furthermore, some consternation exists over what's viewed to be salary inequities between 9-month and 12-month academic appointments. (Staff engaging in extension functions are more likely to be 12-month appointees.) It's felt that the salary inequities do exist on these bases and that they're compounded each year by guidelines on salary increment ceilings that don't properly differentiate between 9- and 12-month appointees.

This is a stress that exists and will continue to affect the development of the extension function of the institution. It's very possible that this stress could be eliminated by a contrary finding of facts. Or, if the facts substantiate the perceived status, the stress will continue to persist until the matter of equity is dealt with. In any case, the facts pertaining to this would be very desirable for any institution that's serious about its extension program.

Financing Stress

A seventh stress relating to Extension is that of financing. Historically, there has been some notion that continuing education and extension activities—other than Cooperative Extension—should somehow be financially self-supporting, but other activities of the institution should be heavily subsidized by the state. These arguments are made on many bases, none of which withstand critical inquiry. Nevertheless, they do persist and this is a stress that must be faced.

Societal Interests

Missions will determine, in part, the critical nature of these problems. However, the wealth of the clients for whom education is provided isn't a criterion the institution should use to determine the charges made for educating them. A physician's child isn't charged any more or less in fees when he comes to the campus of the university than the child of a custodian.

If the mission is valid educationally, then a part of this validity must be the ultimate societal interests it promotes. The whole principle of public education is based on this premise. Therefore, the Robin Hood approach to the financing of Extension isn't a valid one and ways must be found to communicate this fact to the citizenry.

**Many
Institutions
Involved**

The matter of financing for extension and continuing education is going to be further compounded by the number of institutions getting involved. Some states will be providing state funds for off-campus activities for credit under certain conditions by all public institutions.

This is a valid approach. However, the practical results of the extension and development of this resolution is going to result in increased competition among the institutions for students enrolling in these kinds of activities. Ultimately, the pressure will increase for some kind of equivalency reimbursement for noncredit activities that are held both on and off the campuses of the various institutions.

As desirable as all of these things may be, it must be recognized that these directions will create continual stresses among and between the institutions for the revenue generated from these activities and a resultant pressure for an increased pyramid type of coordination and control.

**Accountability
Stress**

Along with the stress of financing comes the stresses brought about by the age of accountability. This is a total societal phenomenon, affecting all social institutions—including universities—in all of their functions. Basically, it's the result of two general factors. These are the increasing costs of operating the institutions on the one hand and a sort of general lack of credibility on the other.

In any case, pressure is exerted from several quarters to document more explicitly the inputs, outputs, and costs. This creates dilemmas with numerous horns. However, the major institutional stress is the pull on the one hand for the faculty member to be an "employee" and, on the other hand, to be a "professional." In some respects, the demands of the public and others make the institutions of higher education act as though faculty members were pieceworkers. Yet, some faculty members consider themselves completely self-directed professional

If, on the one hand, this piecework mode becomes too prevalent, as evidenced by legislated teaching loads and other recent developments, then minimum load will become the maximum load and faculty members will rebel against doing anything on account of professional obligation.

On the other hand, the university is an organization and faculty members aren't completely free individuals when employed by the organization. Therefore, activities must be institutionalized to the extent that the institution can exercise

accountability and stewardship of the resources made available to it.

It seems that the trick is to strike the appropriate balance between the two. But, it's important to leave the maximum latitude for the exercise of professional judgment in decision making at every level where decisions are made, with accountability attached. Some evidence shows that the latter objective isn't being emphasized enough. This evidence is found in legislation of teaching loads, low-level decisions made in high places, and the general tendency to treat management information in a way as to remove indigenous situational variables—not to discriminate discriminately.

Individual Entrepreneurship Stress

This stress isn't new, but its resolution is more urgent than ever before. Not many years ago institutions were facing this stress in funded research endeavors. Vestiges of it remain where an individual (not the institution) is funded by an agency, even though the base of the individual's operation is the institution.

Conducting activities of an extension nature by resident teaching faculty as individual entrepreneurs is rampant. These take the form of "consultant" arrangements, speeches at conferences, in-service education activities, other ways.

Institutions that plan to conduct extension activities on a systematic basis will find that this entrepreneurship will offer competition to the institution itself and will interfere materially with the institution's goals. It will also weaken the ability of the institution to deploy its total resources to attend to *total* needs.

Perhaps an equally serious consequence is that organizations and groups external to the institution can easily tap expensively developed human resources without either appropriate institutional recognition or remuneration.

External Solution

This stress has long roots in institutional history and will be very trying to resolve. However, the directions for its resolution lie in two areas. The first is external—close communication with the agencies that normally call on staff members. It may be possible to encourage them to use institutional procedures to request help.

Internal Solution

The second is internal—structuring the reward and/or recognition system to heavily weigh them toward activities that are institutional in nature. Is there any more reason to reward "free agent" activities of an extension nature than to reward the teaching of classes on campuses that aren't officially approved, scheduled, and "assigned"?

Summary

Extension and continuing education may be coming of age in higher education. However, the next 15 years will

probably determine whether this maturity will be a sensible maturation providing for an evolutionary metamorphosis reaching into the bowels of the institution or a chaotic, opportunistic scrambling for temporary advantage—the playing of games.

Above all, to be worthy of its name and a place in higher education, it must be *education* and it must be *higher*.

Footnotes

1. Lindley J. Stiles, *The Growing Edge of Education* (Madison, Wis.: Dembar Educational Research Services, Inc., 1969), p. 47.
2. "Extension and Public Service in the University of Illinois," Phase I Report (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1967), p. 8.
3. "Comprehensive Evaluation Team on University Extension" (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1973), p. 2.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
5. Larry A. Hale, "Perceptions of Academic Department Chairmen As Related to the Degree of Participation of University Departments in Continuing Education" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1969).
6. "Comments from an Anonymous Dean," *AACTE Bulletin* (April, 1972), p. 3.
7. L. J. Duth, "Health Research and the University," *American Journal of Public Health*, LIX (January, 1969), 21-28.
8. Harold E. Sponberg, "Continuing Education in the Mainstream of the University" (Paper presented at the National NUEA Convention, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1967).