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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE RESPONSIVE COLLEGE:
RHETORIC AND REALITY



BY

BRIAN THOMAS WRIGHTSON

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and
Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

ADMINISTRATION OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION,
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1994



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ISBN 0-612-11419-8

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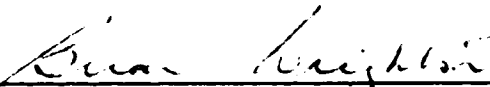
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DATE: January 21, 1994

**This work is dedicated to
Dawn, Jessica and Kevin.**

ABSTRACT

One instructor at The College stated:

Responsive means that you must understand the expectations of each of your customer groups and then you have to commit yourself to meeting those expectations. If you do that, then you are responsive.

Responsive has been defined as "responding or reacting readily to influences, appeals, efforts, etc." For a college to move in a new direction, to meet the needs of tomorrow's student, business, and industry, administrators require a visionary outlook.

Successful colleges are those that evolve efficiently and effectively. Today, the public expects improved service even as budgets shrink. For colleges, the only sustainable advantage comes from "out-innovating" the competition. This means educators must know exactly why the college exists; that is, how to serve their consumers best.

The following conclusions on college responsiveness evolved in part from the study of one college that is reputed to be responsive:

1. Colleges cannot possibly serve everyone. They must be selective and serve only those they can serve well. A sound consumer base is established by developing the "right" consumers.
2. College planning cannot focus on individuals. Strategies must be based on the collective needs of homogeneous groups.
3. Consumers have expectations and this is legitimate.

Responsiveness is a function not only of current consumers but also must reflect the needs of potential consumers.

4. Being responsive requires assessment technology that allows administrators to discover the precise consumer benefit and value advantage in light of the current environment. Leaders must learn from the chaos about them.

5. Listening and learning is not enough. What is learned through the various sensors must translate into information used in strategic planning for the college.

6. Responsiveness is "lived not proclaimed." For administrators to proclaim their goal for the college is to be responsive is mere rhetoric unless their decisions and actions reflect their words. Their good intentions must turn into effective actions.

7. College responsiveness lies in a shared desire of all college staff to satisfy consumer demands and expectations.

8. The completely responsive college is an unachievable goal for responsiveness is a continual process.

As Canada changes so must colleges. The responsive college will reflect the aspirations of the stakeholders college administrators chose to serve. College responsiveness is indeed a complex agenda.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many who should be mentioned. My apologies to those who played an important role and who are not mentioned. Of particular note are those at The College who were so cooperative and whose comments proved invaluable. The President must be ever so proud of his staff.

No thesis would ever become a complete work without the guidance of one's Supervisory Committee. A sincere thank you to Drs. Frank Peters (Supervisor) and James Small and Professor Arthur Deane for their support, advice, and encouragement.

In addition, I am grateful to Tim Packwood and Tim Whitaker for their permission to rely heavily on their study Needs Assessment in Post-16 Education (1988).

Finally, thank you to my family, Dawn, Jessica, and Kevin. All were both patient and supportive in this effort.

Table of Contents

Abstract

Acknowledgements

List of Appendices

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter

 The Sound of the Forest 1

I **Introduction** 2

 Background of the Study 2

 Competitive Advantages in Colleges 4

 College Responsiveness 5

 Statement of Research Questions 6

 Statement of Significance 6

 Theoretical Significance 8

 Practical Significance 8

 Delimitations and Limitations of This Study 8

 Definition of Terms 9

 Assumptions 10

 Organization of Thesis 12

II **Review of Related Literature** 13

 The Current State of Colleges 15

 Open Systems and Boundary Spanning 22

 Open Systems 23

 Boundary Spanning 24

 The College Consumer 26

	Needs, Wants, Demands, and Expectations	31
	Bradshaw's Taxonomy of Needs	33
	Needs Assessment	38
	Criticisms of Needs Assessment	41
	The Responsive College	44
	Chapter Summary	46
III	Research Design and Methodology	48
	Nature of the Study	48
	Methodology	50
	Choosing the Site	50
	Access	52
	Selection of Respondents	52
	Interviews	53
	Transcription Process	55
	Observation and Document Reviews	55
	Data Analysis	56
	Final Comments	56
	Standards of Rigor	57
	Reliability	57
	Validity	57
	Trustworthiness	57
	Ethical Issues	58
	Chapter Summary	58
IV	A Description of the Data	59
	The Responsive College	62
	The College Consumer	65

Enrolment Management Project	67
The Changing Student Profile	68
Linkages Used at The College	69
Formal Research Processes	69
Primary Sources	71
Secondary Sources	72
Interactive processes	73
Advisory Committees	74
Industry/College Partnerships	76
Networking	80
Realities of Responsiveness	83
External Realities	84
Internal Realities	88
Chapter Summary	91
v Integrating the Rhetoric and Reality	93
Introduction	93
Who is the College Consumer?	95
The Role of Needs Assessment	101
Processes of Needs Assessment	104
Needs Assessment Processes	105
Technology of Needs Assessment	107
Formal Linkages	110
Interactive Linkages	112
Forms of Assessment	114
Who Can Best Define Consumer Needs?	118
Chapter Summary	125

VI	Reflections, Conclusions, and Implications . . .	127
	Reflections	127
	Leadership	129
	Vision	131
	Culture	133
	Entrepreneurial Spirit	134
	Conclusions	137
	Implications	140
	For Practice	141
	For Further Research	143
	Chapter Summary	144
	References	147

List of Appendices

Appendix

A	Interview Guide	155
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List of Tables

Table

1	Canada Versus the World's Top 20 - Economic . . .	19
2	Canada Versus the World's Top 20 - Education . . .	20
3	Who is the College Consumer?	28
4	College Stakeholders	29
5	Bradshaw's Definitions of Need	36
6	Who Does The College Serve	100
7	Participants in Assessment	120

List of Figures

Figure

1	Bradshaw's Taxonomy of Social Need	37
2	Model of Needs Assessment and Planning	40
3	Throughput Model	96
4	Needs Assessment Model at The College	102
5	Cycle of Responsiveness	108

The Sound of the Forest

Back in the third century A. D., the King Ts'ao sent his son, Prince T'ai, to the temple to study under the great master Pan Ku. Because Prince T'ai was to succeed his father as king, Pan Ku was to teach the boy the basics of being a good ruler. When the Prince arrived at the temple, the master sent him alone to the Ming-Li Forest. After one year, the Prince was to return to the temple to describe the sound of the forest.

When Prince T'ai returned, Pan Ku asked the boy to describe all that he could hear. "Master," replied the Prince, "I could hear the cuckoos sing, the leaves rustle, the hummingbirds hum, the crickets chirp, the grass blow, the leaves rustle, the bees buzz, and the wind whisper and holler." When the Prince had finished, the master told him to go back to the forest to listen to what more he could hear. The Prince was puzzled by the master's request. Had he not discerned every sound already?

For days and nights on end, the young Prince sat alone in the forest listening. But he heard no sounds other than those he had already heard. Then one morning, as the Prince sat silently beneath the trees, he started to discern faint sounds unlike those he had ever heard before. The more acutely he listened, the clearer the sounds became. The feeling of enlightenment enveloped the boy. "These must be the sounds the master wished me to discern," he reflected.

When Prince T'ai returned to the temple, the master asked him what more he had heard. "Master," responded the Prince reverently, "when I listened most closely, I could hear the unheard - the sound of flowers opening, the sound of the sun warming the earth, and the sound of the grass drinking the morning dew." The master nodded approvingly. "To hear the unheard," remarked Pan Ku, "is a necessary discipline to be a good ruler. For only when a ruler has learned to listen closely to the people's hearts, hearing their feelings uncommunicated, pains unexpressed, and complaints not spoken of, can he hope to inspire confidence in his people, understand when something is wrong, and meet the true needs of his citizens. The demise of states comes when leaders listen only to the superficial words and do not penetrate deeply into the souls of the people to hear their true opinions, feelings and desires."

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"Parables of Leadership" by Kim & Nauborgne, (1992, p. 124).
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Chapter I

Introduction

The parable, The Sound of the Forest (Kim & Mauborgne, 1992, p. 124), emphasizes the need to listen. Without listening, understanding is inconceivable. If one accepts the premise that an organization must serve, the responsibility of college administrators is to attend their many stakeholders by "hearing what is being said." Without understanding and empathy, efforts to meet or exceed consumer expectations will be in vain. Administrators must learn to listen to their consumers to discover their needs just as Prince T'ai listened to the sounds of the forest. If "the demise of states comes when leaders listen only to the superficial words and do not penetrate deeply into the souls of the people," (Kim and Mauborgne, 1992, p. 124) so might come the demise of colleges as effective educational institutions. One must not lose sight of the reality that educators must be responsive to consumer needs.

Background to the Study

Educators face conflicting pressures. Taxpayers are calling for accountability from administrators of public institutions while operating expenses defy restraint. Students are facing spiralling tuition costs. College leaders are feeling the pressure of global competition. Employers in government, industry, and business are

demanding an increasing number of better prepared graduates.

The successful college prepares graduates who will strengthen the community.

The community college should retain the degree of flexibility appropriate to the community to be served, in light of all other educational opportunities available to the communities. Anything less in times of scarce resources, indeed at anytime, seems socially indefensible. (Dennison and Gallagher, 1986, p. 153)

The process for determining necessary change is difficult at best but this need cannot be ignored. The very integrity of the college is at risk in these changing times.

Responsiveness to community needs undergirds the community college.

Michael Porter (1991, p. 391) addresses this point from a Canadian perspective in Canada at the Crossroads: The Reality of a New Competitive Environment.

Canada today faces unprecedented challenges to its future economic viability and prosperity. The traditional Canadian economic order, developed over many decades, generally worked well for most Canadians. Now, it is under tremendous strain because of sweeping changes in the global competitive environment - rapid growth of trade and investments, more open competition, the globalization of industries, shifting corporate strategies, rapid technological change, and increasing economic integration among countries. . . . New approaches are necessary to create the pressures, incentives and capabilities that will support innovation.

Porter warns that Canadians face a changing world. The forces of change in the world economy are inexorable. The political costs of blockading Canada from the world economy will be intolerable. New approaches are necessary to create the pressures, incentives, and capabilities that will

support innovation. Canadians should not seek quick fixes or accept anything less than real solutions. Canada can draw upon many strengths, not the least of which is a talented and youthful population and a nucleus of internationally successful firms. (Porter, 1991, p. 391)

Porter (1991, p. 381) submits Canada's competitiveness is anchored in certain advantages including its investment in education and skills upgrading:

Ensuring that the education system does a better job of imparting basic skills is one priority. . . . Since it is expected that the requirements for skills upgrading in Canada will increase significantly over the next decade. As this occurs, it will be particularly important to have mechanisms in place.

Porter's contention is that human capital is the primary contributor to an organization's competitive advantage. Organizations contribute to a nation's competitive advantage.

Competitive Advantage in Colleges

This writer will argue that the essence of a college lies in the ability of its leaders to understand the needs and expectations of the community. Educators must greet these disparate pressures by asking the question, "How can we become more responsive to community needs?" In a responsive college, the catalyst for change is the needs and expectations of their primary consumers. These needs may rest with the employer and the workplace or it might include the students' needs for a suitable learning environment. This is in contrast to colleges where decisions are made in

"monastic isolation" from the community. Birnbaum (1988) holds, "colleges must be responsive to their environment to endure."

Peter Drucker (1990) warns that the question the non-profit executive must continually ask is:

What should our service do for the customer that is of importance to this customer? Then think through how the service should be structured, be offered, be staffed. End up with nuts and bolts: What to do, when to do, where to do. And most importantly, who is to do it? (p. 102)

Drucker (1990) challenges educators to ask, "Is this something that fits our strengths? Can we develop a service that satisfies?" If strategy is to commit the organization to action, administrators must grasp the underlying question, "Who are we here to serve and how might we do this?"

College Responsiveness

The following are the words of Mary Parker Follett (cited in Hurst, 1992, p. 55) who lived from 1868 to 1933. This quote was taken from a lecture she gave in 1927.

I believe we shall soon think of the leader as one who can organize the experience of the group. . . . It is by organizing experience that we transform experience into power. . . . The task of the chief executive is to articulate the purpose that guides the integrated unity which his business aims to be.

What Follett did was capture the essence of a consumer orientation and the importance of this focus when developing an organizational vision.

To some, the question of the responsive college is

rhetorical. If asked, "Is your college responsive?", the answer will be, "Of course!" The question of responsiveness then becomes one of degree. Educators have a responsibility to be responsive, to meet the challenge of becoming an equal partner in Canada's growth.

Administrators must create an atmosphere where strategies for college growth can thrive. Administrators operate at a confluence of pressures from students, parents, employers, unions, professional organizations, special interest groups, individual employees, governments and politicians, and so on. To manage a college requires an understanding of the various consumers of learning in the context of their own environment.

Statement of Research Questions

According to Conner et al. (1985, p. 717), needs assessment is an evaluation tool that serves administrators and program planners when developing new programs or changing existing ones to satisfy their consumers' needs. Successful programming requires an understanding of the current level of unmet needs within the community. Educators must have trustworthy information on all communities served by post-secondary education.

The research questions answered in this study were:

To what degree do the leaders of the college respond to community members and their needs?

What linkages are available to ascertain consumer needs

as well as shifting environmental forces?

What role can needs assessment play in college responsiveness?

Statement of Significance

Just as law, medicine, and theology are uncommonly complex, so is educational administration. Each discipline requires a knowledge base that is "used by persons committed to the direct benefit of human beings, with minimal societal control placed on their practice, and organized among themselves to ensure that they continue to provide those benefits" (Quinn and Smith, 1987, p. 3). Educational administrators can meet their professional responsibilities by continually developing a stronger base for the discipline.

All education is provided against a backdrop of past thinking and ways of working which constrains attempts to introduce change. (Packwood and Whitaker, 1988, p. 1) The last decade has been characterized by uncertainty and change. It has seen deepening recession and an emphasis on value for money and cost effectiveness in public services. This is becoming a key concept in social policy planning.

The thinking of many is that public services including education must respond to the recognized needs of the publics they choose to serve. As Packwood and Whitaker (1988, p. 2) suggest, "once needs have been identified then they can also serve as statements of service priorities."

An examination of how needs are assessed requires identifying the various activities that contribute, who participates, the criteria that are applied and how different assessments affect educational provision.

Theoretical Significance

In this context, this investigation is significant because a study of college responsiveness was conducted that drew upon established but under-utilized theoretical frameworks and examined these relationships and interactions.

Practical Significance

This research provides an insight into the ideal of the responsive institution. This research adds clarity to a complex subject by providing insights into the difficulties associated with college responsiveness and then to examine the technology of needs assessment.

Delimitations and Limitations of This Study

This study was delimited to:

1. A single college.
2. An analysis of college responsiveness in general and the needs assessment process specifically. Findings are not reconciled to planning or teaching concerns.
3. An analysis of career-specific programs with attention paid to business education programming of the chosen site.

This study was limited by:

1. The selection process. As one college cannot represent

all colleges, neither can the respondents represent all staff at the site.

2. The ability, willingness, and goodwill of administrators to respond to the interview process.

3. The ability of the participants to recall, articulate, and share their experiences, beliefs, perceptions, feelings, and reactions.

4. The ability of the researcher to understand, witness, interpret, and report these experiences, beliefs, perceptions, feelings, and reactions.

5. The case study method, specifically the potential for oversimplification or exaggeration of a situation, and the tendency to think case studies account for the whole.

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions of significant terms used in this study:

Community college - is an institute of higher education that is not degree-granting. Distinctive characteristics of the Canadian college include: a community orientation, preparing the graduate with job-ready skills including career, technical, and para-professional programs. Other programs might include university transfer, general academic, personal interest and community development, upgrading, and those intended to serve individual needs. Community colleges are "publicly established, publicly supported,

publicly maintained - to achieve public purposes, to serve all citizens without discrimination" (Dennison and Gallagher, 1986, p. 80). The term "college" is synonymous with "community college" in this thesis.

Community member - If a community college is mandated to serve "to achieve public purposes, to serve all citizens without discrimination" (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986, p. 80), community members are all citizens the college serves. This definition includes all who directly or indirectly benefit from the educational offering.

Consumers - Some people may use the term customer and others the term client to describe these patrons. Customers are those who pay for a service and clients are those who receive the benefit of the service. Consumers are patrons who directly benefit from the college. This includes all who assimilate or use the educational offering or the results of this service. Consumers are homogeneous groups of individuals who have similar needs and expectations of the organization.

Environment - the suprasystem in which the college exists including the social and cultural, political and legal, demographic, technological, and economic systems of society.

Linkages - If linking is the joining or coupling of the college to its stakeholders and consumers, linkages are the processes, systems, and contacts that bond the college and its community into a common function.

Needs assessment - are methods, both structured and informal, used by practitioners to assess consumer needs.

Responsive College - is an anthropomorphism that describes a college administration that anticipates and consistently provides services to meet consumer needs effectively and efficiently.

Stakeholders - are persons or groups with a vested interest in the college organization. These are distinct groups of people who have an actual or potential interest and/or impact on the college. Stakeholders exist within and without the organization. While all consumers are stakeholders, not all stakeholders are consumers.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made:

1. Administrators are revisiting the raison d'être of their schools because external pressures are multiplying.
2. Forces external to the college frequently create a need for internal change. Change in colleges must be consumer-driven in light of environmental forces.
3. All colleges are responsive to some degree.

These assumptions are identified to clarify the writer's perspective.

Organisation of Thesis

Chapter I has provided information about the background and rationale of the study. Chapter II presents a review of literature relating to the need for college responsiveness. Details of the research methodology, including a discussion of the suitability of the case study approach, appears in Chapter III. Chapter IV is a presentation of a single case - Responsiveness at The College. An integration of findings from the research site college as compared to the concepts found in the literature appears in Chapter V. The study concludes with a presentation of reflections, conclusions, and implications of responsiveness in Chapter VI.

Chapter II

A Review of Related Literature

Senge (1990, p. 8) suggests, "the successful corporation of the 1990's will be something called a learning organization, a consummately adaptive enterprise." To extend Senge's premise, educational administrators must build colleges into learning organizations where people are continually expanding their capabilities to shape the future for the college and community for colleges do not operate in a vacuum.

Garvin (1993, p. 80) contemplated the definitions of organizational learning from scholars like Huber, Levitt, March, and Argyris. His definition of a learning organization is "an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights." This definition begins with a simple truth: new ideas are essential if learning is to take place. Truths alone cannot create a learning organization. They must be accompanied by changes in the way that work gets done. "The effective executive has to be able to recognize and run with opportunity, to learn, and constantly to refresh the knowledge base" (Drucker, 1990, p. 351). Birnbaum (1990, p. 214) cautions the detection of error requires accuracy in learning, but leaders are subject to cognitive biases that

are difficult to avoid. Nevertheless, there are several simple details that can be completed to reduce error.

Twain (1983) warned of several social issues emerging about higher education. These entail (a) education as a need as opposed to education as a right, (b) quality versus quantity, (c) the short run compared with the long-run, and (d) conservatism measured against radicalism. What the community can expect from the college system continues to be a topic of serious debate.

Small cites Schumacher (1973) who calls for "a breakaway from large scale technology in favour of more personalized and localized education" (p. 1). The successful college administrator will balance consumer desires within the bounds of resource and environmental limitations.

This chapter contains a survey of literature dealing with the notions of college responsiveness, of using consumer needs as a driver for colleges and the technology of needs assessment.

The Current State of Colleges

Education isn't just a social concern, it's a major economic issue. If our students can't compete today, how will our companies compete tomorrow.

John Ackers, former chairman, IBM

At times higher education has been responsive to changing demographics and to the shifting social agendas of society. To frequently however, "college administrators will resist external changes to maintain the status quo, almost regardless of the degree or power of the new environmental contingencies" (Owens, 1991, p. 83). The future of college education will lie in its ability to react effectively to a public that will no longer tolerate less than a best effort.

Forrest Gale (1992) of the Defense Systems Management College in Virginia refers to a "smugness among many college administrators." Gale argues this is due to past successes. He comments:

(Given) the rigid bureaucracy. . . and unyielding cultural framework of higher education. . . . There is widespread unease in the general population about this bureaucracy, this educational mafia. But the hue and cry for fundamental change in both educational institution and classroom process is currently focused on the lower levels of our educational system. . . . The heat and critical light will spread, probably within this decade. We have time to initiate fundamental changes, but the clock is ticking. We have an opportunity to grow and develop our own quality transformation but - if not - society and the deadly competitiveness of the developing world order will force it. (p. 2)

Gale (1992) relates the complacent attitude of some educators to a similar state of mind in the steel,

automobile, consumer electronic, and semiconductor industries. Their blindness to the obvious preceded a "competitive blood bath of downsizing, bankruptcy and red ink." Gale argues the time has come to recognize that education is a competitive international industry.

Shirley Terreberry cautions "survival of the fittest" is a function of fitness given the environment. "Remember, dinosaurs were impressive in their day" (cited in Kast and Rosenzweig, 1973, p. 308). Terreberry's contention is that even the hardy are at risk if they do not adjust. There has been continual pressure for colleges to become more open and adaptive yet they are often more mechanistic and structured in form.

The goals of education are many and varied: mastery of basic skills, intellectual development, career education, interpersonal understandings, citizenship participation, enculturation, moral and ethical character development, emotional and physical well-being, creativity and aesthetic self-expression, and self-realization. (Fullan 1991, p. 119)

Goodlad (1984) concludes "We want it all" but how does a college administrator balance these expectations?

Derek Bok remarked upon his retirement as President at Harvard:

(When) you look within schools at what is really going on. . . you are struck by what an inverse correlation there is between what society needs from these institutions and what we are taking most seriously. If you take some of the basic problems facing society. . . and then make a list of all the things that a university could contribute. . . and ask yourself how do all these things rank in the list of priorities of the modern university, one is struck by how low they rank. (cited by Seymour, 1992, p. 128)

Bok reflects, "Are universities meeting the needs of the society that supports them?"

Dr. George Johnson, President of the University of Kansas, adds his voice to this rising tide. He feels a growing segment of higher education is "overpriced, underperforming, and possibly corrupt" (quoted by Church, 1989, p. 14). Church continues to suggest "this is why we are seeing a rapidly growing higher education enterprise evolving in the private sector." This initiative is due to a lack of responsiveness and effectiveness of public higher educational institutions.

The current state of American Universities alarms Trachtenberg (1992), yet he suggests this situation is ideal for the college system. This creates an opportunity. The argument is that colleges are not caught in the "lust for bigness" that prevailed in universities during the 1980's.

Colleges serve the very need the economy requires, a regional and local focus on providing a work-force that helps to attract new business operations and to retain the ones that have been around for awhile. (p. 278)

The key is to do so in a cost effective manner. The progress of a nation depends in part on its educational system. Lynton (1989, p. 28) suggests colleges play a significant social role.

They are the principal instruments to which society looks for the creation, aggregation, synthesis, interpretation, and dissemination of advanced knowledge. . . This inevitably affects the relationship of higher education to the surrounding world.

Higher education in Canada is not immune to this

criticism. One measure of the effectiveness of Canada's educational system is to measure this nation's economic successes of this nation against that of other nations. Michael Porter (1991) submitted his report, Canada at the Crossroads: The Reality of a New Competitive Environment, to the Business Council on National Issues and the Government of Canada in October, 1991. This account of Canada's economic and competitive state when compared internationally should cause educators to rethink the current state of higher education.

Porter (1991) rates Canada's economic and educational performance against the world's top twenty nations (see Tables 1 and 2). Table 1 represents Canada's rating based on a series of combined indicators to yield a comparison against the World's top 20 industrially. By Porter's calculations, Canada ranks ninth overall in business confidence. Japan was judged first and the USA fourth.

This "white water" turbulence is forcing most leaders to examine the very essence of their organizations - their basic purposes, their identities, and their relationships with customers, competitors, and suppliers. (Beckhard & Pritchard, 1991, p. 1)

This is evidence that Canadian industry faces increasing pressure due to changes in the global competitive environment. There is rapid growth of trade and investment, more open competition, the globalization of industries, shifting corporate strategies, rapid technological change, and increased economic integration among countries. (Porter,

TABLE 1

**CANADA VERSUS WORLD'S TOP 20
Indicators of Economic Strength
(Selected Factors)**

	Canada	USA	Japan	#1
Overall Rating of Business Confidence				
1989 GNP/Capita	9	4	1	Japan
Real GNP Growth	7	6	3	Switzerland
Income Distribution	4	6	2	Turkey
	14	19	2	Hungary
Total Employment	8	4	9	Switzerland
Total Unemployment	15	4	9	Switzerland
Availability of Skilled Labour	15	8	4	Ireland
Brain Drain	15	1	2	USA
Overall Productivity/Capita	7	6	3	Switzerland
Annual % Change/Capita	12	19	4	Ireland
Product Quality	13	12	1	Japan
Marketing Orientation	10	1	2	Japan
Managerial Freedom	1	2	15	Canada
New Business Generation	20	11	4	Portugal
Managerial Initiative	10	13	5	Italy
Real Growth Business R & D	12	16	15	Spain
Future R & D Spending	19	1	10	Japan

Adapted from Porter (1991) The World Effectiveness Report

TABLE 2

**CANADA VERSUS WORLD'S TOP 20
in Education (Selected Factors)**

	Canada	USA	Japan	#1
Effectiveness of Compulsory Education In Meeting Needs of Economy	11	1	19	USA
Secondary School Enrollment	3	7	10	Denmark
Secondary School Attainment	4	3	2	Switzerland
Higher Education Enrollment	2	1	15	USA
Higher Education Attainment	6	1	7	USA
In Company Training - Effectiveness \$ Spent/Capital	20 3	17 6	1 9	Japan Denmark

Adapted from Porter (1991) The World Effectiveness Report

1991, p. 391)

Porter (1991) estimated Canada's educational position in relation to our worldwide competition (see Table 2). It is unsettling to many to realize that while Canada's educational investment per capita ranks third and both enrolment and attainment are at least credible. To the contrary, as witnessed in Table 1, the effectiveness of Canada's compulsory education ranks eleventh. Corporate training is worse yet with a ranking of twentieth. By traditional indicators Canada's workforce appears well educated, yet Porter submits Canada's labour force is not adjusting well to forces of change; that our investment in education is not yielding acceptable results. (p. 181) His premise is that while this is not yet a crisis state, the reality is this requires immediate attention.

Canadians "must rekindle our competitive advantage by investing more in education and specialized skills upgrading and a more focused technology development and faster adoption" (Porter, 1991, pp. 381-383). Human capital is becoming the most important source of competitive advantage in the contemporary world economy. Resource-poor nations such as Japan, Switzerland, Taiwan, and Korea have built successful economies based, in part, on the strength of their human resources. Clearly, the quantity, skill, and cost of a nation's personnel all effect national advantage. (Porter, 1991, p. 166) Canada's future competitiveness must

be driven by a new approach.

Canadian industry has been urged forward with goals of productivity and innovation. Porter (1991, p. 350) insists Canada must become more focused on technological development and faster adoption. His contention is that Canada's weak international position is, in part, attributable to our weak commitment to training and education. (Porter, 1990, p. 181) Improvement demands a responsive educational system.

Planning cannot exist in a vacuum; planning must have a real-world context. The college administrator must be in touch with the community.

There seems to be a natural tendency for every organism to jar apart and become a loose-jointed aggregation of unrelated units unless there is some binding, supervising, and coordinating force that continually keeps them in place and makes each unit realize that it is not complete in itself, but merely a part whose greatest service is rendered when it fits perfectly into the whole. (Robinson, 1925)

The sense of the whole emerges in the open systems theory.

Open Systems and Boundary Spanning

Ratsoy (1980, p. 1) refers to literature on organizations that gives increasing prominence to: (a) the importance of an organization's environment to the functioning of the organization, (b) the need for understanding and attending to the formal and informal linkages between organizations, (c) the significance of the boundary-spanning roles that personnel within the

organization play, and (d) the importance of temporary systems and other ad hoc arrangements for policy formulation in the organization.

Open System

The open-systems perspective features a "continuous flow of energy, information, or materials from environment of system and return.." (Robbins, 1976, cites DeGreene, p. 270). Robbins maintains:

This interchange with the environment is absolutely necessary for the organization's existence and survival. Further, open systems are self-regulating, which have a natural balancing tendency.

To contrast, a closed system is predictable, rational, optimal, and certain. Members of the system are more concerned with protecting the system and organization from its environment than being responsive to the environment. This is not descriptive of the healthy college environment.

An illustration of an open system is the burning candle. It affects its environment but its surroundings also affect it. If a door opens, the candle may flicker in the draft but it will return to normal at the first opportunity. This assumes the environmental change was not so overwhelming as to extinguish the flame. While it is self-regulating, it retains its own identity.

When there is a need for change and there are few precedents, technology must be adaptive. (Birnbaum, 1990, p. 46) Management systems should be less centralized, coordinated by specialized planning units, planning of

interlocking activities with attention to intermediate goals, and emphasis on quality. Birnbaum recommends that support for adaptive systems is likely to be decentralized, to be coordinated through face-to-face interaction within the unit, to emphasize general plans that are adjusted according to feedback, and to give attention to learning based on experience.

Boundary Spanning

An organization must implement certain mechanisms set into place to encourage external linkages. These processes foster a college posture that is sensitive to both the environment and the needs of the various stakeholders. In the words of Gratz and Salem (1989, p. 109):

Colleges should take a broader view of external communications than they normally do, and they should recognize communication problems and opportunities that occur are likely to affect all parts of the system.

Colleges must pay greater attention to the development of boundary spanning episodes or individual contacts.

Gratz and Salem (1989) describe several boundary spanning activities that college personnel can engage in to help them to better understand those outside the college:

1. Representing - embraces public relations, news services, providing information, publicity, and so on.
2. Scanning and monitoring - college planning efforts are based on the assessment of opportunities and constraints in the environment.
3. Information processing and gatekeeping - involves

college efforts to interpret, to translate, and to filter knowledge about the environment. Problems arise in the college's planning process when the information is outdated or the boundary spanners are not in touch with current realities.

4. **Transacting** - Acquiring inputs and disposing of outputs in the activity known as transacting. Because colleges are human systems, these transactions involve people and communication.

5. **Linking and coordinating** - this addresses interorganizational connections and constraints. Today's college personnel must become involved in collaborative efforts with industry, communities, public schools, and other agencies, both private and public.

6. **Protecting** - This amounts to defending college definitions and protecting them from challenges across boundaries.

As college boundaries become less rigid and fade, they demand more effective management. Boundary spanners have the difficult task of explaining institutional constraints to the outside while convincing an often reluctant internal constituency of the need for change. Lynton (1989, p. 28) contends that boundary management must be strategic or based on a clear understanding of institutional responsibilities and mission.

As Owens (1991, p. 30) suggests, "effective management

of organizational behaviour in schools must be set upon critical analysis of the organizational realities of schools." Organizations must organize to satisfy the consumer.

The College Consumer

Kotler and Andreasen (1991, p. 43) describe a consumer orientation.

Success will come to that organization that best determines the perceptions, needs, and wants of target markets and satisfies them through the design, communication, pricing, and delivery of appropriate and competitively viable offerings.

An easy interpretation might be that the college must cater to every consumer's fancy. To suggest this is to misinterpret the notion of a consumer orientation. Simply, the college administrator has many consumer groups to consider when planning the college's future. Assessments of collective need require knowledge of the characteristics displayed by larger groupings and of the provision available to them. (Packwood and Whitaker, 1988, p. 101) Planners must embrace the collective needs of certain consumer groups when setting a future course.

Harvey Lamm, President of Subaru of America, asserts:

To satisfy the customer, it means that everybody in the company has to understand that the total existence of a company depends upon the customer, so if the customer is not satisfied, he is not going to be a customer tomorrow, and if he is not a customer tomorrow, we don't have a business tomorrow. (Band, 1991, p. 49)

From the point of view of the consumers (potential, actual,

or former), the only excuse for being in business is to satisfy them. (Carr, 1990, p. 31) As Slywotsky and Shapiro (1993, p. 97) suggest, "developing a loyal consumer base can take many years. And short term thinking only sabotages the process." This requires shrewd consumer selection and an effective strategy to serve consumers productively.

While consumers define benefit in terms of expectations met, they define value by measuring benefit against cost. To satisfy the consumer, educational administrators must consider their service provision through the consumer's eyes. For example, a college student may realize benefit in gainful employment or an enjoyable social experience. Industry may realize a benefit from a ready supply of appropriately trained, productive employees. Knowing your consumer will not solve all of education's ills but it is a choice point from which to begin. Given this notion, "Who is the educational consumer?"

A review of current writings on colleges and their consumers is summarized in Table 3. A theme common to the authors charted is the recognition of the student as a key consumer. Of note is the fact that only Kotler (1982) and Packwood and Whitaker (1988) recognize the employer as a second key consumer. The second grouping mentioned is the community or society-at-large. Taxpayers are included. Except for the Donors category, at least two of the writers recognized each of the remaining groups.

Table 3

Who is the College Consumer?

As Addressed by Various Writers on the Subject

Authors Referenced Consumer Category	Kotler & Fox (1985)	Kotler (1982)	Coate (1990)	Packwood & Whitaker (1988)	Theodossin (1986)	Stewart (1991)	Kaufman & English (1979)
STUDENTS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
EMPLOYERS		X		X	S		
PARENTS		X			S		
ALUMNI		?	X		S		
VALIDATING AGENCIES		?			S		
DONORS	X						
OTHER COLLEGES			X		S		X
GOVERNMENT			X		S		
SOCIETY/TAXPAYERS		?	X	X	S		X
<p>Legend: X - Consumer ? - Asks the Question S - Secondary Consumer Note: Many spoke of "Others." These are not included.</p>							

Kotler and Andreasen (1991, p. 89) propose another view of a consumer orientation. They suggest that every organization is "a resource-conversion machine." The input stakeholders supply resources that are converted by internal stakeholders into useful services. Delivery to consuming stakeholders occurs through various intermediaries. Table 4 is an adaptation of Kotler & Andreasen's ideas.

Kotler and Andreasen (1991) explain that while the actions of these stakeholders or publics can affect the welfare of the college, not all stakeholders are equally important to the college. Students, for example, are both

Table 4

College Stakeholders

INPUT STAKEHOLDERS	INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	INTERMEDIARY STAKEHOLDERS	CONSUMING STAKEHOLDERS
Students Donors Government Student influencers Alumni Other suppliers	Instructors Students Management Board of Governors Senates Unions and Associations Support staff Volunteers	Instructors Media Agent/Brokers Facilitators	Students Employers -Industry -Government -Business Society -Taxpayers -Activists -Local community Alumni Parents Validating Agencies

input and consuming stakeholders and this proves to be confusing for each role requires different treatment. On

the input side, students select both colleges and programs based on a selection process. Students have choices. On the output or consuming side, many students have expectations for employment; students are the end users for many college services such as student services as well as teaching and learning. Instructors are internal stakeholders while also serving as primary intermediaries. Parents are stakeholders for they have expectations for their charges and how they will be served. Parents play a role as an influencer to certain students. The dilemma facing educators to find an elusive balance given limited resources is persistent.

The reality is that colleges and universities are in service for society. Seymour (1992) insists higher education cannot isolate itself from other institutions in society by lamely declaring, "we are different or too complex." No matter how common it may seem to some educators, higher education has characteristics similar to banks, airlines, or restaurants. Seymour maintains all serve consumers. Educators serve students - they pay tuition. Educators serve alumni - they give both good will and money. Educators serve industry - they provide support with their tax dollars and research grants and they employ graduates. Educators serve society - they pay taxes.

The mandate for colleges, as it is in the private sector, lies without not within. The mandate for colleges

resides in its consumers' need(s). The bond among each consumer group is this common need. To understand consumer need, wants, demands, and expectations is to understand the role of the consumer in college planning.

Needs, Wants, Demands, and Expectations

Need is often viewed as an objective and static phenomenon which is an attribute of the client. (Whitaker and Packwood, 1988, p. 59) The notion of need is an effective starting point for the planner to found a responsive college. Need is a requirement or lack of something on the part of the consumer. Some explain need as a state of felt deprivation. Humans have complex needs, none of which are created by an organization, but "are a basic part of human makeup" (McDougall et al., 1992, p. 5). Successful managers attend to consumer needs.

It is reasonable for an individual experiencing a need not to be aware of this need. They may recognize a disorder without knowledge of the need itself or, more importantly, how to solve the problem. When a need exists, a person will normally look to satisfy or reduce this need. Because of the intangible state of needs, they are usually described in terms of goods or services.

McKillop (1987) argues that needs are value based. The person observing the need and the person experiencing the need may differ on the need itself as well as the potential solution to the problem. Values reflect in the analysis of

the problem, in expected outcomes, and the very mission of the organization.

Wants suggest a desire to satisfy a need or solve some problem and are expressed through patronage. Kotler (1982) suggests wanting implies the consumer is aware of the need or deficiency. Efforts to satisfy wants are shaped by social pressures, culture, and individual personality.

When backed by buying power, wants become **demands**. Kotler (1982) suggests consumers view products and services as bundles of benefits and choose those that give them value for people have unlimited wants but limited resources. Kotler proposes demands differ from wants because the consumer, rather than the provider, fathers demand. Often there is a sense of urgency associated in the minds of those demanding.

Consumers choose to satisfy those needs that they hope will exceed their expectations - today, simply meeting these desires is not enough to ensure success. (Deming, 1986) **Expectation** implies confidence that some benefit will be realized. Consumers expect an ideal or maximum outcome. Parasuraman et al. (1991, p. 39) propose that understanding expectations is a prerequisite for delivering superior service for consumers compare perceptions with their expectations when judging a service.

From continually trying to meet these demands, the members of the organization learn what new capabilities are

required.

The key to success is designing a linkage system that can bring together whatever modules are necessary - instantly, costlessly, seamlessly, and frictionlessly. (Pine et al., 1993, pp. 109-110)

Pine et al. continue to suggest that this is a never-ending campaign to expand the number of ways the organization can satisfy consumers. Understanding consumers begins with an understanding of their needs.

Unfortunately, educational needs are often difficult to define and measure for, not only are they intangible, these needs are collective rather than individual. Pine et al. (1993) refer to this as "mass customization." This requires a dynamic network of independent operational units each working to provide a service that is changing in response to consumer wants and needs. Mass customization calls for flexibility and quick responsiveness.

Packwood and Whitaker (1988) point out there is a considerable amount of social policy literature that examines the nature of collective need. For example, Bradshaw's (1972) taxonomy of social need provides a starting point for educational planners to show the different ways in which need can be defined.

Bradshaw's Taxonomy of Needs

Bradshaw's (1972) taxonomy of social need provides a theoretical basis for understanding collective needs rather than individual need. Bradshaw's classifications of social need are:

1. Normative needs - When the expert or professional, administrator, or social scientist defines a need, this is a normative need. A desirable standard is interpreted by the specialist.
2. Felt needs - Here need can be equated with want. When assessing need for a service, people are asked whether they feel they need it.
3. Expressed needs - are felt needs turned into action. It is easy to argue the litmus test for any service is utilization but this does not affirm that effort is correct or vice versa. While demand is not declared unless need is sensed, it is not uncommon for needs to remain unexpressed because consumers perceive higher value and benefit elsewhere. In this case, a legitimate need can remain dormant. These contradictions may cause misgivings and confusion among those responsible for funding of public programs.
4. Comparative needs - By this definition, need is measured by studying those already receiving a service. If all people with similar characteristics are not receiving this service, they are thought to be in need. Comparative need is established by investigating the gap between services that exist in one area and those that may or may not exist in another.

Packwood and Whitaker (1988) reconciled Bradshaw's (1972) Taxonomy to the findings of their own study. This

appears in Table 5 (used with permission). Each means of assessment is correlated to one or more of Bradshaw's definitions of social need. The inter-relationship of Bradshaw's (1972, p. 641) taxonomy is displayed in Figure 1. This demonstrates the relationship of Bradshaw's definitions. The plus (+) and minus (-) symbols denote the presence or absence of need by each of the aforementioned definitions. The first symbol represents the presence (+) or absence (-) of normative need. The second, third, and fourth symbols represent felt need, expressed need, and comparative need respectively. For instance, (+--+) is a need that is accepted by the experts and recognized when compared to others in a like situation. The need is neither felt or demanded by the individual.

As seen, the needs of various groups can be placed in any combination of Bradshaw's taxonomy from the centre zone where need meets all four definitions (++++). There is a full range of combinations of need through to the perimeter area where there is an absence of need by all definitions (----). When Packwood and Whitaker (1988, p. 57) applied these definitions of need to their experience they demonstrated the many combinations of needs definition that Bradshaw theorized while recognizing the needs of college consumers.

In a world of unlimited resources, organizations could deal with individual needs. Unfortunately, this is cannot

Table 5

DEFINITIONS OF NEED

		Means of Assessment	Definitions of Need
Institutions	-- Students	Recruitment process Pastoral care Student progress Careers guidance Demand Examination results Student destinations Course drop-out rate attendance Course evaluation Student surveys Knowledge of other initiatives	Expressed, felt, normative Felt, normative Normative Felt, normative Expressed Comparative Expressed Expressed Felt Felt Normative, comparative
	-- Employers	Industrial liaison Demand Schools/college industrial liaison committees Advisory committees Conferences/consultations Employers' surveys Careers Service information Knowledge of other initiatives	Felt, normative Expressed Felt, normative Felt, normative Felt Felt Normative, comparative Normative, comparative
Careers Services	-- Students	Careers guidance Teacher opinions Careers meetings and conventions Student destinations	Felt, normative Normative Felt, normative Expressed
	-- Employers	Employers' visits Schools/college industrial liaison committees Advisory committees Conferences Employers' surveys Recruitment patterns	Felt Felt, normative Felt, normative Felt Felt Expressed
LEAs	-- Students	Complaints about access to courses Demand Examination results Course provision Student destinations Forecasts of demand Population forecasts and social trends Applications for grants and awards Monitoring of provision Knowledge of other initiatives In-service training Student surveys	Felt, expressed, normative Expressed, comparative Comparative Normative, comparative Expressed Expressed, normative, comparative Comparative Expressed, Normative, comparative Normative, comparative Normative Felt
	-- Employers	LEA employers' committees Employment trends Personal contacts	Felt, normative Expressed, comparative Felt

Source: Packwood & Whitaker (1988) (Used with permission).

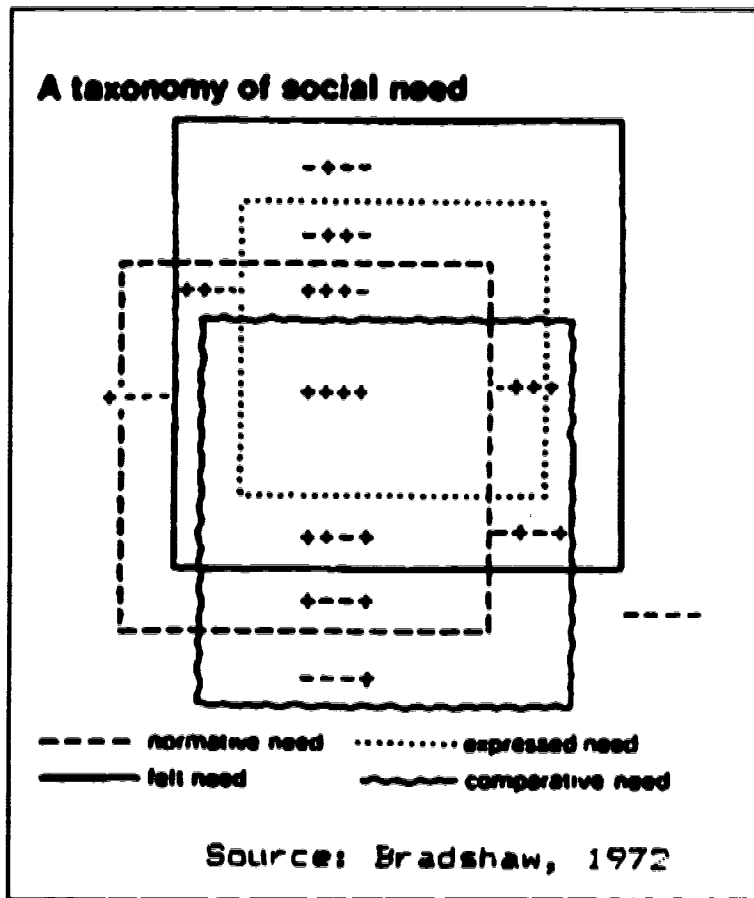


Figure 1 Bradshaw's Taxonomy

be, therefore public or social needs must be viewed in the collective sense. College planners must focus on segments of the population that are alike given parallel educational needs. Public institutions must deal in the public interest, in collective wants or generalized opportunities for consumer satisfaction. Institutions must offer services that are both desired and needed. Needs assessment provides the technology to identify these requirements.

Needs Assessment

There is a maxim that cautions, "If you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there." Needs assessment is a process to evaluate how an organization's leaders can develop a direction for their college. Rothman and Gant (1987, p. 36) describe needs assessment as a response of public officials for greater accountability in the provision of human services. There is continual pressure on agencies and professionals to be more clear, explicit, and rigorous. Assessment entails gathering pertinent evidence and drawing inferences about the nature of a given problem and the actions and resources needed. Needs assessment sustains planning through a consumer focus.

Donath (1992, p. 87) addresses the issue of changing needs:

Despite what you might think, it's not fickleness that leads customers to change their minds. Customers keep

tinkering and trying out new ideas because their needs keep changing.

Kaufman and English (1979, p. 8) explain needs assessment as:

A formal set of tools and techniques and a way of viewing the world; of intervention and positive, productive change for putting means and ends into useful perspective. Needs assessment is a means of intervention to stimulate positive, productive change for putting means and ends into useful perspective.

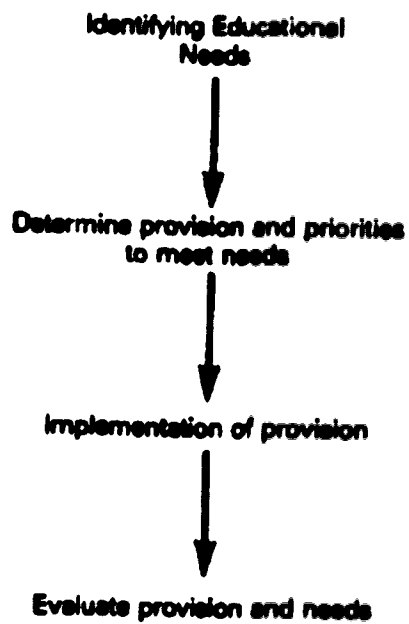
These authors maintain this is central to identifying the correct problems and, in turn, will provide the necessary information for determining appropriate interventions.

According to Packwood and Whitaker (1988, p. 145):

Needs assessment is a rational process that is characterized by reflective activity. It seeks to relate policy means to defined ends that are themselves under constant review.

Figure 2 illustrates a typical sequence of planning events. College planning begins with an assessment of the demand for existing courses. Planning begins with the identification of educational needs. These are measured against available resources and capabilities before implementation. Provision is then evaluated using need as a benchmark and this information is returned to the system. To relate this to Bradshaw's (1972) taxonomy, expressed demand is an indicator of need which administrators consider necessary to satisfy. Determining what service shall be provided is a complex task but once done, implementation follows. Needs assessment is a continual process of verifying the effectiveness of both provision and need satisfaction and modifying provision to

*The Rational Model of Needs Assessment
and Planning*



Source: Packwood and Whitaker, 1988

Figure 2 Needs Assessment

best serve need. As Fullan (1991, p. 49) cautions, change is a process, not an event.

Benveniste (1989, p. 25) points out that effective planning is vital for good management. The process of planning includes all the consultations, deliberations, and participative experiences that lead to elaboration, adoption, and implementation of a plan. Canadian humorist Stephen Leacock wrote of the young man who "flung himself upon his horse and rode madly off in all directions." Needs assessment is one method for helping decide which direction to take. Planning includes the research to determine the appropriate set of decisions to achieve the organization's goals. As Benveniste concludes, effective planning is planning that makes a difference.

Criticisms of Needs Assessment

Monette (1979, p. 83) challenges needs assessment in adult education on the basis of the language of need and the philosophical assumptions underlying its use. He maintains:

The concept of need to define educational aims provides little else than an admonition that objectives must always be postulated with a full awareness of the inherent limitations of the situation at hand.

Monette cites Freire (1970) who suggests "valuing per se is overt. Freire's stance is clear: education cannot be neutral" (p. 87). Freire continues to suggest that once the educator's values have been identified, they might prove embarrassing to this "service-oriented" profession.

Monette (1979, p. 83) contends that need has no meaning

without a set of norms and that it is impossible to identify needs without them. Needs are not merely empirically determinable facts; they are complex value judgements. His concern is that community needs will fall second to the personal values of the assessor. Theodossin (1986, p. 68) refers to "the increasing subordination of provider to client needs." This stems from an earlier reference that "colleges do not exist in a social and cultural vacuum" (p. 50). Theodossin proposes that client/provider relationships are two way arrangements, therefore, the provider must take care not to impose their beliefs to the subordination of those of the consumer.

Packwood and Whitaker (1988, p. 137) share Monette's (1979) concern that the values of the need-satisfier weigh heavily on the process. They discovered the values of senior staff regarding the scope of provision affected what courses were supplied and that schools within the same area differed due to administrator influence. Packwood and Whitaker conclude "the school's views about needs varied because of such factors as the values of staff, school policies and resources" (p. 139).

Shapek (1975, p. 754) expresses his concern about needs assessment by quoting the Study Committee on Policy

Management Assistance:

(They were) inexorably drawn to the conclusion that needs listings are fraught with inconsistency, lack of meaning, and many other affecting variables with seriously limit their utility. Worse yet, the goals,

problems desires, indicated. . . may be unachievable, insolvable, or beyond the present. . . government to bring about.

Members of the Committee infer that part of the problem is the system. The other part is the needs assessment process itself.

Packwood and Whitaker (1988, p. 55) cite W. A. Kimmel (1977):

It appears needs assessment can be almost anything: a change oriented process, a method for enumeration and description, an analytical procedure, a decision making process, a process for the resolution of many view points, etc.

There is a concern that the agencies might tend to reaffirm their existing form and structure while losing sight of their reason for being - to serve. Packwood and Whitaker maintain there is risk of achieving an uneasy balance of utility of the service and the costs of provision.

Despite its flaws, needs assessment strives to define appropriate learning needs and to identify how these needs can be met. Needs assessment is governed by the normative canon that asks, "What should be done?"

Institutions must be responsive to their environments to survive. (Birnbaum, 1990, p. 15) Open-systems thinking recognizes the interdependence of the organization and its environment. The flexibility of the open system equips it to survive with the influences, uncertainties, and complexities outside its boundaries. There must be a constant flow of energy and information to endure, to be

responsive.

The Responsive College

The responsive college is a relevant, community-oriented institution. Small (1981, p. 1, citing Myran, 1978) describes the responsive college as having a responsibility "to function as an integral part of the fabric and rhythm of the communities." Responsiveness might be seen as an operational concern of better employee selection, training and supervision, of more and better facilities and equipment, or of increased funding. Instead responsiveness is decided by the college's ability to serve the needs of community members. Small (p. 5) cautions that responsiveness goes beyond this ability to include: (1) commitment and support of the Board, (2) committed and satisfied faculty, (3) acceptance and moral support by faculty and administration with sister colleges, (4) flexible budgetary process, (5) institutional autonomy, (6) supportive administrative services, and (7) community pride of ownership. Small concludes that the responsive college provides an endorsement of trends if they are true expressions of community aspirations.

Responsive has been defined as (a) responding or reacting readily to influences, appeals, efforts, etc., (b) acting in response to some stimulus, or (c) characterized by the use of responses. (Theodossin, 1986) However, a

responsive college must not only meet today's needs but it must also be anticipative, innovative, predictive, and visionary for tomorrow's consumer may have very different needs and expectations.

The responsive college will not seek to stimulate demand, but to meet/supply demand, at least in the strict dictionary sense. Of course, a college may be both responsive and proactive at different/the same times, and in different ways. . . . Colleges should go to their potential customers with the offer of providing for their needs and wishes at times and in ways which suit the individual. (Theodossin, 1986, p. 21)

Responsiveness requires a sophisticated consumer information system to coordinate and integrate findings into planning systems.

Theodossin (1986, pp. 51-53) draws the following conclusions on college responsiveness:

1. There is little likelihood that responsiveness can ever be absolute and total. The absolutely non-responsive college would have no students. The perfectly responsive college is difficult to imagine.
2. Since everyone perceives the college differently, judging a college as responsive can be done only when referring to the majority. Responsiveness can have meaning only to specific groups of clients at a given time and place. Responsiveness is a continual process.
3. In the client-provider relationship, "the client holds the upper hand, i.e. the customer is always right, since he initiates the demands, carries the expectations and confers

the epithet responsiveness."

4. Responsiveness (or its absence) cannot be solely a function of those clients who arrive, but also must reflect the needs of potential clients.

If one accepts these tenets, college responsiveness lies in a shared desire of all college staff to satisfy consumers demands and expectations. Although not a perfect science, the success of the college lies with need identification, rather than with the "personal agendas" of those within the college.

Chapter Summary

Learning to improve the effectiveness of the effort is a natural component of all strategies and tactics.
(Beckhard & Pritchard, 1991, p. 9)

Garvin (1993, p. 79) summarizes three critical issues of the learning organization that, when considered, are essential for responsiveness. These consolidate the thoughts of many regarding the problems an organization faces when interacting with its consuming stakeholders. First is the question of meaning. Colleges need a plausible, well-grounded definition of purpose. It must be actionable and easy to apply. Second is the question of management. There must be clear guideline of practice that are filled with operational advice rather than high aspirations. The third is the question of measurement. College administrators need better tools for assessing the organization's rate and level

of learning to ensure that gains have in fact been made.

Once these "three M's" are addressed, managers will have a firmer foundation for launching learning organizations. Without this groundwork, progress is unlikely, and for the simplest of reasons. For learning to become a meaningful corporate goal, it must first be understood. (Garvin, 1993, p. 79)

Handy (1989, p. 5) advises us that while continuity may be comfortable, change due to questing and experimenting will likely be painful and difficult. Handy bases his book, The Age of Unreason, on three assumptions: (a) changes are discontinuous and not part of a pattern, (b) little changes can make the biggest differences, even if they go unnoticed at the time, and (c) discontinuous change requires discontinuous, upside-down thinking. A college's future depends upon the ability of administrators to adapt strategies to the pressures and calls of the environment while remaining focused on those served. The future for college administrators will be interesting and productive for change means sacrificing the familiar for the unknown.

Chapter III

Research Design and Methodology

Nature of this Study

Borg and Gall (1989, p. 324) propose that researchers design a study to yield the strongest possible evidence to support or refute a knowledge claim. Merriam (1988, p. 6) chooses the metaphor of an architectural blueprint to describe a research design. "It is a plan for assembling, organizing, and integrating information, and it results in a specific end product." The cornerstone for this study was naturalistic inquiry using a case study design.

MacDonald and Walker (1977, p. 181) explain the case study method as "the examination of an instance in action." The case method "tries to describe and analyze some entity in qualitative, complex and comprehensive terms. . . as it unfolds over a period of time" (Wilson, 1979, p. 448) and is therefore not necessarily generalizable to all circumstances.

Erickson, Florio, and Buschman (1980) argue that qualitative research is most appropriate when seeking answers to the following questions:

1. What is happening in this field? The authors refer to the "invisibility of everyday life" when participants have difficulty acknowledging what reality is. When something becomes routine, administrators may lose sight of what is

happening.

2. What do the happenings mean to the people involved in them? The focus is on local meanings of happenings and the significance these actions have for the actors. The meaning of certain actions again may be lost due to one's closeness to the events.

3. What do people have to know to function effectively in a particular setting?

4. How does what is happening here relate to what is happening in the wider social context of this setting?

5. How does the organization of what is happening here differ from that found in other places and times?

As implied with the research question, the theoretical perspective, and the literature review, a design was required that would provide an in-depth description and explanation of the processes associated with college responsiveness. The research process should provide opportunity to explore emergent topics and issues. This would necessitate discussions with a wide variety of members of the college community. The case study method was chosen.

A "qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. xiv). She notes that the case study technique is most useful when introducing basic information about areas of education where little research

has been conducted. In exploratory research, the investigator attempts to collect as much information on as many aspects of a situation as possible. The primary purpose of such a research design is to gain familiarity with some problem or to achieve new insights which can guide further research. (March, 1965, p. 267) The data collection and analysis were both shaped deductively and inductively by concepts from the literature and themes which emerged from the study. The nature and course of the data collection requires a decision on the part of the researcher given the problem, previous research if available, theoretical orientation, environmental influences and other factors.

Methodology

This design employed a single case strategy with multiple respondents. The following details the case method format that was used.

Choosing the Site

The study site was one that some of the professionals in post-secondary education, and college education in particular, identified as displaying the following characteristics:

1. The leadership has a consumer orientation.
2. It is an example of good practice.

Two other critical factors were that the participants were

willing and accessible and it was other than the researcher's own workplace.

The search for schools that exemplified the qualities expected of a responsive college was difficult for little mention appears in Canadian literature of such colleges. When asked which colleges were responsive, colleagues and teachers of this writer were forthcoming with examples but each recommended different sites. There seemed to be little consensus on which colleges epitomized responsiveness. At the time of this writing, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) was undertaking a national study on responsiveness. Their data were not complete enough to supply a reliable sample either. It soon became clear given the broad range of colleges mentioned that to achieve consensus was going to be difficult.

Given the limitations mentioned, one college was chosen for this case study, The college, now called **The College**, has a reputation for being responsive based on the criteria stated. It became evident that this research should be exploratory in nature for little was written about the qualities and processes of the responsive college. A thorough study of one college which is reputed to be responsive by some was deemed to be necessary to provide additional insight on responsiveness. Whether this site was truly responsive was not as important as was the fact that this study could form a base point from which other

researchers might compare when looking at college responsiveness.

Access

The first communication with The College was made by telephone through the Director of Institutional Research and Planning in early April of 1993. A proposal was sent to the Director outlining the details of both the intent of the research and proposed methodology. Approval of the management committee at The College was in order.

Approval was secured in April, 1993 and arrangements were made through an on-site contact who provided an invaluable service. This assistance ranged from securing respondents to arranging for appointments and interview facilities to providing much needed directions around campus.

Selection of Respondents

Interviews were held with nineteen individuals who represented various positions and perspectives from throughout The College. These respondents were recommended based on the following criteria that were provided by this researcher:

1. Represent a variety of perspectives and job responsibilities.
2. Represent the spectrum of staff at The College from instructor to President.
3. Represent as wide a variety of program specialties as

possible.

4. Represent both line and staff functions.

5. Represent a wide variety of tenures at The College.

The selection of respondents were limited to those who had direct contact with students and/or program administration. Personnel with non-student related duties such as physical facilities support staff were not included.

The nineteen respondents included the President, two Vice-Presidents, one Dean, two Associate Deans, one Program Chair, and two instructors. Respondents from other arenas included the Executive Director of Marketing and Development, two Directors of Part-Time Studies and one from Student Services, as well as managers from Enrolment Management, Institutional Research and Planning, the Downtown Education Centre, Cooperative Education, Development, and Technology Transfer.

Interviews

At the most fundamental level, an interview is a "conversation in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons" (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954, p. 44). The interview, like any other research technique, should be appropriate to the investigation, the situation, and the skills of the researcher. The interview technique was chosen because it afforded an opportunity to gather the feelings and opinions of the respondents without the

structure of many other methods. The information that was exchanged was important to the respondent and it directed the researcher's attention to emergent topics and themes within and across the interviews.

Data collection took place during May, 1993 using taped interviews of a semi-structured format. These interviews lasted from 35 to 75 minutes although most reached approximately 45 minutes. The interview guide (see Appendix A) was designed to stimulate thought and conversation. The intent of the research was to explore responsiveness with as few preconceptions of the direction of conversation as possible.

A pretest of the interview guide insured this approach was productive. The pretest was conducted by interviewing three respondents at the writer's own institute who represented a cross-section of subjects chosen at The College. The interviews were conducted to best represent the actual interview situation. It was soon evident that the original interview guide was too long and specific. The questions were directing the conversation rather than promoting open dialogue. There were also too many questions. The changes are reflected in the guide shown in Appendix A.

The majority of interviews were held in a common area at The College rather than in the offices of the respondents. Logistically this was necessary for all

nineteen interviews were held within an intensive four day period. The preparation for each interview was then limited to changing tapes rather than to finding offices in an unfamiliar setting and the juggling of all the problems associated with conducting an interview. This arrangement was appreciated.

Transcription Process

The recordings of each interview were professionally transcribed and those respondents who requested the opportunity to review their transcripts were provided with this opportunity. Of the eight who requested the opportunity to review the transcripts, only three returned the documents. Requests for changes were completed. Most were clarifications of language and terms used rather than to change the essence of what was interpreted.

Observation and Document Reviews

A request for support documentation was made. This folio included applicable information from placement data and other statistics from the Institutional Research and Planning office at The College. The strategic planning document for The College was reviewed. Many organizational details were evident in the handbooks provided to the Board and Advisory Committees. These too were reviewed.

Observation was limited to attendance at the May meeting of The College's Board of Governors and at one Advisory Committee meeting while on site. Time was also

spent walking around the campus in an effort to better understand some things that were mentioned during the interviews.

Data Analysis

The researcher prepared verbatim transcripts and made notes throughout the process. As each text was reviewed, a draft coding system was devised that identified themes while preserving the identity of the respondent to the researcher. When one paragraph contained more than one theme, multiple copies were made. Once all interviews were read and coded, they were reorganized by grouping all corresponding material together.

All themes were then reviewed with an eye to differences and similarities. As this progressed, certain meanings began to surface and these formed the basis for the writings which appear in the following three chapters.

Final Comments

Interpretive case studies "contain rich, thick descriptions" that are used to develop conceptual categories to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held before data gathering. (Merriam, 1988, p. 27) Though not without its limitations, the case study method can provide a holistic portrait that can lead to certain insight about a phenomenon.

Standards of Rigor

Reliability

The research of Packwood and Whitaker (1988) provided theoretical support for the methodology used in this study. Results of this study were verified against their findings.

Validity

The basis for the interview guide used and the thesis framework are both established. Packwood and Whitaker (1988) went to great lengths to assure the validity of these mechanisms. The interview guide used was based in part on the work of Packwood and Whitaker with references made to the guide used by Theodossin (1986).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness checks occurred throughout by having the respondents confirm the researcher's notes and summaries of interviews. For instance, a draft copy of the thesis was sent to three individuals at The College. Their feedback was incorporated into the final document. A final draft was sent to the President in December, 1993 to comment. No reply from him was interpreted as acceptance.

Periodically the researcher relied on colleagues to review the data and interpretations. This was done to determine how well themes and ideas related to needs assessment can be supported by the data.

All attempts were made not to be selective and to report all findings provided by the respondents.

Ethical Issues

Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 378) cautioned "unusual problems of ethics" (cited in Merriam 1988, p. 34) exist with the case method. "The unethical case writer could so select from among available data that virtually anything he wished could be illustrated." To protect against this possibility, four copies of the thesis were sent to different members of The College community for their comment on omissions as well as to provide an opportunity to correct misrepresentations.

Chapter Summary

According to Merriam (1988, pp. 11-13), the case study methodology has four characteristics that are necessary. First, the case method is particularistic, it focuses on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. Second, it is descriptive for the end product is rich, thick, description of the phenomenon under study. Third, it is heuristic. The case method can illuminate the readers' understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, the case method is both deductive and inductive for new relationships, concepts, and understandings can emerge from the data. For these reasons the case method was chosen.

Chapter IV

A Description of the Data

When selecting a college site to study, it was decided to rely on a reputational method. The researcher sought advice from a array of professionals in post-secondary education to identify a college that displayed the following characteristics:

1. The leadership has a consumer orientation.
2. It is an example of good practice.
3. The participants were willing and accessible.
4. It was other than the researcher's workplace.

The College was identified by a number of those surveyed as having a good reputation for being responsive. A thorough study of one college that is reputed to be responsive was deemed to be the best way to gain additional insights on responsiveness.

The College serves 6,000 full-time, 3,500 apprentices and more than 20,000 part-time students. These students study in one of four schools: Engineering Technology, Health Sciences, Business, or Trades Training. The College's mandate is to be an innovative, flexible, advanced technology institute that focuses on initiatives to increase the economic prosperity of the province.

According to their statement of purpose, The College will:

1. Establish expertise in specific technological areas and develop applications for business and industry in the Province.
2. Facilitate technology transfer by providing innovation, industrial assistance, and contracted applied research through the Technology Centre.
3. Provide the highly trained work force that is vital to the establishment and continuance of advanced technology in the Province.

This case embodies the comments of nineteen respondents on college responsiveness and needs assessment. As the respondents were promised anonymity, they will be recognized not by name or specific role but by a more generic term which describes their capacity in The College: Administrator (President through to Dean), Instructor (Associate Deans to Instructor including Directors responsible for Part-Time studies and the Downtown Centre), and Support Staff that embraces "non-line staff" including those from the Technology Centre.

One could readily argue against the inclusion of front-line administrators with the instructors. This was done because most have concurrent classroom and administrative responsibilities. The balance have daily contact with both student and teaching issues. All quotes are individual and may or may not be shared by peers or The College management. These opinions illustrate the variety of attitudes and

impressions on college responsiveness and needs assessment.

The interview guide was designed to stimulate conversation and contemplation concerning the respondent's thoughts on the responsive college. As respondents offered their ideas, this researcher probed for further reflection. Therefore, many of the interviews ambled through a variety of topics with few interviews following the structure of the guide. It was consequently considered impractical to present this chapter in the format of the interview guide. As the interview transcriptions were considered, analyzed, and reflected upon certain themes evolved. This chapter will be introduced around these themes.

The Responsive College

Although the phrase "responsive college" lacks consensus in meaning, there is agreement that this goal is both desirable and attainable.

Responsive means that you have to understand expectations of each of your customer groups and then you have to commit to meeting those expectations. If you do that, then you are responsive. (Instructor)

To be responsive, there must be mechanisms in place to keep administrators in touch with these expectations.

You have to be very careful that you are responding to real needs and not just perceived needs. You must make sure that people are getting what they need, not always what they want, but to get what is necessary to meet their needs. (Support Staff)

Listening is integral to responsiveness for, as one administrator advised, "there is no way we would just listen willy-nilly and then jump up and down and respond." The ability of college members to respond is dependent on factors both internal and external to the college. A bigger picture must be painted. Without sensing the threats and opportunities of the external environment while considering organizational strengths and weaknesses, responsiveness is unlikely to be meaningful. Responses may be out-dated. Responses may be inappropriate.

To be responsive, one must understand what the consumer will require in the future. Administrators have a responsibility to insure academically sound programming that will stand the test of time.

We must anticipate industry needs so we have students

going through the program who are ready to be immediately productive. . . . We must understand what industry and business needs today and what they are going to need in five to ten years. . . . We must look at what students need, what industry needs are and how we can best address their educational needs so they can fulfil their academic goals. (Support Staff)

One staff member referred to an instance when the executive of a real estate organization approached The College to teach occupational health and safety and environmental health to their members. Their concern was the impact that environmental worries have on real estate assets and the resultant lack of preparedness of members to advise clients correctly. People invest and suddenly their property is worthless because of contamination. Educators must become involved early in the need recognition stage.

College leadership must respond. One administrator pronounced his concern that corporate Canada worries that colleges are not meeting their needs. "Education drives economic development. To develop your economy you must have trained people to do it" (Administrator). When attending a Conference Board of Canada symposium, one respondent was taken by a quote by Florence Campbell, a Vice President of the Board, about the immediacy of college responsiveness. "The wake up call is here and the snooze button is no longer working."

Educators willingly admit that they too are frustrated. As one respondent lamented, "It is the system that we have and it does not allow us to provide what is needed." We have

a problem." This was often heard. Colleges must adjust to be responsive to the challenges of a changing environment.

To be responsive is to ensure that curriculum and consumer needs are in concert. If the potential employer is looking for a particular skill set, curriculum must serve the need. One example involved the computer literacy prerequisite to many careers. In our information age, it is critical for those in a wide variety of vocations to be schooled in computer skills. Curriculum must then conform to this need.

Colleges must serve more than curriculum needs. Many at The College are proud of their Enrolment Management Project that focuses on issues of student recruitment and retention. One example of Project staff responsibility is their involvement with the Machining program to improve the recruitment for this program. This program was not meeting enrolment targets. Many potential students had completed entry level qualifications but they were not pursuing more advanced programming. Research showed they are often working and could not afford to take the time off. Many had family and other financial responsibilities. To attend a traditional 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. offering was out of the question for most. Administrators soon realized that to meet this demand, the Machining program must be more flexible. This might mean more part-time studies, more evenings and weekends, or whatever is necessary to meet

demands. These words from one administrator capture the essence of responsiveness:

The responsive college is one that works at keeping its finger on the pulse of the set of clients with which it works. . . to make sure that the role we play fulfills the ultimate objectives of post-secondary education.
(Administrator)

One instructor had these words, "Fundamentally, responsiveness is the way we facilitate student access to the program they want in a fiddle-free manner."

The College Consumer

One administrator submitted a fundamental question. He inquired, "Responsive to whom?" His opinion was that:

Responsiveness lies in your spectrum of customers for customer is defined as someone you respond to - who you define your business flow for.

There are several college consumers and this becomes clear in the following two quotations.

Some will see the ultimate customer as the employers because it is through the employer that we define. . . the content, the curriculum, and the programs. The educational folks will clearly identify the primary customer as industry. Those who deal with the solicitation of students onto campus will see the students as primary. (Administrator)

When you look at The College as it operates as a daily business, when you look at it from that point of view, then the student becomes the primary client. He walks in the door and pays his tuition, then industry becomes secondary to the student. If you look in terms of the macro picture, as I would look at it, industry and business are still the primary clients. (Instructor)

The consumer identification process is complex for there are many consumer groups and not all are readily apparent.

Many at The College describe consumers as a member of

one of two streams. The output stream embraces business and industry, government, society, accrediting bodies and professional and trade associations. This includes all groups that have a vested interest in graduate preparedness. The input stream is student driven. By designating students as consumers, one also involves segments including parents and friends, school counsellors and teachers, and all those who influence student opinions.

The College is driven more by the output stream than the input stream. In other words, our Institution, while it strives to serve the needs of our student customers, does so in the context of how it will meet the needs of the output stream, that is business and industry. . . . It makes little sense to train people for things that are not useful to them and the world around them. (Administrator)

The cornerstone of The College is its ability to serve the industrial base in the Province.

The College's objective, its mission statement, is to serve industry - so industry drives it. This is what we are all after here - to meet industry's needs. (Instructor)

The College typically tailors its curriculum to their external consumer, the employer who will hire the student.

A very important part is what happens to the students when they leave this institution, therefore, the employers that hire our students are an important part of that customer package. Once you say that, you have to ask, "Who else buys into what we do here?", and that is the professional associations. . . . To a lesser extent the accreditation with other colleges or universities. (Instructor)

There are other consumers beyond the employers who should be included. The Ministry of Advanced Education is a consumer.

They have agendas that they need to meet and our Legislative Act requires that we respond to the Ministry. We are not autonomous like universities are, therefore, we have substantial interaction with the bureaucracy within the Ministry. They are also our customers. (Administrator)

The umbrella category "other external consumers" involves society-at-large, taxpayers, colleges and universities, trade associations, and professional accrediting bodies.

While the input stream is primarily focused on the student, there is a host of implications associated with this.

We service industry by looking at where industry trends are going in the same way a local community college looks at social trends. But the real market for us is the people who are actually come to attend the events. (Instructor)

The direct services provided and the culture of The College are oriented more to the student as a consumer. As one administrator pointed out, an educational institution takes "students en masse to teach the skills and knowledge to help them develop their abilities."

We spend a lot of our time providing stimuli and materials and setting up functions that must provide students with knowledge and information and good feelings about The College. (Administrator)

The recognition of the importance of the input stream has led to the creation of the Enrolment Management Project.

If the students do not buy in, we really do not have an institution. . . they, like the faculty, are on the firing line daily. (Instructor)

Enrolment Management Project - The expectation of industry is that the graduate will satisfy certain expectations. The

Project is an effort to assure that the applicants to a program will meet the entry criteria that industry has for graduates. This requires an understanding of the future needs of both students and employers.

If students are accepted in the programs, they should have a reasonable chance of success in completing the program. Now that would mean the students want to complete the program and they do not have some other personal or educational goal. . . . That their need is to start and complete the program. (Support Staff)

The mandate of the Project stretches beyond simply attracting the best candidates to a program. Project administrators are also concerned with student retention.

We want classes 100 per cent full, 100 per cent of the time. In an ideal world, programs would start with a defined number of students, all available seats will be filled at the beginning of the first term, and all seats will remain filled by the same people at the end of the term. . . . Student retention to us is also student persistence. (Support Staff)

The goal at The College is to graduate everyone who begins. This depends on an effective enrolment process.

We should end with the same students with which we begin. Our interest is not boot-camp where we win if there is suitable drop-out rate. (Instructor)

The need for the Enrolment Management Project is due in part to the desire to better serve the changing student profile.

The Changing Student Profile - The traditional profile of the college student must be refined.

The College focuses far more energy on full-time students than those students represent of our total population. We must figure out this balance so we reflect our customer's background and aspirations. That entails focusing less on full-time and more on part-time, for this is the fastest growing segment of education because of the need for upgrading and re-

credentialing. This includes delivery methods as well. . . where we deliver, what time we deliver, the mechanisms by which we recognize external achievements. Lots of challenges there. (Administrator)

As the portrait of the student is changing, so is that of the employer. As the environment changes so must colleges. The Province is progressing from a resource-based economy towards an information-based economy. The suggestion is that The College must be prepared to adjust. As these shifts and others evolve, so must The College's capacities, programming, content and new programs. But how are these priorities identified?

Linkages Used at The College

A college that prides itself on hands-on training should open strong, front-line linkages. (Instructor)

As one administrator cautioned, The College is "an advanced technological institution that has not yet invented a thoroughly reliable crystal ball." Until this happens, the effective college must develop solid linkages with various sources "who or that tells us to beware of this and plan for that."

Formal Research Processes

The Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) group is charged with the responsibility of supporting The College administration through formal research. "We must look at everything that we do - how well we do and what was the cost and the efficiency of what we do" (Administrator). A

responsive institution must "leave no stone unturned."

We do evaluations, internal evaluations and accountability studies that are driven by a whole variety of things: surveys and focus group studies, and all kinds of outreach surveys with past graduates. We have our institutional research people trying to assure that we have observables and measurables that will allow us to make business decisions that are meaningful. (Administrator)

A sampling of current administrative support projects at The College include:

- Graduate Outcomes Survey
- Program Costing
- FTE Analysis/Competitive Analysis
- Discontinuants/Withdrawal Analysis
- Executive Organizational Analysis
- Accountability Framework
- Student Success Study
- Timetabling System - Ad Hoc Committee
- Library Planning Session
- Marketing & Development Planning Session
- Space Utilizations
- Housing Survey

IRP conducts academic research as well. Examples are:

- Broadcast Graduate 5 Year Study
- Point of Leaving - Business Department
- English Language Proficiency
- Neuroscience Advanced Diploma
- Vocational Apprentice Inventory
- Health Part-time Studies - Advanced Diploma Survey
- Computer Systems Technology Graduate/Employer Graduate Study

Although IRP is growing in function and responsibility, concerns were expressed.

The IRP role is administrative rather than participatory. Measurement has focused internally rather than externally. How many students applied? How many got in? How many were qualified? How many were not? How full are the classes? What space is available? . . . Rather than looking outward to see if the external customer is properly served. (Support Staff)

Primary Sources

The College uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. "What we need is an interpretation of the statistics and how we can use the statistics to our advantage" (Instructor). While the provincial government does out-going student surveys, The College is doing more research on curriculum, on services to students, and on classroom instruction. The College is concerned with accountability.

The College uses an Incoming Student Survey. When students start their first term, they are asked several questions. The focus is not just demographic in nature. The survey explores reasons for attending The College and their ambitions upon graduation. The survey explores other questions as well such as:

- What factors were important when choosing The College?
- How did we treat you when you applied?
- Were all your questions answered when you inquired?
- What more could we do to help you?

This is an extensive annual survey.

We get feedback from students in both full and part-time studies each term. This provides not only a commentary about the course but also about things the student would like to see or do or to identify things we are not doing. We receive a fair amount of feedback from the students. (Instructor)

Qualitative techniques not only include large sample studies but also focus groups. These explore consumer attitudes, interests, and the opinions of prospective

students, university students, high school students, and The College's own students and graduates. "We have a perception of what people think. It will be revealing to find out just what people do think?" (Support Staff) Focus groups are used to unearth the "key issues that help students to be successful at The College, and complete their programs here at the school" (Support Staff).

Focus Groups are surprising to some degree because sometimes you do not really understand the impact of some things you already know. (Support Staff)

Currently, groups are used to explore student retention and success concerns, the student orientation process, and to complete an image study concerning The College.

We work with focus groups. . . to get a flavour of what message is out there regarding The College. We are trying to track not only the absolute state of the universe but also the state relative to last year and the year before to track what is going on.
(Administrator)

Secondary Sources

Secondary data sources include material on the labour market, on economic development in Canada, and industry trends. Reports from agencies such as The Conference Board of Canada are helpful. Other colleges and universities, both Canadian and international, share findings in support of one another. The College also has access to the Province's Link File project which involves tracking various student flows and student outcome data.

Internal sources include financial and enrolment audits, strategic plan audits, student examination results,

and reviews of instructional programs, including internal program reviews, and reviews of course articulations.

One support staff member advocated a movement away from "counting noses." The suggestion was that this can be captured in a systematic, automated way. What ought to be done is to gather information about what is going on outside. More research should focus on support for policy thinking. He continues to suggest research must move in this direction with not so much the immediate short-term research but to do more long-term investigation.

While the external sources are as many as they are varied, one staff member was afraid that The College could be doing more. One example would be for The College to subscribe to more of the electronic databases. Another process that is very real and influential involves staff members developing interpersonal, interactive linkages.

Interactive Processes

There is no limit to the number and character of interactive processes. These are unstructured, personal responsive techniques that link the college to the community through college staff.

Many people are sensitive to the different aspects of what is happening in the educational enterprise. By being in touch with them, you get a sense of what is going on. You also hear about what is going on in the Ministry. These things are all little signals that, when added all up, tend to focus on an image. We are also predictive as far as curriculum is concerned in that we try to be sensitive to where the business and industrial community is going, to where the jobs are going to be. (Administrator)

On its own no one event would, or should, form the basis for decision making, but they do serve as a basis for understanding.

The categories of interactive processes include: advisory committees, partnerships, and networking.

Advisory Committees - There was unanimity among respondents that the Advisory Committee system is the predominant sensor at The College. This system provides close coupling of industry to a program. About 90 advisory committees involve over 1,000 volunteers from business and industry. They often meet twice a year to:

Give us the scoop on whether or not we are doing it right. How are the graduates doing? Do they know the right things? Have they been trained on the right equipment? That kind of feedback. (Administrator)

The advisory committee system has two dimensions. First, there is a quality dimension. They advise on what should be taught in relation to industry trends. "We rely on them as a distant early warning system for determining potential shifts" (Administrator). The second addresses the question, "How can The College be more responsive to industry?" The advisory committees were seen by faculty as an excellent way of sensing employer needs.

Advisory committees are selected to better profile industry sectors. "It is not an old boy or an old girl network. I think that is its greatest strength" (Instructor). Advisory committees frequently include alumni, first and second year students, faculty and

administration, as well as recent employers of our graduates. "They really do drive the program" (Administrator).

An effective advisory committee will influence a decision on an initiative. Two examples follow. In the first instance, the advice was not to proceed with a program.

We were getting a very high demand for our international trade program so we went to our advisory committee and asked if this true in the job market. They told us "to hold off. Do not get excited about what you read in the newspapers. There is still a lot of uncertainty and problems out there with competitiveness, interest rates foreign exchange rates" (Administrator).

They advised not to expand that program and put another twenty people out there without jobs. The proposal never got by the Associate Dean.

The second case received Committee blessing. A subcommittee of the Marketing advisory committee prepared a well researched brief on technical sales and marketing.

They did a lot of work when looking at prospects and developments in the industry. This is their industry. They developed a thorough and relevant brief that strongly recommended the addition of set in technical sales to the advisory committee. In turn, they brought the recommendation forward. Because the advisory committee had done their homework, the executive committee was receptive to the proposal and approval was conferred. (Administrator)

As with any endeavour, there are some committees that work well and others that do not. There was some doubt expressed by certain instructors about the effectiveness of the advisory committee system. Has the college fallen into

the trap of using the advisory committees as "window dressing" and the program staff "simply goes through the motions?" Is contact between instructors and advisory committee regular? Is this effective? Some argue that the role of the advisory committee is better served by providing "more front line contact rather than the Boardroom stuff."

To counteract these concerns:

We produced a handbook for advisory committee members which outlines what they are there to do and, in fact, mandates them a little more broadly than some of them had thought. They now know that they can get at (the President) if they do not think that they are being listened to. (Administrator)

Industry/College Partnerships - Interactive processes range beyond the Advisory committee organization. Industry and college partnerships rely on personal interaction. Examples witnessed include mentorships, internships, directed studies, technology transfer, conferences and workshops, and professional articulation agreements. "These linkages not only tie our students to the community but get our faculty involved in day to day business" (Administrator).

The **mentor** is:

Someone whom the student can relate to, talk to, check with, ask "What is happening?", "What do you think about that?" or "Can you help me meet so-and-so?", or propose, "I would like to look at this." It aids in student networking and offer leads to job offers from that sponsor. It is not a hard-edged, structured program with several activities to do, but it pays dividends. (Instructor)

Internships are credit-driven. The student in a

particular program may spend three days a week in industry completing a specific project.

It is not contact making, this is not networking, this is working. It is intended that the student does a productive job. It is not a feel-good program or big-brother program. There is not social obligation to do something for some poor kid" (Administrator).

Industry recognizes the benefit to the student. Business is supportive for many reasons not the least of which is the opportunity to evaluate potential employees. Industry receives a better prepared, experienced employee. These students also bring a fresh perspective to the firm.

The Internship program is powerful. . . .The students love it and the instructors, though they find it an administrative challenge, are supportive. (Instructor)

The College does not have a co-op program or a practicum but does have a **Directed Studies Program**. An illustration comes from the Marketing Program where every student in their fourth semester must do a project with an organization that has a real-world, marketing-based problem. Another example surfaces in the Engineering Division. They provide incentives for students to become involved in their directed studies assignments.

The biggest form of recognition comes in the way in which those students receive positive feedback from project sponsors who, after a presentation, will often choose to furnish a letter of commendation to a student. In some cases they give an honorarium. They all do it in different ways. (Instructor)

Although the directed studies program involves some risk, it adds "something extra to what the students are doing."

Faculty members sponsor student projects because "students

get exposed to industry and real time situations" (Support Staff).

The Technology Centre is evidence of Administration's dedication to get more involved in applied research and **technology transfer**. Tech Centre staff describe their role as having a free rein to go out to industry to discover what their problems are and then to look inward to The College to detect what tools and skills are available to assist. The resulting projects might involve students and/or release time for faculty members to dedicate to the problem.

There are several cases where the solution has resulted in a product being developed. Some clients may pay for this service while others take an interest in the product.

We developed some very sophisticated software for a Hospital to answer their nurse scheduling problem. It solved the problem and then we realized there is a product here. We licensed it to an outside group and now they are selling it across Canada. The College and the Hospital are sharing in the royalties. These monies are being redirected into the specific area of responsibility. (Support Staff)

One support staff member submitted the biggest benefit to The College is not the financial reward but the opportunity for a real world experience.

This is the nuts and bolts of The College. This sets The College apart from the universities. The students are work ready. (Support Staff)

Another focus of the Technology Centre is **conference and workshop sponsorship**.

We do the Pulp and Paper Summer Institute; we do the Specialty Wood Product Institute; we do the Natural Gas Petroleum; we do a Medical Devices Workshop; we do

Environmental Workshops. We put these conferences on for industry and they support them. (Support Staff)

A variation on this, the City Enterprise Forum, is a technology alliance. The College's President serves on the review panel. This Forum meets once a month to present either a business or a problem to an audience. "We will wrap a panel of experts around an issue who will listen and advise. Then we open it up to the audience. They are great" (Support Staff).

Professional articulation agreements are arrangements with industry that recognize inhouse training for credit towards credentials in The College's School of Business. Agreements have been signed between The College and the Telephone Company. Soon another will be signed with the Workers' Compensation Board.

I am trying to get more employers who do their own inhouse training signed on. The payback is multifold. The employer is able to offer a reward for inhouse training. They attract more people into this training. For the employees, they get a bigger payoff for the work they have put in. The College benefits from an increased flow of students. We have not had to do the whole educational piece. We can pick them up and include them in other parts of our programing.
(Administrator)

These agreements can have the reverse effect. The College currently has seventeen articulation agreements with professional societies whereby completion of qualifications at The College provides all, or a major part, of training requirements for a professional designation.

We set great store by those because we find more and more industries require a professional designation as

the add-on, the value-added to educational attainment rather than an advanced degree. (Administrator)

This initiative serves to link the college with the independent standards bodies to foster uniformity of practice.

Networking - Although networking is the least structured linkage reported, it is most productive. Examples of networking include association and committee involvement, instructor experience and connections to industry, community involvement, guest speakers, part-time staff, industrial and educational leaves, and information sessions.

Association and committee involvement by staff members provide powerful linkages because they often afford an initial contact with the community. The College staff have a vital networks including trade and industry associations such as the Province's Science Council, Research Council, and other government task forces.

The College staff have strong linkages with the professional bodies.

On staff we have an individual who was the Executive Director of CGA Association of Canada as well as their Director of Research. At one time we had three past presidents of CMA Association, we now have five or six Fellows of their respective CA, CGA, or CMA associations. That speaks to those inter-relationships. (Instructor)

Many staff are involved in **community affairs** from the arts, multicultural, and service clubs to environmental groups. Most of the involvement is altruistic; nobody is looking for a cause and effect relationship between what

they do and a benefit to The College. "Ultimately though some good things flow from their involvement. That is the power of networking" (Administrator).

To get a job at The College, instructional staff must have at least five years industry experience. The objective is to bring a business and workplace focus to the classroom.

Having experienced instructors makes our programs inherently more responsive to business. We have our roots, contacts and knowledge of the pace of change in business. This is in contrast to someone with a pure academic background. They may know the state of the discipline but have no sense of how business is using it. (Administrator)

Academic and professional qualifications and the desire to teach are important when relating to young people.

Industry leaders are often invited as guests to speak to both faculty and students. One illustration of this is the instructor who is teaching the advanced taxation course wants to provide the best content. Although he teaches Tax I and Tax II, Advanced Taxation is a specialized topic he knows little about. With this in mind, "he secured a representative from Revenue Canada to discuss the innards of the Act. . . GST, Mining Taxation or Forestry Taxation. Now he is a real believer" (Instructor).

The students can begin to link in. . . it is changing out there and you have to keep up to date. Even though you are going to graduate, there is more that you are going to have to do if you want to survive out there" (Instructor).

Part-time and contract staff are frequently used to support regular instruction. The people taking business law

might be learning from a lawyer who was in court that day and is talking about things that just happened. "They are not looking at books, although that is helpful. They are listening to a guy on the front line and he is doing it" (Support Staff).

In the medical area, The College has adjunct faculty teaching. They are valuable because they have one foot in industry and the other in education.

Leaves for professional development are available. Staff who want to go back to industry for updating, to find out what is happening in their field, can apply for time release. Administration's conviction is so serious, one plank in The College's planning document, Strategy for the 90's, is that instructional staff must return to the field for a minimum of six months every six years. This has yet to be ratified.

The College will fund educational leaves but they are not a priority. An initiative that breaks new ground will be considered. This year one instructor at The College is studying environmental accounting at Carleton University. If industry is moving in a new direction, so must The College.

The College brings prospective students together with faculty, alumni and students at **information sessions** to ensure that prospective students have knowledge of what to expect when they enrol.

Building strong linkages is not an isolated function. "Everybody out there on campus must be working and coordinating their efforts on our behalf" (Instructor). Assessment extends beyond the gathering of hard data. Often the most forceful linkages evolve from interpersonal, interactive connections. Therefore, needs assessment is a blend of quantitative and qualitative research as well as the many interactive processes. These involve the consumer in the college planning process.

Realities of Responsiveness

This chapter began with a discussion of college responsiveness and was followed by particulars of how The College has developed linkages to its consumers and its environment. But responsiveness requires more than sensors or linkages for there are many obstacles that can hinder or prevent a college from being responsive.

There is a whole universe of impediments. It seems that is how I spend most of life trying to figure out what these impediments are and how to deal with them.
(Administrator)

A refreshing point of view evolved from many interviews. It was evident many saw these not as barriers or obstructions but simply as realities of existence. These realities might hinder or even obstruct a course of action and cannot be ignored.

I am one of those people who does not worry too much about impediments. You have to look for ways to make things happen. If you have to wait too long, the

process then takes control and the opportunity is lost. The answer is then academic. (Instructor)

These realities are found both within and without the college.

External Realities

The external realities addressed by respondents included environmental forces of a political, social and cultural, financial, or competitive nature.

Political forces are immediate for, by statute, a Provincial Ministry is responsible for running the college and institute system. Administration is therefore in constant dialogue with government.

Our legislative Act points out quite clearly that we must get approval for all the programs that we put together. We do not make decisions about programs. We invent programs and create the curriculum, then we go to the Ministry for funding. The decision is made by the bureaucracy. (Administrator)

As one instructor related government is reactive, therefore, The College is reactive. "Government cannot, or does not, predict changes in the job market. It is a crapshoot" (Instructor).

Another challenge college administrators must face is that government changes every four to five years and it is necessary to look beyond the short term. "To plan beyond four or five years can be a bit naive for this reason. I do not mean to sound negative but I am more practical than visionary" (Administrator). He continued to suggest "a five year window is insufficient" for college planning requires

long-term thinking.

One administrator feels strongly that the political attitude throughout Canada is that education is a social cost. He argues, "this is the wrong way to look at education."

Education is an investment and education can pay larger dividends than any investment that government can make, better dividends than health care, better than welfare systems, better than bricks and mortar, new highways, or whatever.

For example, Singapore, which has about the same population as the Province, has four polytechnical institutes; the Province has one. While the Province has 1,500 students in business schools, the Singapore system has more than 10,000 students.

I say to my Singapore colleagues, "How can you get funding for so many schools of business?" They look at me as if I was a child and say, "It is axiomatic. If you want to develop your economy, you need natural resources, you need material resources and you need human resources" (Administrator).

A notable barrier is the belief that everybody is entitled to an educational experience that will meet individual expectations. This is evidence of **social and cultural** pressures on the college.

You get competing demands that are impossible to accommodate without trading off some fundamental priorities that you set. (Instructor)

There is clearly a societal pressure for degree attainment.

This pressure seems pervasive. Everyone wants a university degree. . . parents want their kids taking a university degree, many teachers in the secondary

school system are streaming kids to university. We see that as our major hurdle. (Support Staff)

The feeling is "unless you can specify "B" something, a Bachelor degree, after your name it does not have the same merit as a diploma program." There is pressure to move away from purely diploma level programming into degree level programming. The College is expecting an announcement from government within the next few months conferring the power to grant Bachelor degrees.

Financial pressures have become a way of life. Additional resources are simply not there. "We are faced with an almost continuous recessionary environment" (Instructor). But some would claim that the problem is not the dollars but the allocation mechanisms.

In BC, there was a 36% increase of seats in Arts programs, a 6% increase in Science, and a 1% increase in career, technical and vocational - which is where the jobs are. Why? Because of the social and cultural bias that Porter and others refer to favours the degree. Somehow the degree is a mythical attainment almost akin to a religious experience. (Administrator)

The realities of funding exposed several discussions of potential solutions. Certain "sacred cows" including cost recovery education, increases in tuitions, user pay, and partnerships are now being examined. The following comment was specific to user pay.

It is a realistic thing that is going to emerge in a society that is already bankrupt. It has bankrupted itself and it has driven itself into the economic state that it is in right now. (Administrator)

The College has several **competitors**. Universities are

direct competitors due to their high entrance requirements. Regional colleges are also a concern. Emerging competitors includes industry doing in-house education. This can go beyond work related training into academic upgrading.

Industry has found that they must take a leadership role. Many corporations in the United States that have been accorded degree granting privileges. Phillips does it in Holland, Digital does it in the States. . . . These corporations do not really want to operate in that area but do so because of all the rif-raf that is produced by the colleges. (Support Staff)

There is also an explosion of private trainers. Unions also compete when they conduct their own training.

An interesting wrinkle to this discussion is organizations thought to be competitors are often allies. Much has been said about college/industry partnerships but this stretches to other educational institutions as well.

We are also involved in a project with a kinesiology department at a nearby University. It is a software package to assist athletes to train to peak the day of the race. Dr. Bannister developed it but they came to us for assistance to market it. We went to our marketing students and they made it a directed studies project. This University has come to us for the hands-on stuff. (Support Staff)

This was not the only example.

I see a very complementary relationship with this University, they are taking an esoteric, more academic track. We are taking the more practical approach. In fact, they have offered to help us in any to establish a permanent presence downtown. We helped them when they first moved downtown, now they are returning the favour. It is a good relationship. (Support Staff)

A side-bar to cooperating institutions is the notion of the "seamless college system."

The citizens of our province and our government want

the post-secondary system to be articulated and seamless in the same way the K-12 system is. When you move from one city to another at Christmas, you do not expect the school to say, "We do not accept the first three months of grade six for credit in your home town." You would have a riot on your hands.
(Administrator)

Pressure is increasing for colleges to accept more incoming credits. It is but a matter of time before transferring students will expect increased transfer credits and these students will likely find a sympathetic ear at the central funding agency in this time of restraint.

We are going to have to concentrate more on what the student knows and what the student can do rather than how long they have been in a course. (Administrator)

Internal Realities

While pressures from the external environment are notable, there are certain realities that arise from within the college organization. These include funding, the college culture, bureaucracy, and leadership. How these are managed often predetermines the likelihood of a college cultivating a responsive character.

"Sometimes we cry about the lack of funding too much" (Administrator). There are many things that are costly yet necessary such as the latest tools of technology but, "I do not buy the fact that we are in dire straits." People must view **funding** as a reality not as an impediment.

The challenge is not to wish for more but to determine how to do the best we can with what we have.
(Administrator)

One senior administrator presents his resolution for

the realities of funding while satisfying ambitions for responsiveness. This is apparent here:

What I aspire to say to a Dean or an Associate Dean is to, "Come to us with a capital request. Bring with you the information to show the curriculum is up to date, that the industry has validated within the last five years and evidence that your faculty is up to date, that you have sabbaticals and industry experience within the last six years. Bring with it evidence that your advisory committees are working well and that you are listening to industry." When those conditions are satisfied, then we will know it is appropriate to spend public money.

One support staff member voiced this concern.

I do not want to be critical of my colleagues, but I sense that one of the problems in public education, is the people who sign the cheques without ever having signed one for their own money.

One answer is to prove the need.

The College is bottom-line oriented. If you need a buck you had better prove that you know how to make a buck because nobody is going to give it to you. This flows through the veins of the faculty. Remember, on average each faculty member has 10 to 12 years experience in industry before coming into teaching.
(Administrator)

One example is the Cardiology Technology Program. There was not enough money to equip the lab so The College could offer this program. The Dean "went out on a limb" and hired somebody to orchestrate program development. The operational funds were available when (a) there were students who wanted to take the course, (b) the industry was behind it 100 per cent, and (c) the curriculum could be developed, designed, and delivered on time. While much effort went into convincing people that this was important to do. It was an inexpensive way to prove a point.

People are looking for solutions to these funding woes.

Partnerships are one way.

Partnerships with business and industry in which they take more financial responsibility and quit saying, "Well, what are you talking about, I pay taxes don't I!" (Administrator)

Unfortunately, people inside the structure have organized to protect themselves from change.

The internal impediment to responsiveness is the human condition that is resistant to change. . . . We certainly cope with that all the time. Some of the resistance to change is organized resistance. I do not say that in a condescending way, just as a matter of fact. (Administrator)

The realities of **organizational culture** include the labour agreements. "I think that it reduces our flexibility and ability to respond quickly to new technologies" (Support Staff). This respondent's frustration was evident. He continued to suggest the system is constrained by what "certain people can or cannot do. In an ideal world, it would be nice to coexist but these barriers exist."

Many of the barriers come from an organization's structure or **bureaucracy**. Questions raised by respondents include, "How far is decision making removed from the people who come into contact with customers on an ongoing basis?" and "How much flexibility do those people have with respect to all of that?" People feel frustrated.

I am getting tethered. . . . Now, everything is written. Government is so worried about losing a dime, that they do not give a damn about the dollars. I get the sense that we are being watched too closely. How can we be efficient? And that is happening more and more. (Support Staff)

Others adopt a more optimistic view.

I think sometimes the process looks much worse than it actually is. I do not believe a lot of memos and I do not believe a lot of electronic messages other than to alert people and set things up. If I perceive a problem and it means getting the President involved, I will get the President involved. . . . I can live whichever way but let's deal with it. (Instructor)

There must be an understanding among constituents.

This will be nurtured by sound leadership. There must be buy-in throughout the college. Management must speak in a collective voice to convey to all the strategies and plans for The College. Inertia prevents change and this inertia can be deflected by a strong leadership.

Chapter Summary

As one member of the support staff implored:

Responsiveness must become a battle cry of The College. That requires a common understanding between all members of the institution: management, instructors, support staff, and students.

This point is critical. Colleges cannot respond - people respond. Responsiveness is people-driven. The college can be no more effective than the abilities of the rank and file permit. This requires commitment from the President's office through the organization. There must be an understanding at all organizational levels about both the significance and nature of consumer expectations.

Responsiveness is many members of the college community hearing what their many consumers are saying and then reacting in a positive fashion.

Responsiveness is present when members of the college

community serve the needs of their consumers.

To create a truly open system college, administrators must muster the energy and talents of all sectors of the organization. This effort must extend from the formal research processes of qualitative and quantitative studies to the interpersonal, interactive linkages of the participants within.

Chapter V

Integrating the Rhetoric and Reality

The original plan for this thesis focused on three questions:

To what degree do the leaders of the college respond to community members and their needs?

What linkages are available to detect consumer needs as well as shifting environmental forces?

What role can needs assessment play in college responsiveness?

This paper first explored the current literature on college responsiveness. Once a college with a reputation for being responsive was identified and the certain staff were interviewed, it was fitting to draw comparisons of the case to the literature. This chapter will bring these elements together.

First, a word must be said about data analysis. When the interviews began, the writer had no preconceptions of what themes might evolve. A sense of anticipated results was related by both Packwood and Whitaker (1988) and Theodossin (1986). This writer was confident that the findings would evolve by simply listening. Now to return to the integration of rhetoric and reality.

Introduction

A challenge to educators is to deliver expert learning in an efficient and effective manner. Questions that linger from this include:

- How does one best define what is effective?
- How should programming be determined?, and
- Who can best judge the relevancy and suitability of learning?

According to Gratz and Salem (1989, p. 109), a college planner should take a broader view of external communications than what would normally be the case. They should recognize that communication problems and opportunities occur and are likely to affect all parts of the system. Needs assessment is one boundary spanning vehicle that educators can use to learn how they can better serve their consumers.

As documented in Chapter II, many educators have long felt they alone knew what was best for the college community.

There is inertia in the system. It should be obvious but it is difficult to change because you have a whole system of tenure and history and senates. These monks are chanting the same gregorian chants for centuries and they want to keep on chanting. It is very difficult to change. (Administrator)

To understand needs assessment and its purpose, it was helpful to consider the tenet of the consumer in the college environment. This must preface a study of needs assessment and its technology and processes.

Who is the College Consumer?

A common thread among the respondents interviewed is the acceptance of two distinct streams within the college. Although the Input stream, or the acquisition of the best students and resources, has not commanded the same attention as the output stream, a sense of its significance to the college is emerging. As one administrator remarked:

At the institutional level, our customers or clients are clearly defined by what I call two streams: an input stream and an output stream. In a way, the input stream is that which is student driven and that has a whole host of implications associated with it. Students, as customers, include other parts of society as customers such as parents and schools.

The same administrator continues:

The output stream is very much business and industry. The College is driven more by the output stream than the input stream. In other words, I think that our institution, while it strives to serve the needs of our student customers, does so in the context of how it will meet the needs of the output stream.

To be responsive, the college administrator must first understand on whom they must focus. Though this is not a simple task, the identification of the consumer is essential to the college planning process. The Throughput Model (see Figure 3) illustrates the many stakeholders of the college. Many of these stakeholders groups are specifically defined as consumers.

As seen in The College case, the input stream includes those who might be considered to be **potential students**. There are many communities from which a college

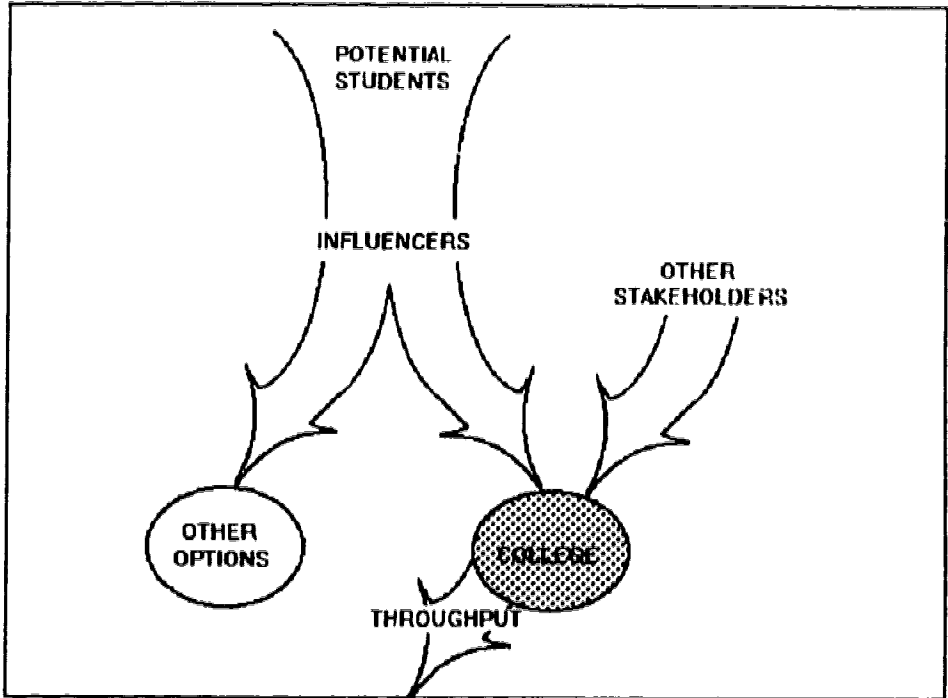


Figure 3 Throughput Model

might attract students: the unemployed, the employed, those in other post-secondary institutions and those in high school. These potential students have **other options** available to them beyond the college. They can choose to bypass further education to travel or work. Should they choose to further their education, their choices might include university, college, or private institutions. Unions and associations are also educational providers. It is imperative for planners to remember that their college is but one option.

Students are often influenced when deciding what option to pursue. The primary **influencers** for many candidates comes from school counsellors and teachers, parents, family members, and friends. Government and social agencies such as the Worker's Compensation Board and Canada Employment and Immigration, and special interest organizations like native support groups can all influence a student's choices. One also must recognize the impact indirect influences such as the media hold over students.

The academic input stream is important for a college's success. Every college must attract the best qualified applicants. As one individual asked, "Is the Harvard graduate superior because of their educational expertise or does Harvard simply attract the best to begin with?"

Included on the input side of Figure 3 are the **other stakeholders**. Just as students have choices, so do resource

providers. The resource suppliers also sway the college planning process. The principal underwriter of education is government and it is experiencing an uncommon demand for limited resources. Government officials must decide if these assets should go to education, health care, highways, international aid, or some other agency. If a certain resource is earmarked for education, then what is The College's share?

There are other suppliers besides the government. Organizations and individuals also offer support, both financially and in goods and services. In addition, some volunteer their time and knowledge. Demands are unlimited; resources are not. Those responsible for resource allocation are continually balancing needs with value received. Again, the responsive college must recognize the needs of these suppliers for they too will have expectations of the college.

The output stream, or **throughput**, is also complex for there are many forces about the college that must be both measured and responded to. Employers expect graduates will possess certain skills and abilities and this is perceived to be the primary focus of a college's curriculum. College administrators must also be sensitive to the needs of the professional and trade associations as well as apprenticeship bodies and brotherhoods for they also have an interest in the abilities of the college graduate. Society-

at-large also has an interest when they presume students will contribute positively to their community. College planners must recognize all demands.

Although The College is not a transfer institution, some graduates will chose to continue their education by going to other colleges or universities. University transfer programs are not seen as a "driver of content" at The College but it is of concern because some students do attend university after graduation.

Figure 3 represents the many stakeholders that a college administrator must consider. As discussed, this is a difficult balancing act that can be made easier with solid information to support decision making. The Throughput Model portrays the many college stakeholders in general terms but college planners cannot deal in abstract terms. Planners must have a clear image of who they must serve.

Table 6 affords such a portrayal. There were nineteen respondents interviewed at The College and each was asked who they thought was the consumer of their college. The two primary consumer groups identified by the respondents were students and employers. As was revealed in the literature review in Chapter II, the primary consumer group is the student. In contrast, those at The College ranked the employers, as well as the students, as the dominant consumer groups.

Table 6

Who Does The College Serve?

Category	Adminis- trator	Support Staff	Instructor
Number	(4)	(8)	(7)
Students	P P P P	P P P P P P P	P P P P P P
Employers	P P P P	P P P P P P P	P P P P P
Associations	S		S S
Family & Friends	S		P
Other Colleges			S
Society		P	S
Donors		S	
Government		P P S P	

Legend: P - Primary Customer S - Secondary Customer

The implications of the are significant considering the impact a second primary consumer group will have on strategy setting. A college planner must assess the mandate and philosophies of administration about those they wish to serve and the degree to which they will include the

expectations of the various stakeholder in their strategies. To further complicate matters, employers and students are not alone as consumers.

The secondary consumer group is more complex for it is vast and diverse. Be it donor, society-at-large, government, professional association, parents, another college or university, alumni member, instructor, or one of the multitude of other groups, educators must identify and minister to their needs even though one is often in conflict with another. However, this is another matter.

The Role of Needs Assessment

Having recognized students and employers as the primary consumers of education, a simpler model might prove valuable as a springboard to a discussion of needs assessment. The Needs Assessment Model (see Figure 4) portrays three important relationships: (a) the Student to Employer and Society-at-Large, (b) the College to Employers and Society-at-Large, and (c) the College to Student. This model demonstrates both the simplicity and the complexity of the challenges facing the college administrator.

Generally, students attend college in preparation for employment. This is the union of **Employers and Society-at-Large to Student**. Employers and the Society-at-Large have expectations; that is, does this person have the knowledge and skills to support their roles as an employee and

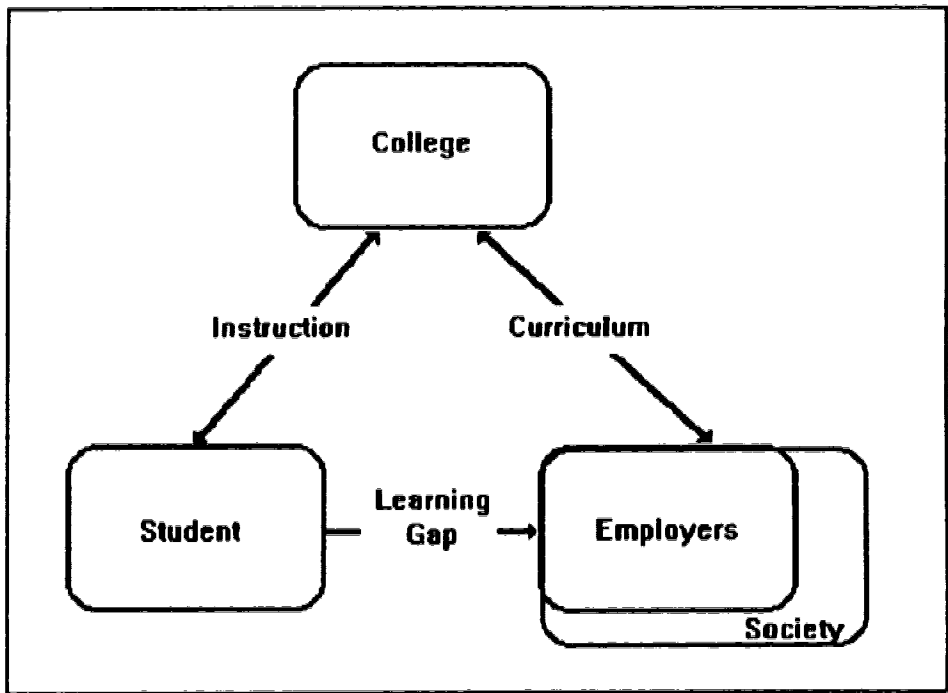


Figure 4 Needs Assessment Model at The College

citizen? Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values will be necessary to narrow the gap between what the student can do (what is) and what the employer and society expect of this person (what should be). The learning gap must be understood by the college curriculum planner.

The identification of "what should be" is determined through the linkage of **College to Employers and Society-at-Large**. It is necessary to ensure that educational goals of the college correspond to the different levels of knowledge and qualifications that employers and society-at-large demand. An insight into **curriculum** needs can be provided by studying the needs of the employer and society. This is a two-way information flow.

An understanding of "what is" is provided through the third relationship of **College to Student**. Curriculum cannot be viewed in isolation from the abilities of the student.

A community-based college is characterized by its efforts to coordinate planning with other community agencies, its interest in participatory learning experiences as well as cognitive ones, the wide range of ages and life goals represented in its student body, and the alternative instructional approaches it arranges to make learning accessible to various community groups. (Myran, 1978, p. 5)

College planners also must understand student needs to establish an effective learning environment. Instructional processes must be sensitive to the needs and peculiar characteristics of learners. This exchange must produce an understanding that includes both psychological and physiological characteristics. This insight may span

instructional concerns to include more personal requirements such as career counselling, housing, and recreation. These processes all facilitate learning.

The means of determining curriculum and instructional methods is never-ending. If there is a starting point to the process, it is the identification of the learning gap. Once the cycle begins though, there is a need for a system to monitor the ever-changing condition of the student in relation to the needs of industry and society. To understand these relationships is to begin to understand the role of needs assessment in college planning.

Processes of Needs Assessment

Myran (1978, p. 2) submits that a college education: (a) can make a significant difference, (b) is a means by which people can enrich and enhance their lives through self-growth, and (c) is a recurring part of daily life. Educators have a responsibility to optimize the congruence between its services and educational needs and aspirations of their many stakeholders.

Myran (1978, p. 2) continues:

A community-based college, then, is one that uses these values as a basis for planning all programs and services, selecting faculty members, designing and locating facilities, developing budgets, carrying out administrative functions, and creating policies.

Needs assessment technology serves to simplify the definition of educational needs.

Community-based colleges, and for that matter higher education institutions in general, have become increasingly aware of the need to document, to understand, and to communicate the impacts their programs have on the communities they affect. (Micek & Cooper, 1978, p. 79)

This technology is available to administrators to assist when coordinating planning and the diverse social role of the college. An examination of the processes and technologies of needs assessment follows.

Needs Assessment Processes

Needs assessment fulfills many of the roles necessary to meet Micek and Cooper's (1978) challenge to document, understand, and communicate the impacts of programming. As Packwood and Whitaker (1988) proposed four purposes of needs assessment: discovery, testing, diagnosis, and evaluation. Each was evident at The College.

Discovery is the process of learning of consumer needs. For instance, The College's Development staff held discussions with potential supporters and donors about fundraising. In another case, the Business Department used the discovery process to estimate the potential for both international trade and technical sales programs.

An obvious example of discovery is the analysis done about the possibility of The College becoming a degree granting institution. Many individuals have been involved from faculty and staff, the Board, students, the public-at-large and government personnel. Research reinforced the need for this initiative.

Testing determines whether needs will be satisfied by a proposed change. An example of testing was observed when student services personnel measured changes in their student orientation process. When new ideas emerged, the concepts were measured against the views of a sample set of students. Changes were implemented based on this feedback. Testing is one of the many functions ministered to by the Advisory Committee system.

Packwood and Whitaker (1987) propose diagnosis calculates how needs can be served by existing resources. For example, medical programming is affected by restraint in both healthcare and education. Public health inspectors must have a university degree by 1995, however, a degree is not yet attainable. Presently all inspectors in Western Canada receive training through The College. Discussions between all stakeholders are currently in process to focus on the issues preventing inspectors from meeting this requisite and how The College could help fulfil this standard.

Evaluation considers how well existing provisions are satisfying needs. Evaluation serves to close the system loop. This feedback allows management to adjust their tactics if the organization varies from its intended course.

One illustration of the evaluation process is evident when The Province's Ministry of Advanced Education monitors the student placement rates after graduation. In another,

The College's Enrolment Management Project focuses heavily on performance monitoring, specifically in the area of student retention. The staff survey students who leave The College before graduation to determine if their needs were met. If needs were not met, then faculty must find out why.

Technology of Needs Assessment

Strategy is primarily the art of positioning an organization at the right place on the value-chain - the right business, the right products and market segments, the right value-adding activities. (Normann & Ramirez, 1993, p. 65) This involves the interaction of the different economic actors or stakeholders - suppliers, business partners, students, employers, donors and so on - working together to co-produce value. This systematic social innovation is grounded in the understanding of the players.

Monette (1979, p. 85) concludes "the reflective educator inquires not only about what is desired by the student, the educational institution, the society or himself, but also, about whether or not it is worthwhile, right and good." An inquiry of this kind requires judgements beyond the technical. Monette proposes that needs assessment is a normative function and, as such, is more than a scientific information gathering procedure.

Originally, this researcher's view of the linking process was as sensors. It soon became apparent that inherent in the word sensor is the one-way, inbound flow of

information. As the interviews progressed, it soon became clear this is contrary to reality. Linkages are the result of the blending of the college and its consuming publics through a collaborative process of assessment need. Needs assessment includes both inbound and outbound exchanges for communication and this is a two-way process. Linkages, as opposed to sensors, was chosen for it better portrays current circumstances.

A synopsis of the methodologies uncovered at The College was well documented in Chapter IV and these are revisited in Figure 5. This interpretation is labelled as a Cycle of Responsiveness for there is no beginning, there is no end. Responsiveness is a continuous process of evaluation, renewal, and implementation. One cannot rest on past successes for the world is ever-changing.

Formal research processes and the less formal, interactive processes are two taxonomies of college/community linkages. The college employs most conventional methodologies that fall under the umbrella of qualitative or quantitative research. At The College, the Institutional Research Project shoulders these responsibilities. Interactive Processes are borne by all within the college.

The three interactive categories documented in Chapter IV are the advisory committee system, college/industry partnerships, and networking. The advisory committee

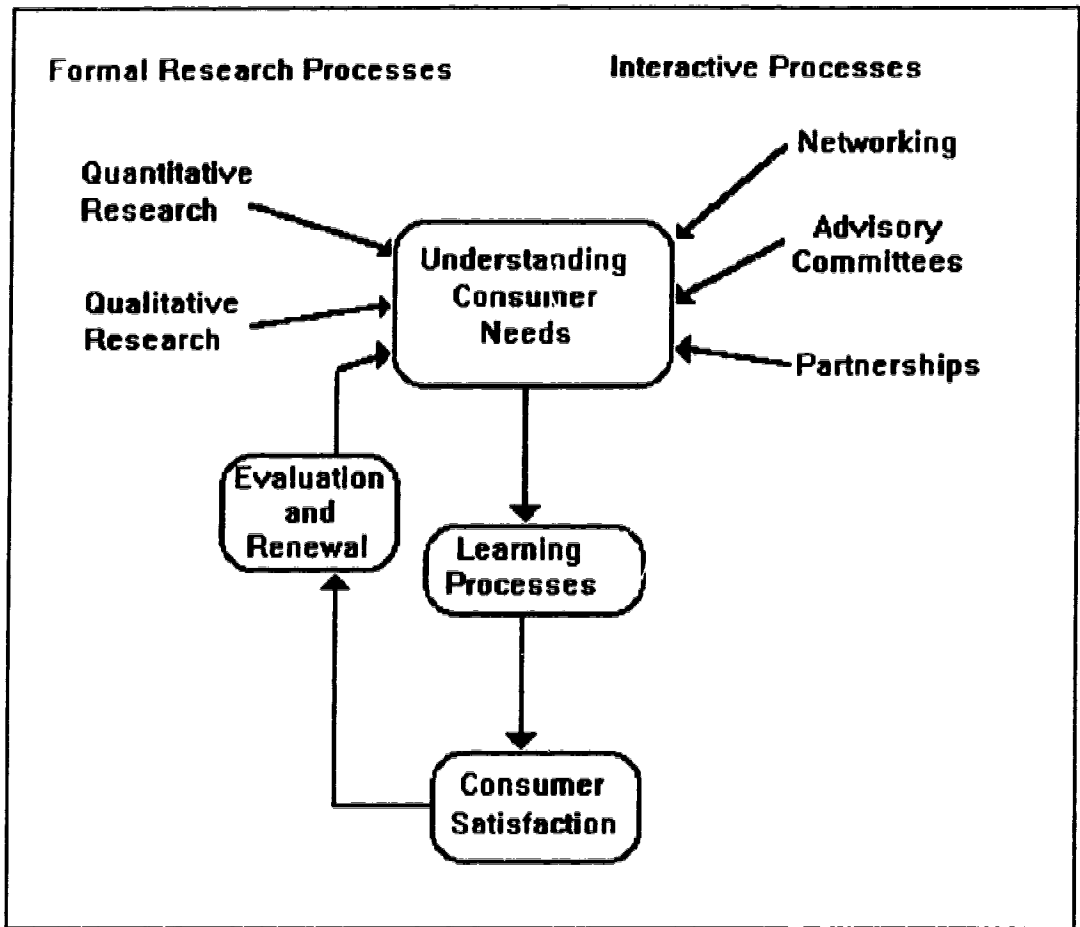


Figure 3 Cycle of Responsiveness

structure is recognized by most as the principal linkage with the business community. College/industry partnerships are achieved through mentorships, internships, directed studies, technology transfer, conferences and workshops, and professional articulation agreements. Examples of college networking includes staff representation on professional associations and committees as well as similar community involvement. A commitment to hiring instructors with industry experience and the utilization of guest speakers, part-time and contract staff improves the student experience through a closer alignment of the college to industry. Each linkage contributes to a better understanding of consumer needs.

Consumer empathy by administrators should result in improved learning and heightened consumer satisfaction. The results of system evaluation are fed back into the consumer understanding cycle with the goal of system renewal. Details of the linkages used at The College are now integrated with the views of Rothman and Gant (1987).

Formal Linkages - While the term linkages has been used in this writing, Rothman and Gant (1987) chose the expression "instruments of needs assessment." They described six such instruments and each was observed in The College case. The following is a comparison of Rothman and Gant's theory and the findings from the case:

1. General population surveys - this is a cross-sectional

look at a community. This method is used to define problems, identify special needs, determine the actual or potential use of services, and the level of satisfaction with services provided. In The Province, this role is often assumed by government agencies such as the Ministry of Advanced Education. This information is collected by the central authority and then is shared with the colleges and universities throughout the Province.

2. Target population surveys - are smaller, more focused surveys that are attentive to specific homogeneous segments in need. This process often provides an in-depth look at needs. Target population surveys of reference groups such as students and employers are integral to The College's research process.

3. Service provider surveys - involve instructors, administrators, counsellors, and so on. There is also value in gathering data from the personnel of service agencies. Staff perceptions of unmet needs and barriers to service may provide a rich source of information. However, these service providers, specifically the instructors, may be uncertain sources for many have been away from the workplace for years.

4. Key informant surveys - engage recognized leaders or representatives within the community for advice or assistance. Surveys of key informants, be they formal or informal leaders, can provide insight into what issues may

emerge and who may support or opposed proposed changes. At The College, key informant surveys involve Advisory Committee members and certain focus groups.

5. Review of social indicators - incorporates the volumes of secondary data available on a variety of social indicators. These can provide evidence of changing needs.

6. Review of managerial and administrative records - provide a portrait of service patterns. Secondary information sources include reviews of college records.

The College uses all research processes included in Rothman and Gant's (1987) taxonomy but there are more. The case revealed a reliance on less scientific, indirect processes. After all, education is an interactive experience. This point is seldom debated by writers on needs assessment.

Interactive Linkages - The College operates approximately ninety **advisory committees** that involve more than one thousand people. As outlined in The College's Advisory Committee handbook, the objectives of this system are (a) to establish communication links with the Board, administration, and faculty, (b) to review The College's mandate and to assist their programs with the mandate, and (c) to review curriculum, facilities and equipment, and instruction and delivery methods.

Each advisory committee should meet twice per year with additional ad hoc meetings as required. The chair of the

committee will report to administration on their assessment of the program and its progress. One meeting per year involving the Board of Governors and all Committee Chairs ensures opportunity for direct feedback.

Some staff are concerned that the advisory committee system has the potential for the one-way flow of information - from program staff to the committee. Others are uneasy about whether there is equal representation from all sectors of the industry. Some have expressed concern about the limited contact of the committees with instructors. Questions have also raised about whether students should be involved. These worries aside, this system is fundamental to The College's operation.

The College administrators promote industry **partnerships** that include students being involved with mentorships, internships, directed studies and other similar experiences. Staff and college obligations extend to technology transfer and the promotion of industry specific conferences and speakers through the Technology Centre.

There is a priority placed ensuring that instructors are current in their respective disciplines. Concurrently, administration promotes **external relationships** between the staff and the community. It is desirable for interaction between the internal and external communities. Examples include educational leaves, work experience, committee involvement whether industry or community related, and

active commitment to professional associations and task forces. The most visible example of this priority appears in The College's planning document, the Strategy for the 90's, with the recommendation that all instructional staff return to their respective industries for six months every six years. Guest speakers and part-time staff add another dimension to the classroom experience.

Granted each networking experience is separate and undocumented, but these linkages are effective. Each time college personnel connect with the various external stakeholders, the college will be more sensitive to needs. The reliance on any one procedure can result in disappointment. If structured research methods and interactive methods are used in balance, they can be both complementary and self-correcting.

Forms of Assessment

Another view of needs assessment is to compare processes based on contrasts. Packwood and Whitaker (1987) have classified these needs assessment processes based on whether they were: (a) direct or indirect, (b) discrete or continuous, or (c) mandatory or discretionary. Assessments are classified by whether the information generated was (d) recorded or unrecorded or (e) qualitative or quantitative. Packwood and Whitaker's notions are validated by The College case.

Direct assessment occurred in the instances of formal

employer and student focused research. Direct assessment also would include the Advisory Committee system. **Indirect** forms include environmental scanning processes, conference attendance, and most interactive processes.

Discrete forms pertain to specific, problem related research and this is often the most visible form of research for it is done in extraordinary circumstances. One example is the evaluation done by the student services of their incoming student orientation program. Others discrete forms include surveys on student housing, space utilization, and most academic research. **Continuous** research is ongoing. Examples include validation studies, course and instructor evaluations, and placement statistics. This also includes most interactive processes.

In sheer numbers **discretionary** research overshadows the **mandatory** research but this should not be perceived as an demonstration of import. Management may insist on conducting certain analysis but others can press as well. Government measures job placements themselves but they also compel colleges to provide other statistics to support funding claims. Research may also be necessary by union or association contracts. Such research might entail instructor loading or student and class contacts measurement. Discretionary research might include course evaluations, most students surveys, conference attendance, meetings and conventions, and population forecasts and

social trend analysis.

Obviously research should be **recorded** (if recorded is defined as being a permanent account), however, many of the interactive processes witnessed remain **unrecorded**. The information flow from linkages such as conference attendance, industry leaves, and industry partnerships are seldom registered. This raises an important question. How is unrecorded information assimilated into planning and instruction?

The College uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. **Quantitative** researchers attempt to be objective by using instruments with established psychometric properties. (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 23) Examples include examinations results, dropout/attendance records, recruitment studies, and many employer and student surveys.

In contrast, **qualitative** researchers "rely partly, if not entirely, on their feelings, impressions, and judgments in collecting data" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 23). All studies employing focus groups and other subjective processes fall into this category. Other instances include course evaluations, industrial liaisons such as course validations, employer visits, and high school counsellors studies. All interactive processes are qualitative.

In practice, there are contrasts other than those documented by Packwood and Whitaker (1988). These include (a) evaluative or predictive, (b) academic or non-academic,

or (c) having an internal or external focus.

Most formal research done is **evaluative**. It is the measurement of what was; it provides a historical perspective. There is virtue in evaluative study but this form can prove less effective than predictive research when planning. A sampling of evaluative projects in progress at The College includes:

- Graduate Outcomes Survey
- Program Costing
- FTE Analysis/Competitive Analysis
- Discontinuants/Withdrawal Analysis
- Executive Organizational Analysis
- Statistical Indicators
- Student Success Study
- Space Utilizations

With recent changes in administration there has been a greater focus on research that is predictive. Although no one has "yet designed the perfect crystal ball," administrators cannot ignore the import of **predictive** research to the planning function. College administrators must be more than responsive. They must be proactive. They must anticipate rather than waiting for need to materialize. This is being responsive.

The following are examples of predictive studies:

- Broadcast Graduate 5 Year Study
- Neuroscience Advanced Diploma
- Health Part-time Studies - Advanced Diploma Survey
- Computer Systems Technology Graduate/Employer Study
- Library Planning Session
- Marketing & Development Planning Session.

Academic research features all that is curriculum and instruction focused. Illustrations include validations

studies, student success research, student retention, graduate placement, english proficiency, graduate outcomes, and instructor and course reviews.

Studies that have a **non-academic** focus include the student orientation inquiry, library planning, housing study, The College image study, and research into contributions and gifts.

Many studies at The College have an **internal** focus and most are evaluative; these are performance measures. Examination results, withdrawal analysis, student success studies and space utilization studies all have an internal focus. Needs assessment must have an **external** focus as well for this is where the consumers are. In addition, opportunities and threats from environmental forces can be determined.

Packwood and Whitaker (1987) framework, with the additional contrasts, provides a one more parameter to identify the many disparate properties of needs assessment. This serves to illustrate some of the characteristics of needs assessment. The forms of assessment detailed should assist users to better understand needs assessment technology and its role as a decision-making support system.

Who Can Best Define Consumer Needs?

Bradshaw (1972) attended to this question. His taxonomy of social need offered a theoretical basis for the understanding of collective needs. Although Bradshaw's

theories do not appear to be grounded in scientific research, his notions provide solid underpinnings for the construct of needs definition.

Packwood and Whitaker (1988) have related Bradshaw's (1972) taxonomy (see Table 7) to the college environment. They associate various means of assessment to Bradshaw's definitions of need.

1. Normative needs - the expert or professional, administrator, or social scientist defines a need. A desirable standard is interpreted by the specialist. Definition is best portrayed by the influencer category shown in the Throughput Model in Chapter II. There is risk in assuming the input stream is assessed in a purely normative way.

Today's student is often more mature and more aware of their own needs. Although students are better able to judge their educational choices, examples of normative assessment are still apparent. These include guidance counsellors or parental direction.

The employer group is also prone to normative influence. Illustrations include industry liaisons and advisory committees.

2. Felt needs - felt need is equated to want. When assessing need for a service, people are asked whether they feel they need it. The appropriateness of felt needs depends on one's insight and experience about their

Table 7

PARTICIPANTS IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Institutions	Means of Assessment	Clients	Providers
-- Students	Recruitment process Pastoral Care Student progress Careers guidance Demand Examination results Student destinations Course drop-out rate/ attendance Course Evaluation Student surveys Knowledge of other initiatives	Students, parents Students, parents Students, parents Students, parents Students Students	Heads of Dept., course leaders, teachers Tutors, counsellors, teachers Teachers, tutors Teachers, tutors, careers teachers, careers officers Heads of Dept., senior institutional managers, governors Heads of Dept., course leaders, senior institutional managers, governors Heads of Dept., course leaders, senior institutional managers, careers teachers, careers officers, governors Heads of Dept., course leaders Tutors, teachers, course leaders, Heads of Dept. Heads of Dept., course leaders, senior institutional managers Teachers, institutional managers, advisers, HMIs
- Employers	Industrial liaison Demand Schools/college industrial liaison committees Advisory committees Conferences/ consultations Employers' surveys Careers Service information Knowledge of other initiatives	Employers Employers Employers, feeder schools Employers Employers	Teachers, liaison officers Heads of Dept., course leaders, senior institutional managers Senior institutional managers, local careers office managers, LEA officers Senior institutional managers, Heads of Dept., careers officers, LEA officers, governors Senior institutional managers, Heads of Dept., course leaders Liaison officers, Heads of Dept., senior institutional managers Careers officers, careers teachers, Heads of Dept. Dept., senior institutional managers Teachers, institutional managers, advisers

Table 7 (Continued)

PARTICIPANTS IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

	Means of Assessment	Clients	Providers
Carers Services			
-- Students	Carers guidance Teacher opinions Carers meetings and convention Student destinations	Students, parents Students, parents	Carers officers, teachers Carers officers, carers teachers, teachers, tutors Carers officers, carers teachers, Heads of Dept., course leaders, senior institutional managers Carers officers, local carers office managers, carers teachers, tutors
-Employers	Employers' visits Schools/college industrial liaison committees Advisory committees Conferences Employers' surveys Recruitment patterns	Employers Employers Employers Employers, students Employers	Carers officers Local carers office managers, senior institutional managers, LEA officers Carers officers, local carers office managers, senior institutional managers, Heads of Dept., LEA officers, governors Carers officers, local carers office managers, senior carers service managers Carers officers, local carers office managers, senior carers service managers Carers officers, local carers office managers, senior carers service managers Carers officers, local carers office managers, senior carers service managers

Table 7 (Continued)

	LEAs	Means of Assessment	Clients	Providers
	-- Students	Complaints about access to courses Demand Examination results Course provision Student destinations Forecasts of demand Population forecasts and social trends Applications for grants and awards Monitoring of provision Knowledge of other initiatives In-service training Student surveys	Students, parents Students, parents	LEA officers, counsellors LEA officers and advisers LEA officers and advisers LEA officers and advisers, senior institutional managers LEA officers and advisers, senior careers service managers LEA officers and advisers, senior institutional managers, councillors LEA officers and advisers, planners LEA officers LEA officers and advisers, senior institutional managers, Heads of Dept., course leaders. LEA officers and advisers, HMI's LEA advisers, teachers LEA officers
	-Employers	LEA/Employers' committees Employment trends Personal contacts	Students Employers Employers	LEA officers, senior officers from other depts., councillors LEA officers, senior careers service managers, MSC officers LEA officers and advisers, councillors

Source: Packwood & Whitaker (1988) (Used with permission).

problems.

Community-based planning calls for full partnership of the college, community, business, and other educational and governmental agencies in determining the needs of the community, what roles if any the college should play in fulfilling those needs, and how best these needs could be accomplished. (Tadlock, 1978, p. 8)

The changing profile of students is a challenge not only to the deliverer, but to the students themselves. As suggested, educators can no longer assume that students are young and inexperienced. The College uses student surveys, enrolments, and recruitment processes as measures of felt need. Other examples include the determination of curriculum through advisory committees, conferences and networking, and formal employer surveys.

3. Expressed needs - are felt needs turned into action; that is, they are demanded. While demand is not expressed unless a need is felt, it is common for needs not to be declared. Student examples include program applications, program dropout rates, and attendance records. Employer recruitment activity is another example.

While expressed needs definition has been the backbone of college planning, there are risks involved if this process is not used correctly. Needs assessment relies on the ability of patrons to appreciate and communicate their needs accurately. While this can be an essential source of information, if this assessment process is not used carefully, the college could easily set an improper course. There is a need for the researcher to ask the right

questions and then to combine these results with other findings to validate by this definition.

4. Comparative need - is a measure of need that is established by comparing the characteristics of subjects with those already receiving a service. If people with similar characteristics are not receiving this service, they are thought to be in need.

Comparative need depends on the similarity of the comparison group to the target population and can neglect unique characteristics that may invalidate generalizations. As a result, comparative need might well be the least productive alternative in education. Knowledge of placements at other colleges and a knowledge of other college initiatives are examples of this.

As seen, the needs assessment process is administered by many throughout the college. At The College, the Institutional Research and Planning group has the primary responsibility to chronicle many of the "observables and measurables." While the IRP mandate includes most direct assessments, all front-line staff have a responsibility for needs assessment.

Packwood and Whitaker (1988) correlate the means of assessment to both client and provider categories. Accountability for needs assessment must rest with the spectrum of administrators. No one can say, "That is not my job!", for the task is too important to allot to only a few.

Chapter Summary

Nothing emerged from The College study which refutes the comments of Porter (1991), Gale (1992), Terreberry (cited by Kast and Rosenzweig, 1973), Bok (cited by Seymour, 1992), and Johnson (cited by Church, 1989). Each voiced concern at the ability of higher education to meet the needs of business and government. The leadership of The College was concerned that these individuals are correct in their assessment and are now concentrating on ensuring their college is responsive to the needs of the consumer.

If one accepts the premise the responsive college is a community-oriented institution and that education is a recurring part of daily life, there is an inherent obligation to involve the consumer as a planning partner. The contention is not that the consumer is always right, but it is the belief that the consumer is probably right. As Thomas Murrin (1993) contends, it is a matter of "doing the right thing right the first time."

Educators must recognize that their two key consumers are the students and the students' future employers. College administrators must establish processes and create systems that best serve these consumers in all areas of academic life, including curriculum, operations, student advising, recreation, and community involvement. (Murrin, 1993) Colleges must communicate and integrate the mission of the college so that the student and employer are fully

aware of what the institution contributes, not only to the individual, but to industry and society-at-large.

Administrators must look beyond the facts to the essence of education. No amount of scientific data can yield judgments of "what should be" because science deals not with normative considerations but with facts. Monette (1979, p. 93) concludes:

If adult educators were to philosophize, they would attend not only to scientific reflection upon natural and social phenomena, but they would delve further into the values and beliefs which undergird science itself. The philosophical mode of reflection would ground the field of adult education on a firmer, rational basis than the scientific examination of "what is" or the more pragmatic assessment of "what works."

College administrators must listen to and learn just as the master Pan Ku required of young Prince T'ai in the opening parable but so must the researcher. This discussion appears in Chapter VI.

Chapter VI

Reflections, Conclusions, and Implications

The 1990's are difficult times not only for business, industry, and government but these are difficult times for educators who are concerned with being proactive given environmental pressures. There does not seem to be any relief in sight. Administrators must revisit their methods for in these times of concern there can be opportunity. As Small (1981, p. 1) proposed, "others, however, have seen the times as offering new challenges and fresh opportunities, and have called for new programs, directed at non-traditional students, in re-tooled organizations." Small cited Gleazer (1980) who foresees a new vitality, shaped by a clearer vision of the real potential of the college to address adult learning needs during the closing decades of the century. (p. 1) With these views in mind, what is college responsiveness: rhetoric or reality?

Reflections

The following reflections are shaped around the three original research questions.

To what degree do the leaders of the college respond to community members and their needs?

When reviewing the literature and the data collected from The College, one is left with one basic question unanswered. Is college responsiveness mere rhetoric or is it a reality? On one side of the ledger, the likes of Gale

(1992) and Porter (1991) attack educators for not meeting the needs of society with their offering. Owens (1991) speaks of the resistance of college administrators to external change and their need to maintain the status quo. One inference might be that the linkages are effective yet the findings are not integrated into strategic plans. Are educators merely going through the paces and change is not forthcoming? Is needs assessment technology in place yet the desire to change is not? Are colleges learning organizations?

On the opposite end of this scale, those at The College felt they were closely linked to the community that they are mandated to serve. The College has a good reputation but does it excel as a responsive college? There is a feeling from within that The College is meeting the needs of their community but is this shared by the external consumer?

What is rhetoric? What is reality?

What linkages are available to ascertain consumer needs as well as shifting environmental forces?

The linking processes witnessed possessed certain ingredients including:

1. The identification and mapping of college consumer groups.
2. The interfacing with leaders and other representatives of these groups.
3. A collaborative identification, assessment, and analysis of educational needs specific to these consumers.

This needs assessment technology is executed with the concerns of environmental influences.

Much has already been said about the technology that was evident at The College from the formal processes of qualitative and quantitative research to less structured interactive procedures. What is seldom discussed in the literature on needs assessment are the support systems that supplement the process itself. This may be what Pan Ku was referring to in the parable "The Sound of the Forest" when he sent Prince T'ai back to the forest to listen to what more he could hear.

As a researcher, one must look beyond the initial inquiry to what more may be meaningful to the research question. When discussing needs assessment in light of the notion of the responsive college, one must realize that to simply activate the technology is not being responsive. There is more.

Several qualities were exhibited at The College that encourage responsiveness. These are leadership, vision, culture, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Leadership - Leaders are in the business of making sense. When leadership fails, the cause is more by default than by error or sin (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991, p. 40).

They contend:

Leadership is lacking when the institution drifts and is readily influenced by short-run opportunistic trends. When leaders default, it is often due partly to failure of nerve and partly to a failure of

understanding.

It takes courage to hold a course; it takes knowledge to recognize and deal with the basic sources of institutional vulnerability.

College administrators must do more with less or, at least, better with the same. Kehoe (1993, p. 31) urges that this requires committed leadership who:

1. Understand work from the point of view of the customer.
2. Involve every level of staff when meeting or exceeding those needs by creating more reliable and responsive service.
3. Reduce the complexity of work systems.
4. Win from powerful customers the time and financial stability to do this.

The College has a new leadership team with the tenure of three of the five top administrators being less than five years. With them they brought change.

We had a real changeover. With the senior executive we have now, there is a heightened awareness about issues related to the responsive college. The senior administrators have done a good job of bringing The College back on line to being responsive. (Support Staff)

The College has been renewed with the current leadership. The President is certainly very customer service oriented. He is a very nuts and bolts person. He is not interested in a lot of bureaucracy. He wants to see things happen with a vision and a plan. He does not want accidents to occur. (Instructor)

These quotations are but a few of many which exhibit respect for what the current leadership has done and the shared

faith in what is yet to be accomplished.

The College management team has been careful to present visible evidence of innovation. Symbols of change include campus upgrading, the construction of the IBM building that was the result of an aggressive development campaign, the Strategy for the 90's document, and ensuring the management team is visible, approachable, and human.

You have an executive group here who has a very low ego. There is essentially no turf among the executive. There is a common understanding of where we need to go and a willingness to accommodate somebody coming in with a new idea. To the extent that atmosphere exists for executives, it might be paying off by passing it along to others. (Administrator)

If leadership is the capacity to influence and organize meaning for members of the organization, this team appears to provide leadership.

Although leadership speaks for itself in many ways, we see it all too seldom. What we need is a person who can catalyze, combine philosophy with procedure, and conceptualize the effect of that synthesis. (Smith, 1978, p. 20)

Until the leadership of the college lives responsiveness, the college will be unresponsive no matter how hard the rank and file work towards this end.

Vision

If, as Jonathan Swift proposes, "vision is the art of seeing the invisible," planning requires a sixth sense. Creating a vision is seldom an easy chore. Drucker (1990, p. 109) suggests performance in the not-for-profit institution must be planned and this starts with the

mission. As Fullan (1991, p. 102) cautions, "having no vision at all is what makes for educational bandwagons."

A vision is a picture of a future state for the organization, a description of what it would like to be a number of years from now (Beckhard & Pritchard, 1991, p. 25)

Educators must focus on future performance rather than on rules and regulations.

Our job here is very simple. It is not easy, but it is simple. Colleges have a much more difficult mandate which includes training people for the workplace but also includes getting people lifeskills, helping them to self-actualize. . . things that we do not take as a central part of our mandate. (Administrator)

Birnbaum (1990, p. 24) relates social exchange theory to leadership. The theory posits there is a reciprocal relationship whereby leaders provide needed services to a group in exchange for the group's approval and compliance with the leader's demands. The management at The College could well be described as transformational for they emphasize their vision then tap the motivations of others to lead them. The vision and strategic plan for The College was created within months of the President's arrival.

We wanted to create a document that, while it set out far reaching vision, also provided a method of breaking it down into "doable" things, so we could point to some successes and overcome the psychological hurdles that people have. (Administrator)

His priority was to communicate the vision for the college so everyone in The College would have a shared meaning. This document, the Strategy for the 90's, serves as a symbol to both internal and external stakeholders of change.

Strategy for the 90's has helped by staking out the horizon for the Board, the executive group, the Deans and others. . . . We can look up and find our way. That is important. We have worked very hard at keeping it simple and very straight forward. . . to pick some not to profound issues and to work at it.
(Administrator)

Communicating this vision and creating a culture in which people are willing to "buy-in" requires a special feeling throughout the organization.

Culture

All education is provided against a background of past thinking and ways of working that constrains attempts to introduce change (Packwood and Whitaker, 1988, p. 1). Given the specialization and diversification of needs and provision, educators must seek to improve responsiveness in light of this culture.

An effective change strategy is one that takes account of the organization's memories, maps, norms, and values (Beckhard & Pritchard, 1991, p. 16).

I trace your ability to be responsive, and to make changes, back to the internal human condition. If people believe in what they are doing, they feel good about it and are in tune with what customer's needs are.

By virtue of doing a good job you, you are able to do a better job. It is an upwards spiral. The opposite of that is, if you do not have people on side, you get into a downwards spiral - you do a bad job - your customers are not happy. (Administrator)

Having people who are able to experience success within the institutional structure and climate can be a prime motivator. People learn by example. People learn by experience.

Culture is an important pillar of the college. Four years ago the place had been through a lot of turmoil and very tough times with a lot of turnover. We had to stabilize.

It has been a conscious strategy to calm the place so people can focus on the job rather than the changes.
(Administrator)

Marris (1975, p. 51) puts culture into context:

The power of social systems over individuals becomes understandable, I think, only if we see that social systems provide. . . a framework of theory, values, and related technology which enables individuals to make sense of their lives. Threats to the social system threaten this framework.

"Change works or doesn't work on the basis of individual and collective responses to it" (Fullan, 1991, p. 46).

Entrepreneurial Spirit

Administrators are faced with bounded rationality.

Innovations are less a source of rational ideas, and an array of possibilities (Fullan, 1991, p. 19).

Frustrated entrepreneurship is an impediment to responsiveness. If people are continually held back, they will eventually stop bringing ideas forward. If entrepreneurship is rewarded, more good ideas will follow. If people feel their ideas are not wanted, creativity will remain dormant. (Support Staff)

To be responsive staff must feel they can explore new ideas, try another approach, or propose an alternate resolution to a problem.

Reality, therefore, is not waiting to be discovered but is waiting to be invented. The process of negotiating agreements about the nature of reality - of "making sense" - is the process of organizing (Birnbaum, 1990, p. 65)

Some at The College feel they can "invent reality." When one senior administrator was questioned about the apparent

willingness of staff to experiment, he confessed:

They have probably got enough examples of me trying things that are not working. For this reason, they are not afraid to try. They have probably have more on me than I have got on them.

He continued to say:

I have not laid entrepreneurship out as an operating principle, but I think that one way or another that is the style the executive group has brought to The College. (Administrator)

The generation of innovations is, after all, a political and entrepreneurial process (Fullan, 1991, p. 19).

Parallel to entrepreneurship is a positive attitude that is rooted in an organization's culture. Instead of accepting defeat given an obstacle, many in The College saw these as realities that must be dealt with rather than as obstacles around which they could not pass. These became challenges rather than impediments.

As mentioned at the outset, the technologies of needs assessment or boundary spanning was well documented in this paper. What was not substantiated was the underpinnings for this technology. Leadership, vision, culture, and entrepreneurial spirit were the common thread among all who spoke on responsiveness. The message was clear. Without these elements responsiveness was but a dream. The tools of needs assessment may generate valid results but implementation would be impossible. Perhaps this is what Pan Ku was referring to in the parable that greeted the reader in Chapter I. Pan Ku maintained "the demise of

states comes only when leaders listen only to the superficial words and do not penetrate deeply into the souls of the people to hear their true opinions, feelings, and desires" (Kim & Mauborgne, 1992, p. 124).

What role can needs assessment play in college responsiveness?

The responsive college will have five characteristics (adapted from Port, 1993, p. 49). The first is **concurrent everything**. All elements of the college work together to serve the consumer. **Fast development cycles** are critical. All parties must have instant access to the latest information thus eliminating the need to redo flawed work. The third characteristic is **flexible production**. Flexibility will be built into to all levels of the college. In this way appropriate learning will occur in the variety and quality needed by the various consumer groups. Status quo is no longer acceptable. **Quick response** is the ability the college to determine what needs to be done and then to change as required. These changes might include teaching methods or curriculum. The last characteristic is a **commitment to lifelong quality**. A primary focus will be to provide educational services that exceed consumer expectations today and tomorrow. The responsive college must utilize the resources of the organization to best meet these goals. This requires having an understanding of consumer demands. This is a boundary spanning function.

Gratz and Salem (1989) characterize boundary spanning

by three qualities: (a) the cohesion or the degree of involvement of the communicators (both in and outside the organization), (b) the adaptability of the relationship between the communicators, and (c) the premium of exchange defining the payoffs that communicators receive from the episode. Needs assessment is an important part of a college administrator's boundary spanning activities. The most important role that needs assessment can play in college responsiveness is to ensure the premium of exchange is valued by the consumer.

The proof of the importance to college responsiveness of the needs assessment process can be measured by the changes that have occurred in program delivery at The College. An audit of changes and the stimulus for any changes that did occur would be the best indicator of past outcomes. Were changes a result of external or internal forces? Needs assessment can play an important role in college responsiveness but only if administration and others in the college are so inclined. Needs assessment is important but it is only one element of responsiveness. As with any research, assessment merely provides the decision maker with information. It does not provide the answers. Educational administrators provide the answers.

Conclusions

Education is in a time of discontinuous change. As

Handy (1989, p. 5) suggests, discontinuous change happens from time to time in history and is often confusing and disturbing. Handy urges change is "only another word for growth, another synonym for growth. We can all do it, and enjoy it, if we want to." To be responsive or to even survive in time of profound change, administrators must carefully plot a course for their college. A single college cannot be everything to everyone. Resources do not allow. Planners must identify and choose from the many constituencies that place demands on a college. When educators challenge a need, they must discover the precise consumer benefit and value advantage in light of the current environment. The assessment process must measure need in balance with external pressures and internal resources.

Understanding and implementing the needs assessment technology is important but responsiveness will not succeed unless it becomes a part of the culture. Technology becomes hollow and ineffective without commitment and vision of leadership. College responsiveness lies in a shared desire by all to serve their respective consumer groups. This must be supported by a staff blessed with an entrepreneurial spirit. For administrators to simply proclaim their goal for the college is to be responsive is mere rhetoric unless their decisions and actions reflect their words.

Public administrators have an obligation to be responsive, therefore, their good intentions must turn into

effective actions. One administrator put his job and that of The College in perspective:

Our job is very simple. It is not easy but it is simple. We are training people for the workplace. Colleges have a much more difficult mandate that includes training people for the workplace but also includes getting people lifeskills, helping students to self-actualize and preparing them for further education.

In not-for-profit institutions, evaluation of outcomes is complex for there is no bottom-line; administrators cannot measure sales or profits. The temptation is to downplay results and suggest, "We are serving a good cause." "Normally, change is measured only in terms of results; rarely is there any measurement of the process of improvement" (Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992, p. 10).

These authors continue to suggest that administrators must include learning processes as an inherent part of their planning and administration of change. If not, they are unlikely to be fully effective or to reap the benefits of accelerating change that a learning mode can bring. As Senge (1990, p. 8) recommends, educational administrators must continually expand their capabilities to shape the future for the college and community. Through learning the college administrator can become more effective.

Weick and Daft (1983, p. 82) view effectiveness as "a function of the interpretation of cues about the environment." Cameron (1984, p. 236) described effectiveness as:

Both apex and abyss in organization behaviour research. It is an apex in the sense that all conceptualizations and theories of organizations are aimed, ultimately, at identifying effective performance. It is the fundamental dependent variable in organizational investigations, and judgments of effectiveness and ineffectiveness are an inherent part of the activities of theoreticians, researchers, and practitioners in organizations. It is an abyss in the sense that no valid theories of organizational effectiveness exist in organizational behaviour, and no list of criteria has ever been formulated that is either necessary or sufficient for evaluating the construct.

Creed et al (1992, p. 57) chose the metaphor of Milo's "anxiety closet" in the comic strip Bloom County to describe the rubic of effectiveness. It contains everything one is concerned about, but dare one open the door yet again? Educators must open the door on both effectiveness and responsiveness or responsiveness can quickly become mere rhetoric.

Implications

Performance is the ultimate test for any organization. Every non-profit institution exists for the sake of performance in changing people and society (Drucker, 1990, p. 139). Performance in the non-profit is measured by its ability to create positive change through education. Drucker reminds us again and again that the results of a non-profit institution are to be found outside the organization, not inside. The mission of the college and the actions of those within must preserve this focus.

Implications For Practice

Organizational mission is exceedingly important. A mission is a declaration of what the organization should be remembered for.

The mission is something that transcends today, but guides today, informs today. The moment we lose sight of the mission, we begin to stray, we waste resources. From the mission, one goes to very concrete goals (Drucker, 1990, p. 141).

Only when executives identify these goals can they identify key performance areas. Only then can the educator guarantee they are doing what they are supposed to be doing; doing the right things and serving a need.

Results are achieved by concentrating on key objectives rather than by fragmenting efforts. Need alone does not justify college efforts. Educators must match the strengths of the organization and the mission of the college to identified need before taking action. College planners must be every mindful that the college cannot serve every need in its community.

As Drucker (1990, p. 142) advocates:

Good intentions, good policies, good decisions must turn into effective actions. The statement, "This is what we are here for," must eventually become the statement, "This is how we do it. This is the time span in which we do it. This is who is accountable. This is, in other words, the work for which we are responsible."

The ultimate answer to these questions lies in the needs of the consumer. Only there are many consumers and, when the educator weighs the demands of each, these needs conflict.

Drucker (1990) continues, "Effective organizations take it for granted that work "isn't being done by having a lovely plan. . . (or) a magnificent statement of policy." Work is done when it is done. Done by people. By people with a deadline. By people who are trained. By people who hold themselves responsible for results. Only when this occurs and the consumer is the focus, will the college be responsive.

Educators must view their work as an investment in society's future. Administrators must abandon their expense-driven thinking and replace this with an investment-orientation. They must ask different questions. Instead of focusing on graduation success, enrolments, student-contact-periods or cost centre performances, the administrators must concern themselves with:

- How can we measure returns given a consumer orientation?
- What are our long-term goals?
- What is the quality of our market-share? How long will they stay with us?
- What new consumers should we seek?
- How can we leverage our investments to reduce consumer acquisition costs and maximize returns?

Smart choices in consumer selection and timing enable companies to channel resources in building the highest "quality" of market share (Slywotzky & Shapiro, 1993, p. 105).

This is tantamount to being responsive. Responsiveness is a never-ending process of asking questions, determining the best plan of action, reviewing results, and taking steps to improve while serving the needs of chosen consumers. Responsive educators are conscious that needs assessment technology and simply words are not enough. Responsiveness is an ongoing process.

Implications For Further Research

There are several questions that merit further research. These are but a few.

1. Is consumer input of value to the college planning process? This thesis is grounded in the theory that consumer input is necessary for reliable college planning. If there is no value in consumer input, then there is no value in the needs assessment process.
2. Will similar results surface if this research is replicated other colleges, technical institutes, and universities? If this research is completed at colleges without a reputation for responsiveness, will there be significant differences? When the less responsive college is examined, the comparisons might shed a different light on this thesis.
3. Needs assessment is not new but nor is it perfect. Colleges are often viewed as open systems. The question remains, "How can these linkages be improved?" This might require study beyond the academic world with a look at other

non-profit industries as well as the profit sector.

4. How are the findings resulting from the needs assessment process incorporated into the college planning? Several respondents were troubled that the results of assessment were not included in college planning. Some were concerned that needs assessment was nothing more than "window dressing" and there was no consumer focus. This merits review.

This research has provided a positive view of needs assessment and the value of consumer input into the college planning process. It would be folly to assume there is not a negative or opposing view. The perspective in this paper must be balanced by differing judgments.

Chapter Summary

Birnbaum (1990, p. 3) speculates:

The apparent paradox that American colleges and universities are poorly run but highly effective is easily resolved if either or both of the judgements is wrong. But what if they are both right? Such a state would lead to interesting speculations.

If effectiveness is the criterion by which we judge colleges and their administration, what is the benchmark against which effectiveness is measured? As Goodlad (1978, p. 324) states, "Education should become the centre of focus for colleges." His inference is that learning is what is critical rather than the achievement of personal agendas. Consumer expectations must become a benchmark for

effectiveness. Educators must hear what students and employers are saying.

Chapter I began with a parable about listening. Young Prince T'ai was sent to Pan Ku to learn the basics of being a good ruler. T'ai was sent to the forest to learn how to listen to the sounds of the forest. Upon his return the master told him to go back to listen to what more he could hear.

College planners must learn the lesson taught to Prince T'ai. As listening involves more than simply hearing the sonic realizations, the pitch and rhythm, needs assessment consists of more than implementing a technology.

Effective administrators act thoughtfully (that is, by paying attention, by discovering meanings, and by self-correction) rather than unthoughtfully (that is, by rote, by impulse, or mindlessly) (Birnbaum, 1990, p. 213).

Just as the listener must actualize the message from the source, the administrator must appreciate the expectations of the public they choose to serve. James (1982, p. 4) proposes leaders command because they expect action. People praise to make to other person feel good. People speak to be heard. If askers do not listen, asking is futile.

For only when a ruler has learned to listen closely to the people's hearts, hearing their feelings uncommunicated, pains expressed, and complaints not spoken of, can he hope to inspire confidence in his people, understand when something is wrong, and meet the true needs of his citizens. The demise of states comes when leaders listen only to the superficial words and do not penetrate deeply into the souls of the people to hear their true opinions, feelings and desires. (Kim and Mauborgne, 1992, p. 124)

Only when educators listen and act according to the wishes of those they choose to serve will college responsiveness become reality rather than rhetoric.

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Appendix A
Interview Guide

Interview Guide - To determine if and how colleges are consumer-driven, the following interview format will be used. The intent is to look at responsiveness from the point of view of individuals with different perspectives.

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE

The Responsive College

1. Who are the external consumers of this college?
2. Who are the competitors of this college/program?
3. What does the phrase "responsive college" mean to you?
4. Is the concept of the responsive college central to this college's mission?
5. How would you describe the responsiveness of this college? Rank 1 - poor to 5 - excellent.
6. What are the main impediments to responsiveness at this college?

Needs Assessment

1. Describe the sensors, monitoring devices, or linkages used by those in your college to assess community needs.
2. How could these linkages be better facilitated?
3. What shifts in educational priorities have you witnessed in this college?

Concluding Question

1. Are there any questions you feel that I should have asked but have not?