What WASC Would Like Us to Consider….

The Difference between the Instruction Paradigm College and the Learning Paradigm College
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What the “Teaching Paradigm College” looks like to John Tagg (2003):
- Is focused on the number of student credit hours because credit hours serve as the “economic backbone” (p. 16).
- “The mission of the college became putting more students in more classes. For most colleges in a highly standardized and interdependent system of transferable credit, a means—offering courses—had become the end, not the definition, of higher education” (p. 16-17).
- Teaching is seen as the “transmission of information from teachers to students” (p. 19).
- When students don’t perform, blame becomes leveled at students and/or teachers (p. 20).
- “In such a system, since the basic process model is fixed, it is in the self-interest of the participants to deflect blame” (p. 20).
- If problem arises institutionally, the “blaming the student” mentality only has three choices: 1) increase resources (more money for smaller classes, more books, better support facilities), 2) raise the level of incoming students (selective admissions) or 3) when those approaches aren’t available or don’t work, move to level two [blame the teacher mentality]: teach harder” (p. 21).
- Blame then gets leveled at administration (p. 21).
- Or blame gets leveled at the high schools for producing poor students (p. 43).
- As a side note during his lecture at ALA, Tagg notes blame often happens between academic areas (“Student Services people baby students”) and the co-curricular (“Students fail because of poor teaching”) as well.
- Structurally, “departments have a life of their own—insular, self-governing, compelled to protect their interests because faculty positions as well as the courses that justify funding those positions are located therein” (quotes Schaefer, p. 24).
- “Because separate departments, each competing for its own share of enrollment, produce the curriculum, we should expect them to produce a basket of classes that have no very clear relation to one another, that are selected more for their difference than for their similarity” (p. 25).
- Courses are generally “obligatory,” which is seen as having a “negative impact on the student’s sense of potency, esteem, skill, and involvement” (p. 45).
- “The Instruction Paradigm college generates a cognitive economy that accentuates the role of assessment as evaluation and diminishes the role of assessment as feedback. For many students assessment is, pure and simple, grading” (p. 109). This accounts for the proliferation of multiple choice tests—in one study, 70% of teachers are said to prefer multiple choice tests versus 30% who prefer essay tests (p. 108-109).
- The term “final” in final exam means just that. Once a student has finished a course, the thinking that is encouraged is ‘I don’t need it anymore.’ We do not want our students to believe this, but that is what we tell them. After finals, it’s over, done, finished” (p. 110).

The reverse of this is the Learning Paradigm College, the cognitive economy of which supports or stresses: (1) high ratio of feedback to evaluation; (2) all sectors of the community—including clerical staff, students, teachers, students services, and administration see their actions as enhancing active student learning (as opposed to instruction); (3) all members of the community partake in decision-making; (4) encourages and rewards complex cognition (i.e. analysis and synthesis) as opposed to retention and recall; (5) sees learning as a long-time horizon that takes places beyond the classroom; and (6) embraces change and innovation in teaching.
Models for us to consider: Alverno College, CSU Monterey Bay, Olivet College

http://www-personal.umich.edu/~marvp/facultynetwork/cases/olivet/olivet1.html
(this case study of Olivet actually follows how the college went from toxic workplace to one of the most innovative schools in the nation)

Marilee Bresciani (2006) actually documents what WASC considers a very successful institutional structure:

MISSION

GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS

GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES

PROGRAM (CURRICULUM) GOALS
Includes the Co-Curricular

PROGRAM (CURRICULUM) OBJECTIVES

COURSE GOALS

COURSE OBJECTIVES

(p. 81)
