

Editor's Perspective

When Personal and Professional Passions Align

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I have been profoundly challenged this summer by a new book, *What the Best College Teachers Do*, by Ken Bain, director of the New York University Center for Teaching Excellence (Harvard University Press, 2004, ISBN 0674013255). I have provided a complete book review later in this journal. Bain's work is without a doubt one of the most provocative books on college teaching I have read.

The reading of this book has come about as I have entered more deeply into the world of assessment. I head that effort at my own institution and recently have begun the process of becoming a peer-evaluator for the North Central Association (NCA). As part of this process, I also attended the NCA annual meetings in Chicago in the spring of 2003 and 2004. And, I have been working on a paper focusing on competition and classroom pedagogy with a good professional friend. It seems that a variety of personal and

professional passions are converging.

This is as it should be in the world of college education. We who are privileged to work in this way do so out of a variety of motives, but primarily, I think, many of us have pursued this path because it best channels simultaneously the passions of our intellect and heart and soul. We teach, research, and serve as both a personal and professional expression. We bring to our classrooms, our professional publications/presentations, and our administrative/committee assignments intellectual, emotional, and soulful expression all at once. What interests us personally, what stimulates us professionally, and what drives us religiously leave their "fingerprints" on our lectures, writings, and service projects.

It is Bain's contention that we need to help our students discover in their educational journey a similar coincidence of intellectual and emotional passion.

Many outstanding teachers think of their courses as ways to help students learn to reason well and to join a conversation that flourishes among people who do. ... Arnold Arons, a physicist at the University of Washington ... argues that [this] critical thinking entails, at minimum, a series of ... reasoning abilities and habits of thought:

- 1. Consciously raising questions*
- 2. Being clearly and explicitly aware of gaps in available information*
- 3. Discriminating between observation and inference, between established fact and subsequent conjecture*
- 4. Recognizing that words are symbols for ideas and not the ideas themselves (thus being sensitive to multiple definitions and the power of words to influence the way we think about ideas)*
- 5. Probing for assumptions*
- 6. Drawing inferences from data, observations, or other evidence and recognizing when firm inferences cannot be made*
- 7. Employing both inductive and deductive reasoning*
- 8. Developing self-consciousness concerning*

one's own thinking and reasoning processes (Bain, 2004, pp. 85-86).

He documents that the best teachers teach far more than subject matter: they provide the catalysts for students to become excited about the issues, conundrums, debates, and action implications of the “stuff” of our academic disciplines. The aim then (in my discipline) is not so much to teach students about Porter’s Five-Forces Model of Competition, but rather to find creative ways to share with them why I am excited about the study of strategic competitiveness and why they should be also!

George Huber, in his book *The Necessary Nature of Future Firms: Attributes of Survivors in a Changing World* (Sage Publications, 2004, ISBN 0761930361), argues that five environmental characteristics will be the key drivers of organizational change and redesign in the future:

- 1. more and increasing scientific knowledge*
- 2. increasingly effective information, transportation, and manufacturing technologies*
- 3. more and increasing complexity*

4. more and increasing *dynamism*
5. more and increasing inter-firm *competitiveness* (Huber, 2004, p. 13).

In such a world, it is increasingly important that we challenge our previous assumptions about what it means to be an effective educator and an enthusiastic scholar. Simply trying to dump a textbook of material on our students through a series of semester-long lectures is more than useless — it damages the cause of education. Our aim cannot be that students would simply know more — rather, we must care about

- how they come to know anything.
- how they might apply that knowledge to the personal and professional challenges they will face.
- how they can continue to learn more things.
- how the things they know now can be merged with what they will come to know in the future.
- how they can become knowledge generators themselves.

For some of my teaching colleagues this sort of insight will seem ordinary — it captures the natural way they approach their jobs. I think for many of us, though, moving toward a new paradigm of education that prizes conceptual inquiry over memorized regurgitation, intellectual challenge over individual compliance, and good questions over ready answers will cause us to be forever unsettled.

In her new book *Assessing for Learning: Building a Sustainable Commitment Across the Institution* (Stylus Publishing, 2004, ISBN 1579220886), Peggy Maki offers this challenge:

Assessing for learning is a systematic and systemic process of inquiry into what and how well students learn over the progression of their studies and is driven by intellectual curiosity about the efficacy of collective educational practices (Maki, 2004, p. xvii).

The issue we face is whether we are truly intellectually curious and whether we have the passion to lead students toward that same level of curiosity. Are we too comfortable with our roles as

knowledge dispensers to launch out toward a new role as knowledge engagers? Have we for too long allowed the textbook to drive the course to allow thoughtful and creative pedagogy to assume the driver's seat?

There is no doubt that the world of active teaching and research can be frightening for those who prize comfort over challenge, boundaries over openness, and control over freedom. Tell me this, though: in a world characterized by increasing scientific knowledge; increasingly effective information, transportation, and manufacturing technologies; and increasing complexity, dynamism, and inter-firm competitiveness; which educational approach do you think best prepares students: one characterized by comfort, boundaries, and control; or one characterized by challenge, openness, and freedom?

The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business has been challenging Christian business faculty to move out of their personal and professional comfort zones since its first issue was published in 1995. This 10th issue is no exception.

- Steve VanderVeen (Hope College) and Richard J. Martinez (Baylor University) engage in an interactive dialogue concerning Martinez's 2003 *The Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* article titled "Teaching Strategic Management from A Christian Perspective."

- Richard J. Goossen (Trinity Western University) offers a significant treatment of entrepreneurship from a Christian perspective and challenges many assumptions you might hold about this field.

- Larry W. Saylor (Greenville College) and Margie Ness LaShaw (Whitworth College) examine the degree of public financial disclosure many Christian colleges are willing to engage in. You will be challenged by their findings.

- Blaine McCormick (Baylor University) offers a critique of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, providing an intellectually challenging look at Rand's philosophy of objectivism and contrasting it with Christian teaching on a variety of points.

- Robin Klay, John Lunn, and Vicki TenHaken (all of Hope College) have assumed a challenging task: to examine


the doctrine of calling and to apply it to business, particularly from the perspective of non-executive or middle-level management, drawing on insights from business history, economics, and recent literature on leadership.

- Steve VanderVeen (Hope College) uses the job of stockbroker to challenge us to think about whether characteristics related to justice and love influence a stockbroker's perceived Christian behavior, whether a stockbroker's perceived Christian behavior influences her/his perceived trustworthiness, whether a stockbroker's perceived trustworthiness influences a stockbroker's persuasiveness, and whether this persuasiveness is positively or negatively impacted by a characteristic related to holiness.

- Michael Cafferky (Southern Adventist University) challenges us to explore the concept of narrative (broadly defined as the use of story, metaphor, parable, and poetry) in the context of cultural anthropology, education, business, and religion and to explore how instructors can use narrative for stimulating students toward faith, life, and learning integration.

Several of the articles carry rejoinder/comment pieces by board of review members who challenge and extend the perspectives offered by this issue's authors.

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It is my hope that one or more of the articles in this issue discomforts you — and leads you to some personally and professionally passionate response as a teacher and researcher. Do your own research, write your own paper, and share the excitement of this grand inquiry process with your students.

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