

Leading the Paradigm Shift from Teaching to Learning David Arendale, NADE President

There is a major paradigm shift occurring in higher education. After a long period of time of focusing on teaching, there is a healthy shift to focusing on learning. While the instructional paradigm often focuses on increasing the quantity of information, the learning paradigm focuses on the efficiency and effectiveness of the learning process regarding what does the students know and what can they do with the new information. Many classroom professors are searching for effective ways to change from a transmission mode of instruction to a focus on improving the learning and mastery of content material by students. This represents a change from being teacher-centered to learning-centered. Another trend impacting upon higher education is a change in the focus of student academic support and enrichment. In the past some institutions focused their attention by serving only students at the far extremes, developmental students and honors students. I think that the new trend will be to serve all students at the institution regarding academic excellence and persistence toward achievement of their academic degrees.

Most writers agree that the majority of faculty members want to improve the learning environment. They have tremendous content knowledge. However, we as learning assistance professionals possess some of the knowledge and skill that would be helpful to faculty members as they seek to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process. There are no better experts in the learning process than those who are in our profession. Many developmental educators possess knowledge and skills in one or more of the following areas: peer collaborative learning, informal classroom assessment techniques, new paradigms of student learning pedagogy, instructional technology, affective domain needs of students, curriculum development, peer reviews of teaching activities, professional development activities, adapting instruction for diverse learning styles, and other areas.

At my institution we often consult with faculty members on improving instructional delivery, integrate emerging technology with instructional delivery systems, conduct new faculty member orientation and instructional training programs, and host faculty development programs. We have been invited by faculty members and academic departments because of the reputation we have with supporting academic development of students at all levels within the institution. Functionally we have become a teaching and learning center. This provides an excellent way to integrate ourselves more deeply into the academic community. We are all partners in the learning process.

We need to learn to reinvent ourselves as resources for the entire campus -- students and faculty alike -- in renewing the learning environment. Our institutions need for our centers and departments to expand our services to include academic enrichment for all students. I exhort you to find ways to make your existing departments more comprehensive in its services. Whatever the name for your center or department, become a more comprehensive learning center in service. I believe that is the bright future for our profession.