

Distinctiveness in Christian Business Education: A Call for Faculty Educational Entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT: *How do Christian business departments foster distinctive business education? Using the literature in interpretive planning and distinctiveness, it is suggested that one important way is through faculty educational entrepreneurship. By calling for faculty entrepreneurship, out of the core values and competencies of each institution/ department/faculty member, there is great potential to foster distinctive education that models being “salt and light” to students. Unleashing the creative energy among the faculty at each institution can lead to distinctive business education on the campus and great diversity among the business departments/schools of the CCCU.*

INTRODUCTION

It is a commonly heard claim that institutions of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), and, therefore, its business departments, are distinctive from the mainstream of higher education. No doubt, the explicit commitment to Christ and the shared efforts to link education to fulfill Christ’s command to be “salt and light” make these institutions distinctive from the norm. But to what degree should the various business departments be “distinctive” from each other? What are ways for business departments/schools to find “distinctiveness” while sharing a common mission in Christian business education? This article suggests that the innovation that comes from faculty members interacting with the student is one important source of distinctive education that should be encouraged.

For the purpose of this article, “distinctiveness” does not mean that one school is better than another. Rather, distinctiveness suggests that each business department/school has a reason for being that comes from the core values/competencies that reflect the commitment of each campus community. Since each campus offers something “distinctive,” there is an opportunity for great

diversity, both within business departments/schools and among the institutions.

Distinctiveness is defined as “a phenomenon resulting from a set of values that shape educational activities and unite key constituencies, both internal and external” (Townsend, Newell, and Wiese, 1992). As such, it is possible that there be distinctiveness in each of the business departments within the 100-plus institutions of the CCCU.

This article suggests that distinctiveness is frequently a function of a faculty-based initiative. These activities are described in this article as “faculty entrepreneurship.” It is within the faculty culture and ethos of each institution where distinctiveness is likely to be found. Specifically, the contention is that the individual faculty member is in the best position to initiate student-connected and connecting activities that are most consistent with the “salt-and-light” model for Christian business departments/schools (Armstrong and Wiese, 1992). It is in the interaction of “faculty-student-faith-community” and through the process of coming alongside students where distinctiveness can be created. By giving individual faculty members the freedom, flexibility, and resources to connect personal passion with student interests and aspirations, there are endless opportunities for truly distinctive education. In so doing, the faculty member is also

modeling what it means to be “salt and light.”

Faculty entrepreneurship is defined as faculty-initiated educational endeavors that link students with significant learning experiences. Faculty may create new opportunities through coursework, as extra-curricular activities or as recommendations for departmental action. Entrepreneurship appears to be an appropriate term because the initiative comes out of the passion of the faculty member, connects with the interests of a customer group (student and possibly other constituency members), and requires the acceptance of some risk, and hopefully some form of reward.

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH CONTEXT

The notion that distinctiveness can be the product of faculty entrepreneurship started indirectly with an institutional study designed to inform enrollment and retention strategies. As such, the findings provide a case study demonstrating the potential ability of faculty entrepreneurship to produce institutional/departmental distinctiveness. Interactions with faculty members at other schools suggest that this is not uncommon in Christian colleges/universities, although the degree to which this study is generalizable to other institutions is not certain.

Summary of Methodology

The desire behind the research was to identify the variables where the institution is satisfying or exceeding expectations and those areas where there is evidence of dissatisfaction that is related to a desire to transfer out of the institution. An appropriate data collection process led to the inclusion of responses from 79% of the entering class in 2003. A step-wise regression model was used to determine which of a series of independent variables are predictive of the dependent variable of the degree to which the student affirms their initial college-choice decision.

Snap Shot of Findings

Among other variables, the regression analysis suggests that an important predictor of enrollment and retention was a student expectation that the institution will give them unique opportunities for “hands-on” education. (Details of the supporting study can be provided upon request.) First of all, students drawn to this one particular university by a specific international exposure program (that can be characterized by “hands-on”) are likely to be most satisfied with the college and more likely to be retained to the college. Additionally, if students come with the expectation that they will have “hands-on” experiences in their major but are not exposed to the experiences, the

probability of being retained is significantly lower.

Connection to Distinctiveness

This particular institution has a history of creating various “hands-on” programs. Most of the “hands-on” educational experiences were innovated, executed, and nurtured by faculty members. In most cases, they are the product of faculty passion, connected to student interest, and then sustained in the energy of the student-faculty-curriculum interaction. A couple of these faculty-generated ideas have become institutionalized and have served students for decades. These initiatives are rarely the product of top-down strategic planning. Most are championed by individual faculty members or departments, implemented and executed with limited financial support from the institution.

Do these faculty-initiated programs fit the definition of “distinctive”? The authors suggest that, in at least this case, the culture of the institution has made it possible for faculty to innovate out of their passions and core values to connect with student interests, forming educational activities that are distinctive. They did not emerge from a desire to “adapt” to the market. Yet, the ones that last, and potentially foster enrollment growth, have galvanized support from both internal and external constituencies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Distinctiveness as a Concept in the Literature

Distinctiveness is a concept that appears in both the business and the higher education literature. Within strategic management, the concept of distinctive competencies is established as the particular strength of the firm that cannot be easily matched by competitors and feeds a competitive advantage (David, 2005; Wheelen and Hunger, 2006). Kay (1993) argues that “corporate success derives from a competitive advantage which is based on distinctive capabilities.” In marketing, the concept of distinctiveness is one of the characteristics of a branding strategy (Duncan, 2005).

In higher education, institutional distinctiveness as a distinction among institutions was initiated with Martin’s study of institutional character at four universities (1969) and the Clark’s study of three private liberal arts colleges (1970). The notion of being distinctive was then applied to multiple institutional types by various researchers up to the early 1990s (Townsend, Newell, and Wiese, 1992). Since that time, very little conversation about being “distinctive” has appeared within the higher education literature, with the exception of the application of the idea of distinctive competencies applied to branding strategies (Sevier, 2001).

Planning Paradigms

Keller (1983) cites the demographic, political, and cultural changes during the 1970s and 1980s as encouraging educational institutions to actively pursue strategic planning. These realities highlight the need to look both inside and outside of the organization for guidance. Two new paradigms evolved as a result (Keller, 1983; Keeley, 1988; Chaffee, 1984, 1985): (a) managing collective organizational goals by looking outside the institution to read environmental trends, threats, opportunities, and market preferences and perceptions that affect the organization; and (b) looking inside the institution at traditions, values, priorities, and strengths and weaknesses of the stakeholders involved. Chaffee (1984) labelled these two themes the adaptive and interpretive planning models.

Adaptive Planning

Educators in business are very familiar with the adaptive planning model. The dominant assumption of strategy is that the adaptive approach is most appropriate in business (Porter, 1980 and 1985; Day, 1990 and 1999). It is generally accepted that an organization must read the various external dynamics and adapt itself to provide for ever-changing customer satisfaction in order to survive.

The adaptive planning model is also widely adopted within higher education. Chaffee (1984) defines this paradigm as “attuning the organization to changes in market demands and reorienting the organization as needed in order to maintain or increase the flow of resources from the market to the organization” (p. 212). Growth of the organization is the primary goal. Success is seen as the ability to achieve specific measurable growth outcomes.

In the opinion of several authors, historical examples of market adaptive practices incorporated within higher education (Chaffee, 1984; Buffington, Hossler, and Bean, 1987) include (a) adding new academic programs, such as accelerated adult degree completion programs and online degrees, based on their ability to meet emerging societal demands; (b) addition of popular career-oriented programs to make up for declining interest in the liberal arts; (c) expanding graduate programs outside of the original liberal arts scope of an institution; (d) establishing branch campuses or facilities to reach new, untapped market segments; and (e) creating new programs that are merely a re-labeling or re-arrangement of existing courses to meet market expectations.

Erickson (2004) documents that CCCU schools have been active in growth-oriented initiatives that may be reflective of adaptive planning. Strategy among a random sample of 40 Christian colleges/universities over the 12 years from

1991 through 2003 was tracked. Each institution has historically been considered a “liberal arts college” with the primary student constituency being 18-22 year olds.

It is evident that the sample of 40 CCCU institutions has been on a growth agenda. Overall, CCCU schools’ enrollment grew three to five times the rate of non-CCCU schools. Examples of adaptive growth include the following.

- 93 percent of the sample of CCCU schools now offer accelerated degree completion programs.
- 20 percent have a complete degree via distance learning methodologies.
- 48 percent make available courses via distance learning methodologies.
- 78 percent offer adult continuing education courses, with 40 percent offering certificate programs.
- 48 percent of the schools have multiple educational sites (Fifty-two percent have one site.). Among schools with multiple sites, the average number of sites is over eight per institution.
- The number of graduate programs increased by 91 percent.

Interpretive Planning

In the interpretive model, the institution looks internally for strategic direction. The institution is seen as a network of self-interested participants who choose to work together because they believe that it will satisfy their diverse personal interests through a commitment to a common shared value (Chaffee, 1984; Keeley, 1988; Townsend, Newell, and Wiese, 1992). The starting point for consideration is whether or not the activity fits with core values and is consistent with the institution’s core competencies, not whether or not there is growth potential.

Chaffee (1984) emphasizes that this approach “requires the skillful use of all forms of communication and of the symbols used to portray the collective reality of participants — in short, the management of meaning” (p. 213). Typical of social contract settings (Keeley, 1988), this approach requires institutional leadership that is capable of finding and expressing common values across all participants. The major focus for the organization is to answer the question “why are we together?” (Chaffee, 1984). A well-crafted answer to this question gives legitimacy and credibility to the organization.

Under the interpretive paradigm, the roots of innovation are internally derived. It comes in the form of ideas that are tested among the group and found to be a new

way of expressing or extending education that is consistent with those grounding concepts that bring a common sense of belonging. This drive is likely common among Christian colleges. Faculty members choose to belong to the academic community, often with sacrifice, because they “believe” in what the institution stands for. If core values as Christians and a shared understanding of what it means to be “salt and light” are not guiding innovation, then the commitment to “belong” to the institution is likely undermined.

So, the test for innovation, under the interpretive paradigm, is whether or not the idea flows out of and is consistent with the group’s sense of shared core values. Of course, an over-focus on “who we are” may inhibit innovation. Activities that launch the institution in new directions which are viewed as “externally derived” or “market oriented” may be deemed inconsistent with core values. Growth, for growth’s sake, is viewed with suspicion.

The Need for Balance

Initiatives that are adaptive in nature come in response to an external opportunity or internal crisis, and are primarily focused by a desire/need to grow. In contrast, the initiative that is interpretive is linked to some internal desire to better fulfill the calling to some form of values-driven educational experience, with less immediate concern as to whether or not it is “marketable.”

The need for balance is clear within the context of a Christian college/university. Adaptive growth, apart from some understanding of the mission of Christian education, is likely to undermine the very nature of the institution. On the other hand, a narrow compliance to a preconceived understanding of “shared values” can undermine creativity and innovation, rendering the institution to the destiny of the status quo. Or innovation can be so “self-oriented” that it does not match what is required in the marketplace and end up failing to attract sufficient support to be sustained.

It is difficult, if not inappropriate, to judge from the outside whether or not a particular initiative of the Christian college/university is a function of adaptive or interpretive thinking. It is documented that many new, more non-traditional programs (e.g. degree completion programs, accelerated graduate programs, online programs) are the reality on many Christian college campuses (Erickson, 2004). Many of these programs involve or impact the business department/school. It is possible that these new programs that serve new markets (e.g. adult market, corporate markets, church markets) are birthed directly out of core values consistent with that institution’s unique mission or competencies. In other cases, they may

in reality be simply an attempt by the institution to access new resources for the sake survival and sustenance. In either case, these initiatives often have led to significant institutional growth. Whether or not the motivational impetus was “growth” can only be determined on a case-by-case basis. Even if “growth” was the stated objective, the execution of the programs may be “mission” or “values” consistent.

What is distinctive business education in the Christian college/university? In this article, distinctiveness is “a phenomenon resulting from a set of values that shape educational activities and unite key constituencies, both internal and external” (Townsend, Newell, and Wiese, 1992). Therefore, distinctiveness is a function of activity that is “values driven,” and then consistent with core competencies, and then responsive to and accepted by external constituency needs. It is both a function of internal values and responsive to external realities. As such, the interpretive and the adaptive paradigms should not be seen as mutually exclusive, as is the conclusion of other authors (Chaffee 1984; Townsend, Newell, and Wiese 1992).

FACULTY ENTREPRENEURSHIP: REAFFIRMATION OF “SALT AND LIGHT”

This article suggests that a way that distinctive business education occurs is when educational activities come out of a commitment to be “salt and light.” The argument is that one of the ways to assure this is to encourage and reward Christian business faculty members who are entrepreneurial in the educational venue. To proceed with this position it is important to revisit the “salt-and-light” model for the Christian business department.

In a 1992 article in *Faculty Dialogue*, Kenneth Armstrong and Michael Wiese suggest that the practice of business education in the Christian university has not historically been different from education found in other sectors. They asked several questions. “How active have members of the business department been to make the study of business a point of service?” “How do we educate men and women to be ‘salt and light’ in this day?” If we are to take these words of Jesus seriously in Matthew 5:13, how should we educate?

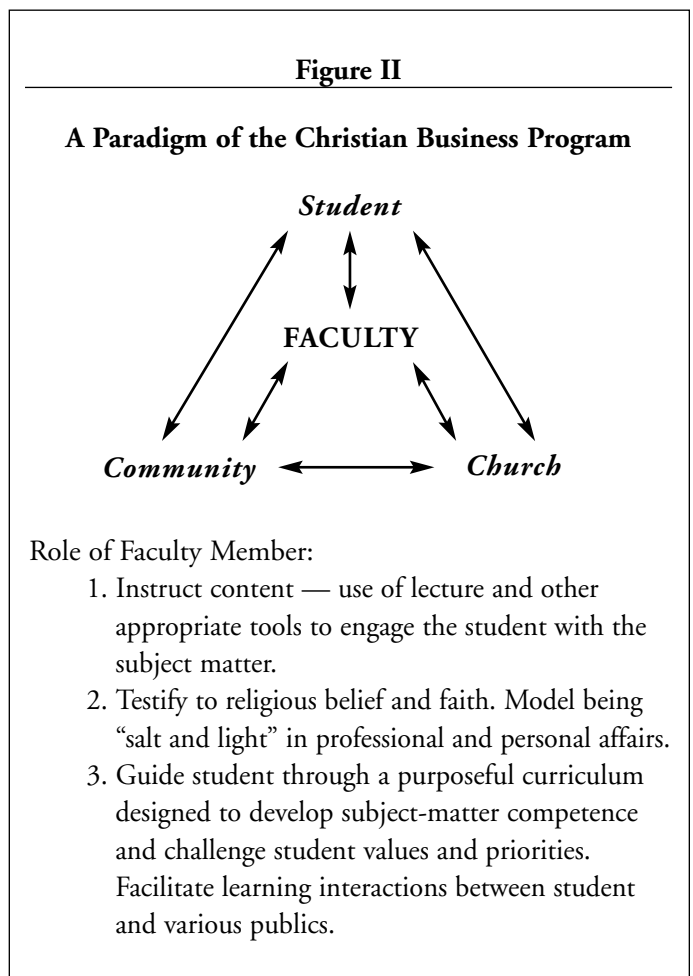
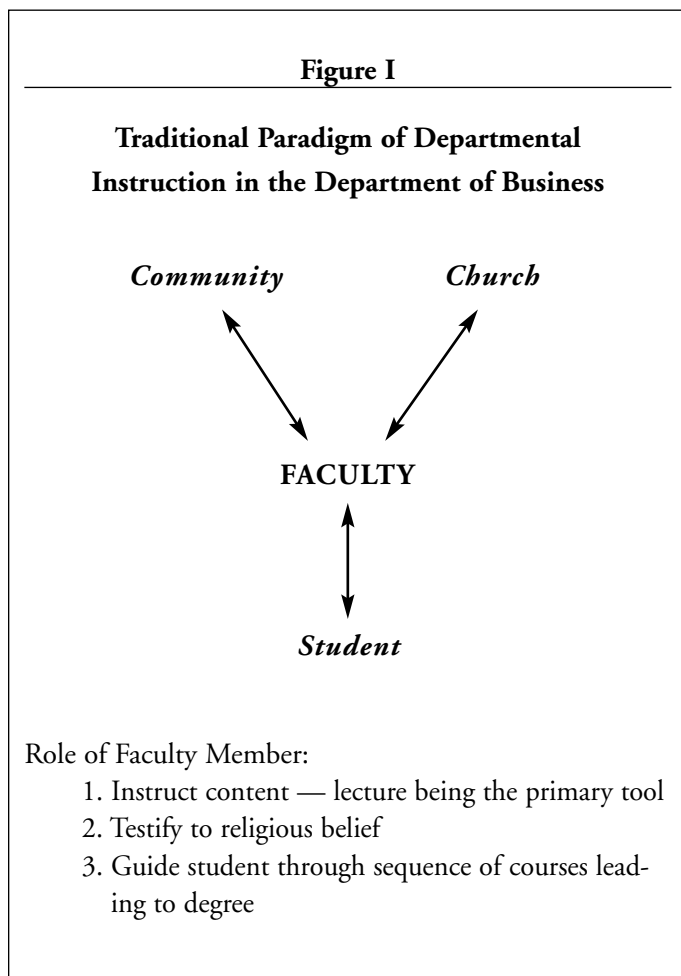
A change in teaching methods was proposed, in the 1992 article, to better fulfill the mandate in these questions. The shift that was called for is from a model where the faculty member is primarily a conduit of information to the students to one that places the faculty member in the middle of modeling “salt and light” as part of the students’ educational experience. Under the traditional model,

while the faculty member’s life in business, community, and church is real, the student is not invited to these intersections with the teacher. The student navigates through a series of courses and earns a degree. While students do interact with fine Christian teachers, they are never really given the opportunity to “come alongside” to see how faith, competency and reality interplay. It is in this dynamic that the faculty member has the best opportunity to “model” being “salt and light.”

Under the “salt and light” model the faculty member becomes the center of connections (see Figures I and II). These connections are between persons and entities in the business venue, through community service activity and in service to church. Most faculty members are already involved at these levels. The key is to bring these areas of life into the educational experience for the student. According to the proposed paradigm, students are given the opportunity to see how faculty competency in business, along with faith in Jesus Christ, can be used to make a difference in the lives of others and in the success of organizations. Modeling being “salt and light” is a primary responsibility of the faculty member.

Being a faculty mentor of “salt and light” should also give students opportunities to be actively involved in creating their own educational connections. The faculty member seeks to provide opportunities for the student to actively interact with business/community/church constituencies and to experience what it means to be “salt and light” while in college. The faculty member brings the student “alongside” to observe, practice, and explore with the faculty member. In so doing, the student develops a rich portfolio of experiences, but more importantly, he/she witnesses how business skills can be used by God to transform society. To quote Armstrong and Wiese (1992):

“A natural result of the model is increased exposure for students with the other players of the model (business, community, and church). This should serve to improve the hands-on practical knowledge of the student. It should also sensitize the student to the moral issues that are present in our society and should open up avenues of dialogue for the student with the business and church communities as she/he struggles with life-long priorities.”



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DISTINCTIVENESS

A conceptual framework for distinctive business education is offered for consideration. While it is an institutional option to employ adaptive strategies for the purpose of growth, the institution that wants to be “distinctive” should encourage faculty entrepreneurship that is in line with core values. For the purpose of the Christian business department, one of the primary driving values is likely to be to teach and exemplify what it means to be “salt and light.” The way this goal is executed, in educational experiences, is likely to vary widely from school to school. Each institution brings its own uniqueness to the pursuit of “salt-and-light” education. It is within this variety that institutional distinctiveness becomes a possibility. For this to be reality there is a need for a level of faculty entrepreneurship in each business department. This does not mean that every faculty member must be an entrepreneur, but this opportunity will hopefully be present within every department and help to feed departmental distinctiveness that is shared by all members of the faculty.

In the model, there are three elements that provide the context for strategy impacting the business school/department. This may not be unique to the business department, but the focus of this discussion is on opportunities unique to the business unit. Refer to Figure III for the proposed framework.

The three elements shaping business department/school strategy are the external environment, institutional situation, and the departmental competencies. The external environment (Space 1) includes the realities of competition, emerging and disappearing educational opportunities, changing technology, and changing governmental policies, etc. In light of the external environment, the institution must manage itself.

The institutional situation (Space 2) is made up of various internal dynamics, including leadership, vision, educational philosophy, nature of the religious affiliation, etc. The business department/school then operates within the institutional situation, which can either stimulate or undermine departmental efforts toward distinctiveness. But even if the institution provides fertile ground for distinctiveness, it can be for naught if the department is not willing and able to initiate distinctive education. Factors within the departmental competencies (Space 3) include leadership, vision, faculty size and quality, the degree to which faculty desire to connect educational to core Christian values, etc.

Within this context there are several different paths to educational strategy. First, the institution may seek a growth

strategy and initiate programs that involve or impact the business department/school and are adaptive in nature (Path 1). These actions are often administratively initiated and represent an attempt to seize a market opportunity that offers the potential of financial gain. Efforts, possibly including input from faculty, may be made to stamp the institutional values on the program. But, the initiating desire is still to grow and it is therefore an adaptive strategy. While this path may produce institutional growth, by the definition of “distinctive” it does not necessarily produce distinctive education. As Erickson (2004) suggests, success is likely to result in replication by the competition.

The second, third, and fourth paths offer the opportunity to be distinctive. In each, initiatives come out of and are grounded in interpretive values and are likely to be consistent with the goal of letting business education be “salt and light.” The primary motive of the action is not growth, although, it is possible for the initiative to ultimately contribute to enrollment and/or retention strength.

In Path 2, an institutional initiative is launched out of core values to connect with institutional mission or to reach new groups of people with educational services. For example, an institution with service-learning as a part of its mission may create a freshmen experience that gives all students a significant service-learning opportunity. Or, the institution may launch an adult learning program with the sincere desire and intentional programming to extend a Christian value system through an educational experience to a new market. In these cases, it is likely that the institutional faculty will be integrally involved in the creation and execution of the institutional strategy.

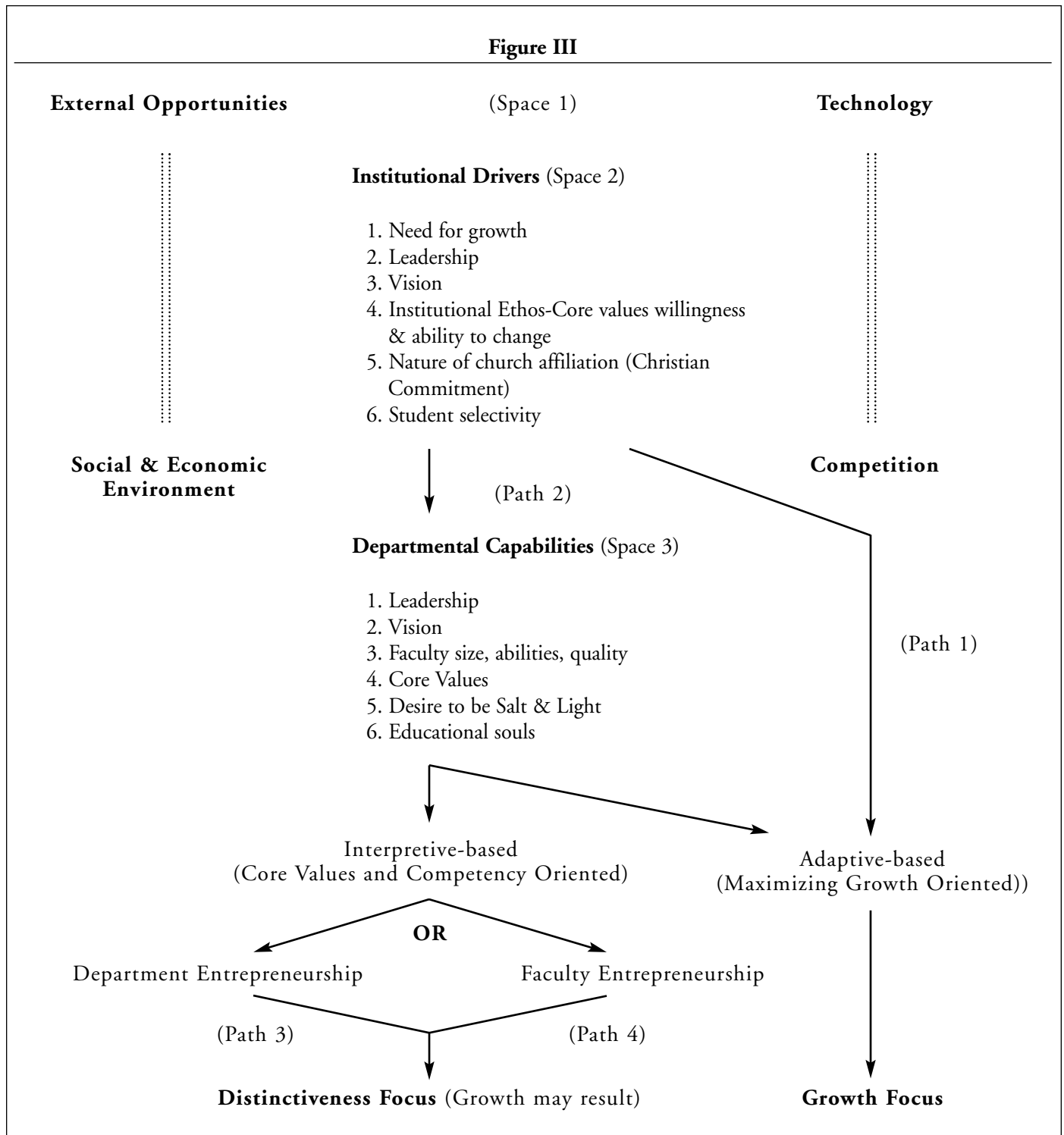
Path 3 and 4 originate out of the business department. Path 3 involves program innovations that come out of departmental action where faculty/administration agrees to initiate a program/activity out of a sense of “who we are” and “how our values produce distinctive education.” Faculty entrepreneurship is likely to be the source of the idea that then becomes a departmental action. While a market study to test feasibility may precede the implementation of the strategy, the primary impetus is not the possible financial gain. The motivation leading to the initiative is the shared desire to be true to a sense of mission guiding innovation out of core values and competencies. For example, a department with a special concern for and capabilities to serve the church may create an academic program designed to provide pastors with needed administrative skills. At another institution, faculty in the business department may respond to their concern for economic development in developing countries by creating programs designed to train persons to serve in global aid and eco-

conomic development settings. In so doing, the department is finding an appropriate way in which it can be “salt and light.”

On a daily basis, while interacting with students, there are enormous opportunities for faculty entrepreneurship that produce education consistent with the “salt-and-light” model. Therefore, it is innovation, in and out of the classroom, along Path 4 that is the primary focus of the rest of this paper. Finding opportunities for the student to “come

alongside” the instructor, in serving community, church, and society, invites faculty entrepreneurship. The result may be creative in-class learning experiences. Or faculty may engage students in activities that stretch the classroom beyond the walls of the institution. In recent years, there has been a trend toward service-learning projects. In each case, as the faculty member innovates out of their own passions and core values as Christian educators, students are given the opportunity to witness being “salt and light.”

Figure III



CREATING DISTINCTIVENESS THROUGH FACULTY ENTREPRENEURSHIP

If a business department aspires to be distinctive, the recommendation is to encourage and reward a spirit of faculty entrepreneurship within the Christian business school/department. Creation of such a culture is likely to result in innovation along Paths 2 and 3. For a department wishing to be distinctive, the following advice is offered, first to faculty and then to departmental leadership.

Thoughts for Faculty to Consider

1. Create Learning Experiences from Core Values/Passion and/or Interests: What are your professional passions? What do the core values of your institution suggest should be a priority? What does the theology of the particular institution suggest should be a focus? Here are some possibilities, but the list is endless. Of course, the Christian faith applied to many of these topics is what makes the Christian institution unique from other educational institutions.

- Applications of theology to business
- Entrepreneurship
- Business ethics
- Global business
- Justice and social good
- A particular subject or concept
- A research agenda
- Consulting projects

If you are going to engage students, you must be passionate about the focus of connection. Enthusiasm for what you are doing is critical. Let your passions/values/interests drive you to innovate.

There are some risks. Make sure that your passion is one that is shared by a group of students. If not, the passion may isolate you from the undergraduate student. There is a risk of education becoming too “faculty-interest centered” and not “student-benefit oriented.” Also, make sure that you are not using the students to achieve your personal/professional agenda, without mutual benefit. The connection to the students’ education must be clear.

2. Become a Faculty Entrepreneur: Having found your passion, experiment on how your interest can be connected to the interests of a group of students. It may not connect with all students. That is impossible. Hopefully the depart-

ment is large enough where faculty will be offering different passions to multiple students.

Accept your role as a faculty entrepreneur. Create a learning experience from the passion. Make it available to the students. This can happen through a class assignment. It may take you out of the classroom into extra- or co-curricular activities. Think big but start small. Don’t frustrate yourself with a “program.” See if your passion can become the passion of a group of students. Think of ways the passion of student/faculty can benefit local business, community service agencies, or the church. Have the courage to integrate your passion with the “real world.” If it works, your educational enterprise will likely grow, if that is your desire.

3. Specialize: One of the concerns about the “salt and light” model in the 1990s was that faculty interpreted it as meaning that they should have active educational projects in all of the three domains (business, community, and church). This was and is unrealistic and overwhelming. The goal is for a department to have various initiatives from multiple faculty members that connect the students (through the department as a whole) with each domain. The reality of busy faculty lives is that we need a level of specialization to be most effective. There is a lot of pressure to “do” and “be” everything. We cannot. Boundaries need to be created. The faculty member must own the right to set the boundaries. The best way to do so is to specialize in one’s passion.

4. Protect your Freedom to Innovate: The prior point leads into this one. Growth places pressures on the faculty member. In addition to heavy teaching loads at multiple levels, faculty in the CCCU are increasingly likely to have some research expectations, have many advisees, multiple committee assignments, and expectations to be active in church/community.

What is proposed here suggests finding synergy between what you are expected to do and what you want to do. When possible, the faculty member needs to intentionally seek assignments (consistent with departmental expectations) that create space for innovation and entrepreneurship. This may mean saying “no” to some opportunities or assignments. Hopefully, this freedom is respected and protected by administration.

Thoughts for Administrators to Consider

1. Cast a Vision: It is crucial that the Chair/Dean fill the role of leader, not merely manager, if this entrepreneurial vision is to become reality. The life of the faculty member is too busy to naturally move this direction unless there is a compelling reason to do so. In many institutions the

role of the department chair is primarily one of scheduling, approving expenditures, and carrying out the dreaded outcomes assessment program. This role must be expanded, and the chair must become a visionary if the department is to move beyond being competent to being distinctive.

2. Create a Culture: Implicit and explicit signals need to be sent to the faculty that their purpose is to be “salt and light” and to create “salt-and-light” students. Make this part of the ongoing conversation. Infuse the culture with this spiritual and Christ-centered mission. Additionally, the faculty members need to have permission to be entrepreneurial, with “salt-and-light” education as the aim. Give permission and then consider how the unspoken norms of the department reinforce the practice of being and modeling “salt and light.” In other words, *discuss it, expect it, support it, publicize it, reward it, and institutionalize it (entrepreneurship, not specific programs)!*

3. Build the team: It is important to understand that “entrepreneurial” and “team oriented” are not terms that naturally go together well. The challenge for the chair is to encourage activities that lead to distinctiveness without promoting a “loose cannon” syndrome. This makes every hiring decision an opportunity to both reinforce the culture and to build the team. Focusing on the vision is part of this as well, but it will also be necessary to create and encourage activities that will bring the faculty together to enjoy fellowship, to worship and to celebrate the collective accomplishments driven by individual initiatives. The chair has the primary responsibility for keeping before the entire group that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (or any individual).

4. Support Individuals and Initiatives: The fact that we are a team does not detract from the necessity, in this model, to encourage individual initiative. There are several methods that can be used to encourage and facilitate in this area:

(a) *Be an Advocate:* Many of our university systems are bureaucratic nightmares. Faculty members have neither the time nor the inclination to fight through this bureaucracy. Someone must do this for them or many great ideas will never get off the ground. The chair has a choice to be seen as part of the bureaucracy or as an advocate. The choice that is made will go a long way in determining the degree of distinctiveness of the department.

(b) *Recognize Champions:* Understand that every great idea needs a champion ... and that the chair cannot be the champion for every great idea. Look for champions, identify them, support them, give them the recognition when things go well ... and shield them when they do not.

(c) *Create some space:* A great champion combined with

a great initiative can result in a marvelous experience for students that can blossom into a departmental distinctive ... but seldom will this happen unless some space can be created. Everything cannot be considered an “add-on” to the “normal” expectations of all faculty members. The chair has the opportunity to be the person who is primarily responsible for creating this space. This may also involve the advocacy role mentioned above in order to help colleagues and administrators understand the necessity of deviating from the established norm.

(d) *Find some resources:* A few dollars to support a project or a few hours a week of student secretarial help can mean a great deal, both actually and symbolically, to the faculty member who has a passion they would like to explore with students. Hopefully the chair can be seen as the creative source of funding for ideas that will lead students to new discoveries of what it means to be “salt and light.”

(e) *Reward the effort:* It is hard to sustain a culture of entrepreneurship if the behavior is not rewarded. Being entrepreneurial is hard work and it has risks. This is just as true in an academic department as it is in a for-profit enterprise. If faculty members do not feel that they are rewarded in some way, it is unlikely that the behavior will last long or be replicated. A dean interested in having a distinctive department will find appropriate ways to reward faculty who are stepping up and out to be “salt and light.” This may mean adjustments to pay, but it may also mean other forms of financial and non-financial awards.

CAUTIONS FOR LEADERS

There are three specific cautions that chairs/deans must keep in mind as they embark on this path of “distinctiveness.” The first is to always remember that there is a difference between being “credible” and being “distinctive.” Sometimes we are tempted to use our “distinctiveness” to hide the fact that we are not very good at the basics. Distinctiveness should be viewed as the “add-on” for our programs. This is especially relevant when making hiring decisions. Business deans/chairs must remember that they operate in a larger academic academy where competency is measured by one set of standards. This standard must not be dismissed as irrelevant, or there is a risk that the business department will be viewed as lacking credibility, and consequently, students will suffer because of our sole emphasis on “distinctiveness.” It will be necessary to hire persons who bring all this plus a passion for faith and “salt and light,” not just the latter. As business departments who are trying to model Christ to the world, we must first be very good at

what is expected of business departments ... then we should do more. That is where our “salt-and-light” distinctives come into play.

The second caution is that this “entrepreneurial approach” to building distinctiveness may not fit every individual within a department. That is not only ok, it is probably desirable. There are a variety of tasks and projects that must be done. Most business departments will probably need a mixture of interests and skills among faculty members in order to ensure that everything that needs to be done will be done with a high level of quality.

Finally, we must always keep in mind that our call as Christians is to be *our best*, not to be *the best*. Developing distinctives out of our individual passions as a way of preparing our students to be “salt and light” in a world that desperately needs both, is much more desirable than developing programs aimed solely at being the best in the rankings or in somebody’s list. The common bonds of grace and fellowship that flow across Christian institutions are more important to who we are than is our rating. If we are working to be our very best, we are carrying out God’s call on our lives.

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