

The Pursuit of Prestige: The Experience of Institutional Striving from a Faculty Perspective

KerryAnn O'Meara

University of Maryland College Park

Alan Bloomgarden

Mount Holyoke College

Abstract: *Each year many colleges compete to increase their national rankings within the academic hierarchy. As institutions make decisions and take actions with external rankings in mind, their pursuit of external prestige inevitably influences institutional members and stakeholders. The faculty experience of this pursuit of prestige, or institutional “striving,” is largely unknown. Through data from 29 interviews at one self-identified striving liberal arts college, this article examines faculty experience of institutional striving with attention to how faculty perceive the origins of striving, and its influence on institutional identity and direction, their own work-lives and reward systems.*

Each year more faculty strive to emulate the work characteristics of their peers at research universities, and more colleges strive to model their research standards after the most prestigious universities in order to increase their national standing (Aldersley, 1995; Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Jencks & Reisman, 1968; Lovett, 2005; Milem, Berger & Dey, 2000; Morphew, 2002). In recent years research has examined the nature of such “striving” and how the organizational behavior associated with the pursuit of prestige influences such areas as admissions, pricing/cost, and educational quality (Aldersley, 1995; Ehrenberg, 2003; Kuh &

KerryAnn O'Meara is an Associate Professor of Higher Education at the University of Maryland College Park.

Alan Bloomgarden is the Coordinator of the Community-Based Learning Program at Mount Holyoke College.

Copyright © 2011 by *The Journal of the Professoriate*, an affiliate of the Center for African American Research and Policy. All Rights Reserved (ISSN 1556-7699)

Pascarella, 2004; Massy & Zemsky, 1994; Meredith, 2004; Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999; Morphew, 2002; Morphew & Baker, 2004; Sarraf, Hayek, Kandiko, Padgett, & Harris, 2005; Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006). Over the last decade, there has been emerging attention to how striving influences faculty work-life (Dubrow, Moseley, & Dustin, 2006; Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; O'Meara, 2007; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2005). For the purposes of this research, "striving" is defined broadly as the institutional pursuit of prestige within the academic hierarchy. By prestige we refer to external national rankings of institutions. Institutions that are striving are making decisions and taking actions to move the institution toward better external rankings.

This study examines faculty experience of striving within one selective liberal arts college. Liberal arts institutions are among the most at risk of striving behavior, and of neglecting teaching and service missions in pursuit of prestige (Massy & Zemsky, 1994; Morphew, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2003). By "at risk" we refer to forces in their environment that create significant incentives for pursuing prestige, and disincentives for not engaging in a quest for prestige. Evidence suggests smaller institutions exhibit striving behavior in part because of their demonstrated vulnerability to market trends, their need of the resources greater prestige promises, and because their small size makes them vulnerable to shifts in mission and goals when leadership changes (McPherson & Schapiro, 1999; Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005). As liberal arts institutions compete for a small number of selective students able to pay full tuition price, they compete for external funds, and these and other market forces encourage competition for recruitment advantage through increase in rankings and other peer benchmarks (Bloomgarden, 2007; Ehrenberg, 2003; Winston, 2000). Most liberal arts college faculty attended research institutions and were socialized toward norms of academic careers that reflect such environments. Yet working in smaller departments liberal arts college faculty simultaneously look outward to disciplinary associations and research university departments for norms, while managing competing and more generalized local expectations about service and teaching (Clark, 1987; Ruscio, 1987). Faculty at these institutions are most likely to already be experiencing conflict between competing roles and responsibilities.

Institutions in the top and middle tier of liberal arts institutions face increased research expectations, and striving to emulate research

university standards is likely to occur on top of significant teaching, advising, and service responsibilities (Clark, 1987; Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Hartley & Robinson, 2001; McCaughey, 1994; Ruscio, 1987; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2003). In particular, a subset of colleges ranked most highly in national, reputational rankings (such as *U.S. News and World Report*) exhibit a markedly higher volume of scholarly output than their liberal arts institution peers, a potential indicator of striving culture in this environment (Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006). Four of the institutions studied in Massy and Zemsky's (1994) study of academic ratcheting were elite private liberal arts colleges. While all institutions may exhibit striving behavior, liberal arts environments appear as ideal settings for the study of faculty experience of striving institutional culture because of these developments and trends. Furthermore, only a limited amount of research has explored faculty professional expectations in selective liberal arts colleges, thus this study is also intended as a contribution to our knowledge of faculty roles and rewards in these environments.

Much has been written on the factors impacting institutional striving, which has also been called institutional drift, academic ratcheting, and mission creep. For example, in 1956, David Riesman, and in 1968 Jencks and Riesman reflected on the post-WW2 higher education landscape, comparing higher education to a snake, whose middle and end are constantly trying to follow the head. Massy and Zemsky (1994) explored "academic ratcheting" wherein institutions slowly decrease teaching loads, increase faculty discretionary time, and emphasis shifts from undergraduate education to graduate education and research (p.2). In this study of private liberal arts colleges and research universities, Massy and Zemsky (1994) found that faculty loosened their institutional ties and responsibilities and increased their cosmopolitan or disciplinary activities as the institution competed for more selective students, faculty, and prestige. Aldersley (1995) examined institutions that had shifted in Carnegie classification and found that "upward drift" or a tendency for institutions to introduce higher level programs to move up in Carnegie classification was prevalent. Aldersley (1995) found these institutions were "beguiled by the promise of prestige associated with doctoral education" (p. 56). As Finnegan and Gamson (1996) studied comprehensive universities trying to adopt "research cultures," they found that the "cultural schema" of research culture was reinforced as resources such as faculty lines, tenure and promotion, and other such

incentives were employed to support the pursuit of prestige (p. 172). Morphey (2002) found that in the decade following 1990, more than 120 public and private four-year colleges changed their names and became universities, at least in part, to gain prestige. The trend of striving behavior or mission drift is not limited to the U.S. as researchers have noted the same trends in the European Union and Canada (Jones, 1997; Neave, 1979).

While research has explored the prevalence of striving and factors that influence it (Aldersley, 1995; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Ehrenberg, 2003; Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Jencks & Reisman, 1968; Lovett, 2005; Massy & Zemsky, 1994; Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999; Morphey, 2002; Morphey & Huisman, 2002; Sarraf et al., (2005), less is known qualitatively about how faculty experience striving environments with regards to institutional identity and direction, institutional climate, their own work-life and careers, and reward systems. Given the prevalence of striving behavior in higher education today, it is important to better understand how faculty, who participate in and contribute to striving behavior, while also being influenced by it, experience it in their everyday work lives.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this research focuses on the academic norms, values, and reward systems that influence faculty behavior, motivation, and careers (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996), the different ways that organizational cultures influence their members (Birnbaum, 1988, 2000; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Senge, 1990) and research specific to striving in higher education (Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Jencks & Reisman, 1968; Massy & Zemsky, 1994; Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999; Morphey, 2002; Morphey & Huisman, 2002). Research on faculty roles and rewards in liberal arts colleges further contextualizes and frames this exploration of faculty experience of a striving culture (Clark, 1987; McPherson & Schapiro, 1999; Ruscio, 1987; Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2003).

Previous research on faculty work-life suggests that faculty perceptions of a striving institutional culture will be impacted by their own sense of the history of the place, their own identity within their workplace and

how it will be impacted by the change, and the various incentives that exist, both intrinsically and extrinsically for them to believe and act in one way or another (Austin & Gamson, 1983; Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Dubrow et al., 2006; Finnegan & Gamson, 1996). Professional norms and pressures toward specialization encourage faculty to become more cosmopolitan than local in their careers in many four year institutions, (Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Jencks & Reisman, 1968; Morphey, 2002; Morphey & Huisman, 2002). Given that liberal arts faculty were socialized toward notions of scholarship and productivity in research/doctoral universities, there is reason to believe that faculty at a selective liberal arts college might welcome the benefits that often come with striving behavior. For example, prestigious institutions often have higher salaries, lower faculty teaching and advising loads, and more resources for research and disciplinary activities (Fairweather, 1993; Sweitzer & Volkwein, 2005). In addition, if the institution keeps increasing student selectivity during striving years, this could improve faculty satisfaction, given most faculty prefer working with academically talented students (Hagedorn, 2000).

On the other hand, emerging literature on striving and upward drift paints another picture for faculty. Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2005) found in their study of “striving comprehensives” that the “upward mobility the campus desires is often at the expense of faculty” (p. 8). In this study women faculty with young children found it particularly difficult to balance the needs of their families with the aspirations of their institutions (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2005). Likewise, while research has shown across 4-year institutions that faculty feel pressure to excel in multiple roles simultaneously (O'Meara & Braskamp, 2005), Wolf-Wendel & Ward (2005) found that the pressures associated with striving intensify this pressure and place work roles in conflict. Faculty in striving comprehensives experienced mixed messages about where they should be spending the majority of their time and energy given that resources did not support the institution's aspirations. Dubrow, Moseley, and Dustin (2006) compiled a fictitious case of “mission creep university”, a composite of the authors experiences at several striving institutions (p.24). In this case a junior faculty member experienced stress as resources for research and teaching load did not match the new reward system and institutional aspirations. In this same case, a senior faculty member who had spent years building academic programs was discouraged and saw no hope for promotion as the new research

emphasis left his work behind (Dubrow et al., 2006). Indeed, much research on faculty reward systems suggests that they will be impacted by a striving culture. As the reward system of a liberal arts college transitions to become more like those of the most prestigious research universities and ivy league colleges, they may also take on some of the observed characteristics of those environments such as being less friendly to balancing work and family (Ward & Wolf Wendel, 2003; Wolf Wendel & Ward, 2005), less supportive of women and minority advancement, and more likely to have tenure/promotion failures and retention problems (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996).

Finally, in addition to being members of disciplines that look outward for norms and standards, faculty are members of an institutional organizational culture. As members of these organizational cultures, faculty are influenced by the values they perceive the organization to hold, look to stories of institutional saga for meaning and direction, and in times of unpredictability create symbols or narratives to provide direction and explain their environment (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Birnbaum, 2000; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Schein, 1985). Likewise, change is not something all organizational members cherish, and dissatisfaction has been found in environments where members are asked to change their direction based on executive level decisions or aspirations, that faculty do not perceive as their own or for which they do not feel supported (Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Gumpert, 1993; Henderson & Kane, 1991; Morphey, 2002; Wolf Wendel & Ward, 2005).

Nowhere are these tensions more pronounced than in “striving” liberal arts colleges where local expectations for excellence in teaching/advising and limited resources for research conflict with institutional aspirations for greater prestige. When faculty further take on additional roles associated with community engagement or other activities that may not support the pursuit of prestige, faculty are likely to perceive role conflict (Bloomgarden & O’Meara, 2007). The following overall research question and sub-questions guided this study: How do faculty experience an institutional culture that is striving? What do faculty experience as the origins of their institutions’ striving? From their vantage point, where is striving coming from? How do faculty think striving is influencing institutional climate, direction, and behavior? How do faculty perceive striving is influencing their own, and their colleagues’ work-life and

behavior? How do faculty perceive striving to influence their reward system?

Methodology

We employed a single, descriptive, critical case study design. According to Merriam (2001) a descriptive case study provides a “detailed account of the phenomenon under study” (p. 38). They are most useful where little research has been conducted and “often form the database for future comparison and theory building” (p. 38). The case is considered a unique or “critical case” (Yin, 1994, p. 39-40) because it is one of a small group of elite and prestigious liberal arts colleges engaged in the pursuit of prestige while also committing as an institution to be engaged with the community through teaching, research, and community development. This means that faculty are under competing pressures for performance in multiple areas, and as such were more likely to have engaged in meaning making regarding the context within which they work. Very little research has explored faculty experience of striving institutional environments, especially in prestigious liberal arts colleges. Therefore, descriptive, critical case study design was chosen to provide a rich account of faculty experience in this distinct setting, allowing for future research to build on these findings. The name of the institution has been changed to fictitious “Whayne College” and participant names and specific fields of expertise have been additionally masked to ensure anonymity.

The liberal arts college chosen for this study self-identified as striving. That is, institutional leaders, and faculty with whom we spoke identified the institution as currently striving to move from being a top liberal arts college in their region to becoming one of the top liberal arts colleges nationally, able to compete with the likes of Amherst, Williams, and Swarthmore in *U.S. News and World Report*. In addition, this institution had all of the indicators noted by researchers of academic drift and striving (O'Meara, 2007; Morphew & Huisman, 2002; O'Meara, in press; Shaw, 2005; Sweitzer & Volkwein, 2005; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2005). For example, over the previous 5 years the institution had been moving toward an increasingly more selective study body in terms of entering GPA and SAT, had made improvements in *U.S. News and World Report* rankings and published rankings on their website, and had made successful attempts to hire more research-oriented faculty. There

had been discussions about decreasing faculty course-load and faculty reported increasing research expectations for promotion and tenure.

Two sources of data were collected within the single case study, interviews and some limited document analysis. Interviewing within the boundaries of a selected case study is an ideal vehicle to examine faculty perceptions of their work environment: “by concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the research aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon...particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from their context” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). Likewise, Massy and Zemsky (1994) observed that in their cases the concept of academic ratcheting was embedded in the vernacular of faculty cultures and we wanted to ascertain whether discussions about striving had similarly been saturated into the vernacular of faculty culture at Wayne.

We, the authors, conducted the interviews and they ranged from 40-70 minutes each. As is common in qualitative research, nonprobability or purposeful (Patton, 1980) sampling was used in this study to select participants. Merriam (2001) observes that in qualitative case studies, a set of criteria needs to be established before the research begins to guide the process of sampling interview participants. In our study we wanted to reach faculty who were predominantly mid-career or outside the tenure process to alleviate faculty concerns about criticizing their institution during pre-tenure years, despite our promise of confidentiality. In addition, we wanted to interview faculty who had been involved in the institution-wide community engagement activities (a) because we had another research project focusing on engagement related activities in a prestige-oriented environment and (b) because faculty engaged in these activities might be more aware of the ways in which striving was affecting their work, given community engagement was an institutional priority but largely unrelated to the pursuit of prestige.

Wayne administrators provided us with lists of interview candidates including a) the names of all faculty tenured since 1994 when the College began extensive community partnership initiatives, and b) the names of all faculty members who had developed a community-based course development or research project. Faculty responded to email and phone invitations to participate in interviews. All faculty interviewed

participated in a community-based teaching, research, or service project during the last decade; most continue community involvement.

Of 29 participants, 17 (59%) were women, 12 (41%) were men; 10 were in the Humanities, 8 in the Social Sciences, and 11 in the Sciences; 8 were lecturers, 3 were assistant professors, 17 associate professors, and 1 was a full professor. Six were faculty of color, 23 were Caucasian. Among the faculty of color, 3 were Latino/a, 1 African American, and 2 Asian American. The interviews were semi-structured (Merriam, 2001) and focused (Yin, 2003). That is to say that we followed a certain set of questions on an interview protocol drafted from the research questions. However, we encouraged participants to expand and extend their answers in areas they mentioned, that were not directly on our protocol, but they believed were relevant to our understanding of faculty work-life in this striving institutional environment.

In some of the interviews, participants shared vita, publications, description of classes or projects and if they did, these were included in the case report. All interviews and documents examined were transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparative method of data analysis, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Through this method, researchers constantly compare incidents from interviews and other data, which lead to tentative categories that are then compared to other categories to create themes (Merriam, 2001). We read through all interviews and any documentation provided by participants several times separately, making notes to ourselves along the way about categories we saw emerging. We each individually coded the transcripts and other documentation using words and phrases that depicted a common theme related to participants views of their work environment (Merriam, 2001). We then met together and compared themes and refined the language we used to describe them, trying to create theme statements that (a) reflected the research questions (b) were exhaustive in holding all of the data available (c) were mutually exclusive, even if related to other themes, (d) sensitive to what the participants actually said, if possible using direct quotes, and (e) were conceptually congruent. These categories led to the findings depicted in the next section.

In our data collection and analysis we utilized several strategies to ensure trustworthiness (Merriam, 2001; Yin, 2003). Internal validity was enhanced through triangulation, and clarification of researcher biases.

Reliability was established through triangulation and audit trail. External validity was enhanced through rich, thick description. A description of each of these strategies and how we used it follows.

Triangulation was accomplished through both authors collecting data separately, sharing transcripts and interview notes, and then conferring about emergent themes. Likewise, theory triangulation occurred as we relied on multiple perspectives from studies of organizational culture, faculty motivation and behavior, and liberal arts colleges. This process allowed us to examine the data and themes from three different perspectives on participant statements and language. Despite familiarity with Wayne College, neither author knew any of the participants, had previous or current collaborative relationships, or had other inside knowledge of the institution's practices or culture prior to this study. Our very different institutional experiences (one of us is employed at a private liberal arts college, the other at a public research university) enabled us to carefully critique and test interview questions and protocols prior to the research, and to look at the data with the particular aim of considering what presumptions about local values and culture we might each bring to the project. We thus aimed as best we could to enable our participants to define in their own terms the language and values locally assigned to teaching, to research scholarship, and to community projects especially as they related to teaching and research roles and expectations. We kept the analysis close to the data by providing quotes of participant's own accounts of their striving environment. An audit trail was maintained by keeping detailed records of all interviews, transcripts, and analysis throughout the project.

In case study research as in other interpretative research, "the search is not for abstract universals arrived at by statistical generalizations from a sample to a population" (Merriam, 2001, p. 130) but for concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case in great detail. Merriam (2001) points out that while generalization as traditionally defined is not the goal of case study research, generalizability as concrete universals can be enhanced through rich, thick description, wherein enough description is provided so that "readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation and hence, whether findings can be transferred (p. 211)." Thus efforts were made through rich description to make the context specific enough as to be recognizable and relevant to other settings.

There are several limitations to this research. First, we only interviewed faculty, and not administrators or students at the institution. There are other campus actors who interact with groups of faculty who may have observed how striving seemed to be influencing faculty behavior (e.g. faculty interacting with students less out-of-class; fewer cases for tenure emphasizing teaching or service) from a birds-eye view and were not consulted. This limitation constrains our conclusions to applying first and foremost to faculty perceptions of their own immediate worlds, which while important and revealing, are limited in perspective.

A second limitation is the emphasis on post-tenure and associate rank faculty in the sample. While it would have been advantageous to interview more pre-tenure faculty, given the predicted impact of striving on pre-tenure anxiety and behavior, we did not try to increase the number of pre-tenure faculty outside of those who volunteered for interviews, rather we interviewed faculty who were recently post-tenure. We felt there were political and ethical issues involved in urging pre-tenure faculty to discuss institutional direction and aspects of faculty work-life while they still felt vulnerable employment wise. This limitation meant an over-sampling of faculty who felt safe in discussing institutional flaws. Further research might be conducted to determine how striving influences the tenure-track experience from those currently on the tenure track.

Finally, the data reported here are only one part of a larger study conducted with this same group of faculty. Other aspects of the project examined faculty integration of teaching, engagement, and research, and faculty involvement in community based outreach and teaching (Bloomgarden & O'Meara, 2007). Because of the larger project that funded this research, the participant group is weighted somewhat in favor of faculty members who were involved in community-based teaching and outreach. It is possible that faculty involved in engagement may have views about striving factors that are distinct from other faculty, however several factors mitigate this limitation. The sample includes faculty from across all divisions of the institution, many of the faculty were only involved in a very limited way with engagement (one course within the last 3 years), and because the entire institution had made a commitment to engagement, the faculty interviewed for this study were not "lone engaged faculty," but rather identified first as faculty in their disciplines at an elite private liberal arts college, and only secondarily as having

been involved in engagement in their somewhat recent past. While we feel the sample was representative of faculty perceptions of the striving environment, nonetheless we note these limitations to improve on them in further research.

Findings

Wayne College and the Striving Liberal Arts College Context

Wayne College is a small predominantly undergraduate liberal arts college in an urban setting in an urban setting. Wayne counts itself among a group of institutions that is both selective in its admissions and its efforts to recruit faculty. Significant executive administrative turnover in the last 5-10 years has helped to foster both ongoing uncertainty and dialogue about institutional priorities. Like its peers, Wayne emphasizes both a student-centered teaching and learning environment, a small student to faculty ratio, and scholarly productivity by its faculty. Faculty teaching load is 5 courses per year and most faculty are actively engaged in teaching and research. Recent faculty hiring has increasingly stressed research potential, an emphasis assisted by the competitive job market. Since the mid-1990s, the institution has made high profile commitments to service-learning and civic engagement.

Major Findings

The findings are presented in order of research question. The first sub-section presents data on faculty beliefs regarding the origins of striving at Wayne. The second sub-section presents faculty beliefs about the influences of striving on institutional identity and behavior. The third sub-section includes faculty beliefs regarding the impact of striving on faculty work-life including faculty satisfaction, and careers. The fourth sub-section describes faculty beliefs about the impact of striving on their reward system. The heading of each sub-section is paraphrased from faculty interview data, so that the findings are reflected in faculty members' own words.

A Real Sea Change. All of the faculty interviewed believed that their institution was in the middle of significant change and had been for awhile. This change was described as an institutional desire to acquire greater prestige and resources associated with more elite institutions. Three themes emerged among faculty beliefs regarding the origins of striving at Wayne. The first theme was that faculty saw it as a natural

progression and “evolution” from the institutions’ beginnings as a “teaching college” to a more “elite liberal arts college.” Faculty often repeated the words “from” and “to,” as they described their institution, what had been happening and where they thought it was going. They each told us a “story” of the college, and the story was one of upward mobility within the higher education system.

The second, related theme was that faculty believed “a sea of new faces,” or influx of scholarly faculty hires over the previous 5-10 years had caused the institution to increase its expectations for greater standing and prestige. Likewise, some faculty attributed the shift in their institutional culture to the aspirations of a past president or academic dean. Only a very few, younger faculty identified themselves as being part of that new influx of recent hires, despite the fact that a majority of the associate professors would be considered in that category. Rather the majority of faculty pointed to other faculty or administrators as the cause of institutional striving. The following faculty quote illustrates both the first and second theme:

The composition of the faculty has changed over time. There was a long time when Wayne was clearly a teaching institution, and they didn't have these kinds of expectations that people were doing cutting edge scholarship. That's changed a lot—the people who they are attracting are people who are scholarly—are engaged in scholarship in a really active way. They want to know that there's really support for it, there's value for it and so that's creating some tension in defining how those things are weighted at the college. I think that process started before I got here and is continuing.

Another faculty member discussed the time when he was working toward tenure and said, “There was a real sea change in what Wayne was hiring, what its expectations were. The culture was evolving—people weren't quite sure where it was going.” Another faculty member explained: “Because of the academic job market of the 1990s we could afford to hire people we never could have hired before.” A similar explanation of Wayne (past, present, future) was repeated in the majority of faculty interviews.

The third theme emerging from faculty interviews was that the institution was striving in part because the faculty wanted to be doing more

research, to be more like their colleagues at research universities. It is well known that most liberal arts college faculty attended large research universities for their graduate degrees and the socialization that they received there obviously stays with them, especially in early career. As one early-career scholar noted:

Many of my references are not in colleges, but in universities, you know my network, it's very disciplinarily bound. My references are (names all big research universities). I am a product of a big university too.

The "I... am too" aspect of this comment is telling. It was clear from their comments that Wayne faculty very much valued teaching and many had chosen the liberal arts college environment because of its teaching emphasis. But it was also evident from faculty comments that faculty struggled themselves with balancing the values they had adopted from research universities and their institution's emphasis on teaching. Many faculty very much wanted to be doing more research and for the institution to be better known as having "star" researchers. From the faculty perspective this was a less overt, but nonetheless important explanation for striving.

Institutional Identity Crisis. Faculty reported that as a result of striving for greater prestige in the academic hierarchy, their institution was experiencing an "identity crisis," a crisis of purpose. The words and phrases, "crisis," "transition," "crossroads," "in flux," "in a holding pattern," "conflicted," and "waiting" were used repeatedly by participants to describe a situation where faculty felt the institution was torn between going after greater prestige and staying rooted in their commitment to teaching and service. This identity crisis played out practically in the reward system as will be discussed in a subsequent section, in hiring practices, and in arguments over teaching load. But it also seemed to be floating over all major decisions faculty discussed, both for their own work and for the general direction of the college. One faculty member described the conflict the institution was experiencing most eloquently:

[This] balancing act is endemic to small liberal arts institutions. Partly because they have these identity crises. They want to be known for having really strong teaching and close interaction with

students. But they also want to compete with research universities. So they're trying to figure out, well, how do you do that and still retain your identity. There may be other institutions that don't have any aspirations to being these sort of research environments or competing. But there's a group of schools that want to market themselves as, 'we do all things that research institutions do, BUT, we promise you this intimate environment where you'll have access to your professors, and you'll work with them.'

This faculty member clearly saw Wayne in the latter category. Wayne College, as embodied in its faculty and the administrators marketing it, wanted both identities. They wanted the college to represent excellence in research and teaching, even when those goals conflicted.

Many faculty believed that once their new president was there awhile, some of the crisis would subside. One faculty member said, "Right now the institution is in flux. We have a new president. Everything we do is under a microscope, to be evaluated." Faculty said there was a lot of "disagreement" over emphasis on teaching and research at the crux of the crisis. Faculty almost always noted the source of the problem with striving behavior and mission drift to be with others outside of themselves and their department, rarely noting even department chairs as conspirators. As one faculty member observed: "Well we have great hopes for our new president, maybe he'll change all of this." In addition to the president, faculty looked to the academic dean to lead them out of this fog and into a more clear and consistent identity and direction.

Closely related to the sense of a Wayne identity crisis was a common sense that faculty and administrators were often comparison shopping. All of the Wayne faculty interviewed in this study were highly aware of Wayne's peers/competitors. Faculty were eager to compare their department or institution's resources and deficits to those of colleagues at more prestigious institutions. For example, all of the faculty interviewed discussed specific institutional peers. For the most part, they all listed the same list of institutions, many of which were much more aspirational than actual peers in terms of *U.S. News and World* ratings and other such comparisons. They all mentioned the oldest, most elite, well-known and well-endowed liberal arts colleges in the country. The list of names was often preceded with, "I always hear...", or, "we always say," suggesting that the conversation about rankings and comparisons to other liberal arts

colleges was an ever-present topic of conversation in meetings and hallway discussions. For example, two faculty members said:

The typical people we want to emulate are Amherst, Vassar, Williams, Swarthmore...I think part of the problem is that Wayne is always spending its time comparing itself to somebody else. The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. I think that's ultimately very bad for Wayne. We've developed a mindset of being second best. And I think if we just stopped comparing ourselves to others and just focused on doing what we do well as best as we can I think we'd be a lot better off. Certainly when [administrator] was here our standing in the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings [was very important]. I think our director of public relations would have gladly shot off one toe on each foot for every point she (administrator) could have moved us up in those rankings. Certainly in that period...we were incredibly image conscious.

Our rankings and our self-perception don't always match. I perceive Wayne in the second tier of top liberal arts colleges—if we did some things differently, we could be Swarthmore or Amherst. But we're not able to break into that top group—that's probably generally felt among the faculty and the students. There are some who recognize a lot of that is money and prestige and traditional perceptions of the institution. For the best students that's the most painful.

It was clear to us that Wayne faculty were proud of their institution. Yet the striving culture seemed to distract them from that pride and replace it with a sense of how the institution was second best in this or that area. The striving culture seemed to pull faculty away from talking about what was distinctive about their institution, and into “comparison conversations” where Wayne was not considered the equal of “better institutions.”

The comparisons made were not always at the institution level. While faculty were less likely to admit that they themselves were comparison-conscious, it was clear that most of them thought often about how their career compared to faculty in more prestigious institutions, with one faculty member who identified very strongly as a researcher making these comparisons most consciously:

I think I know what I want. I want to be a researcher. I want to be a teacher but I want to be a researcher. My friends work in these universities and I don't want to be any less than them. But then, I always see that if I don't want to fall behind, I have to work a lot more than them.

This quote illustrates the affinity many Wayne faculty felt with research university faculty as well as the tendency to use research university careers as benchmarks for their own performance. In liberal arts institutions part of this comparison is related to not having disciplinary peers in one's department as the small institutional size means faculty are often the only person in their specific field. This was most often the case at Wayne. However, the comparison also seemed to be a strategic positioning, consistent with institutional aspirations. Another faculty member made the comparisons personal by comparing her and her husband's career to a close friend:

They [research university faculty] teach 3 courses a year, they get sabbaticals every third or fourth year, a full year, there's no comparison. When we are applying for these national grants, we're at a huge disadvantage, it's very difficult for us to compete with that. I've seen this—my husband is on sabbatical next year, and he applied for some of these national grants and he didn't get them but you know you're competing with people who've been at Princeton. We have a good friend at Princeton—you know, people like that, over the years, because they have more time off, and they have more money, they don't have these problems, they don't have this huge teaching load, they've been able to do more. So whereas my husband has one major book, our friend at Princeton has three. The accumulation of the result of the difference in the reality of your life as a scholar over 25 years, so there's a huge difference.

As this quote illustrates, one thing that was often compared were resources. Faculty were acutely aware of how their own programs compared to these other institutions, giving specific details, along with their own desire to make their programs more like these more elite and often older liberal arts institutions. Faculty compared Wayne's facilities, resources, and endowments to their aspirational peers with constant remarks about where their programs or institutions were deficient in some way or where they were equal to these aspirational

peers. For example, one faculty member said, “as a college, our endowment is our challenge—we want what Amherst and Williams are offering students.” Whereas another faculty member said their facilities were terrible, especially in her discipline in relationship to other institutions.

A few faculty framed these deficits as problems for students, but most faculty related what was missing to consequences for their own research and careers. For example, one faculty member compared Wayne to Amherst and Smith Colleges and said: “Those schools have a clearer reward system for faculty in terms of course buy-outs. Wayne is behind her sister schools in trying to promote research and community initiatives because we don’t do that.” Absent from the conversations were any recognition that Wayne was privileged in the resources it had in comparison to lower-tier institutions, or how far the institution had come in terms of quality in most of the areas mentioned. Rather, faculty dissatisfaction with existing resources was more the norm in making comparisons. However, at least one faculty member felt there were benefits of the constant comparisons for innovation at the institution. She said:

I think that Wayne has a horrific inferiority complex. Given that inferiority complex, there’s a lot of tension around identity. I think if people would only say: “we’re good” and accept that, I think we would be able to get on with all this. But when you’re so busy saying, “my God, we have to compare ourselves to Amherst and Williams,” and yet, we’re never going to be them. We are who we are. It’s a kind of interesting tension, you get the defensiveness. You know when somebody is insecure, and they become defensive and then they become arrogant? You have both of those tensions going on. But I think the great irony is that Wayne, because of its lack of identity, has allowed a lot of flowers to bloom....

This quote illustrates the dynamic tension in the environment between a pride over the distinct, “flowers that have bloomed” and a quest for a stronger prestigious identity. This same tension manifested itself in how faculty spoke about their academic programs and students.

Many faculty mentioned an interest in improving the academic quality of the student body, the courses students took, and the overall rigor of the

academic programs. This issue was almost always raised in the context of the institution's quest to improve in national rankings of liberal arts colleges. For example one faculty member said:

I think that Whayne is really a fabulous teaching school... I think what we're working on is getting a more serious student body. The top echelon of liberal arts colleges have a reputation that if you go there you're going to have to work really hard. I would say that Amherst is like that, I think that's what we are striving for- to get Whayne to a place where if you're going to come here, it's going to be academically rigorous-that's what we need to work on.

Several faculty said that there was "a lot of talk about becoming more academically rigorous." Several compared the quality of their students to those in other programs, sometimes suggesting that students majoring in their programs were of "ivy-league" quality but students in other programs were not. All of the faculty wanted very much to "attract a high caliber student" to their programs and improve on this in future years.

In summary, faculty experienced their institution as in the middle of an identity crisis which influenced how decisions were made and contributed to constant comparison of faculty, resources, and students among members of the community. Likewise, faculty felt the identity crisis influenced how some decisions were made. In the next section faculty discuss the consequences of this identity crisis and striving behavior for their own work-life.

Defining and Redefining "Real Work". Faculty expressed frustration with the consequences of this identity crisis for their own work-life. For example, a faculty member expressed frustration that this back and forth between teaching and research emphasis had real implications for his work and teaching load:

So the three course semesters, there was very little I could work. That was the main contradiction this college has to come to terms with—if they want to excel as a research institution, and they claim they want to be a research institution—they may have to accept that maybe we don't have to teach 5 courses, maybe 4 makes a lot more sense. Either you abandon this aspiration or you change the course load.

A key observation to make in this comment, which was made by many other faculty, is the definition of “real work” that seems to have been framed by the striving culture. This faculty member was doing significant teaching and service during a three course-load semester, he simply was not doing as much research as he would have liked (and/or he perceived his institution expected). Within this faculty member’s experience of the striving culture was a notion that research was the more important, “real work,” he needed to be doing. Thus the striving culture framed the way the faculty member saw and valued different aspects of his job. In his case, it caused discontent with the distribution of his time and talent between teaching and research.

A second theme related to work-life and striving was faculty feeling fragmented or pulled in many different directions. For example, one faculty member expressed frustration with the identity crisis because she felt it created a lot of new initiatives that she was supposed to become involved in, but each became like a revolving door, without moving the college in a singular direction:

Yeah, I kind of hated Wayne because there was always new stuff happening all of the time. I felt like there were a lot of bandwagons you had to jump on. It made me feel spilt in many pieces, and I obviously like integration. We are all trying to jump on as many bandwagons as we can, there were all these people trying to reinvent Wayne all the time.

Implicit in this critique was the idea that the faculty member felt she had to figure out how she fit into each “reinvention” of Wayne, an effort that felt exhausting. Also implicit in her language of “jumping on bandwagons” is the idea that there were several spirited agendas moving quickly, but often in different directions.

In considering the perceived impact of striving on faculty work-life it is also relevant to consider any benefits faculty may have observed. Similar to the psychological tests that suggest that standing next to someone more attractive improves others perceptions of your appearance, there was a vague sense among faculty interviewed that having recruited “faculty stars,” brought more prestige to faculty already in departments through extended networks and improved departmental rankings. Though this was not explicitly emphasized by faculty in their interviews, hiring

faculty stars also seemed likely to improve faculty salaries, and the more faculty focused on research, the more likely it was faculty discretionary time would increase. Wayne faculty were discussing decreasing teaching load further (note: administrators were not interviewed). The greater emphasis on improving the quality of students would reflect positively on the faculty. However, Wayne faculty seemed reluctant to overtly state the personal benefits of institutional striving to their own careers—even if there was a general consensus that there were benefits associated with “institutional improvement.” But faculty did describe a work-life that had become more fragmented, competitive and individualistic than might be expected in a collegial liberal arts environment. For example, faculty talked about the institution, “falling or lagging behind,” “breaking into” or “desperately trying to get into” the top groups, and the institution trying to “position itself” as a top 25 liberal arts college.

There was a sense of struggle associated with this positioning, as faculty often referred to this as an uphill battle. For example, one faculty member said, “we are desperately working towards building Wayne as the finest liberal arts college but we are far from it. If we are not going to seriously invest in human capital, it is empty talk.” Another said, “Wayne is trying hard to maintain and improve its image as a top flight liberal arts school in a difficult environment.” And a third said, “we are desperately trying to be one of the top *U.S. News and World Report* liberal arts schools, and anyone who says otherwise is lying.” There was a sense that time was the enemy and that Wayne College was somewhat of an underdog, trying hard to compete with giants. The climate depicted by these phrases from a discourse perspective is individualistic, naming victors, champions, and causalities. In addition, it seemed to only increase the stakes of achievement for many of the faculty we met who were already overachievers, as illustrated by one faculty comment: “I don’t know that I’m typical in that regard. During the academic year I’m generally in the office at 7:30 and don’t go home until about 10pm.” These faculty had very high expectations for themselves, for the quality of their teaching and the quantity and quality of their research, several mentioning their ambitious research agendas. As such, institutional striving seemed to only increase what they felt was expected of them, and what they expected of themselves.

Mixed Messages. Faculty who had been at Wayne through their pre-tenure years and longer observed that as the institution increased its striving behavior over the previous five years there were more and more mixed messages and uncertainty regarding faculty evaluation. The research standards seemed to increase each year (from faculty member's perspective) and faculty were discouraged from applying for full professor unless their research and grant-funding was outstanding. For example, faculty were concerned that it wasn't clear whether teaching and service would count with the increased emphasis on research. One faculty member said:

I was encouraged in one of my pre-tenure reviews to cut back on my service activities. I found that I constantly got mixed messages as far as what was important. For getting tenure, research is overwhelmingly the most important factor, as long as you're a decent teacher here. The pendulum tends to swing back and forth and I think the pendulum has swung too far to the research side these days, at an undergraduate school.

Another way faculty expressed increased uncertainty was to say that there had been a lot of debate about what should and should not count for promotion and tenure with different players—department chair, dean, president and personnel committee members, suggesting different things. Three faculty members said:

I remember getting back the letter from the reappointment committee at my first reappointment, which was positive, but it had these vaguely worded caveats. Which we actually went to the Dean to talk about, just because it was like, what is the committee trying to say. It's a little bit like reading tea leaves. ...

There were multiple points and messages—the dean would say one thing, the president something else. That is, having 5 or 6 separate bosses, and this was the problem. There were definitely mixed messages going into my fourth year review about what was necessary for reappointment on all fronts.

Emphasis on teaching or research swings back and forth depending on whom you speak with. The new dean hasn't articulated his

priority yet. There is a new president coming in who's an academic. Don't quite know what his take is going to be on these things.

It is important to state that many of the complaints mentioned above could be found in any department culture based on the innate complex nature of the promotion and tenure process. However, faculty felt the striving environment was a major reason that expectations were increasing each year and that the pendulum was swinging back and forth on teaching and research expectations.

Another consequence of where the pendulum had landed at Wayne was its impact on faculty career progression. One faculty member explained: "Certainly there have been some casualties along the road—the rules changed for promotion, which left a lot of people stranded at Associate rank, which was real unfortunate."

Several faculty talked about "ramping up standards" and how this caused Wayne to "lose good people." One faculty member said:

A guy I knew and really respected—someone who helped me with [course name] elected to retire and one of the motivating factors was that he was an associate professor and was going to remain an associate professor because they changed the rules on him, requiring more research. It struck me as silly, here was a guy who is one of the best teachers we had, beloved by his students, who knew everything there was to know about his field, he was completely up to date. I think he should have been promoted—he was everything we wanted—so what he didn't publish papers! We're a teaching institution—it's important that we value research, but it cannot be the be-all and end-all of our existence, because we're not a research institution.

While both the participant and his colleagues are speaking of perceptions that they held that the rules had changed for promotion to full professor and would not honor excellent teaching, these perceptions were nonetheless having a real impact on faculty decisions and the way faculty felt they needed to direct their effort.

The next section discusses the findings in order of research sub-question, relates findings back to extant literature on faculty work-life and striving

environments, and outlines implications for academic leadership and for future research.

Discussion

Wayne college is an elite liberal arts college, one that might be characterized as a “high-high” institution by Astin and Chang (1995), supporting high expectations about student-centered teaching and learning and for scholarly productivity by faculty. In addition, it is an institution whose leadership and a significant number of faculty, have made a commitment to community engagement. Thus, before the institution began its striving behavior it was already a selective college, both for students and faculty, and had high expectations for both. However, it was also distinctive, in that the institution had made specific commitments to teaching and service through a unique liberal arts program, and through local community engagement projects. It is within this unique context that the impact of institutional striving was explored from a faculty perspective.

The first set of findings relates to how faculty understood the origins of striving at Wayne. Consistently, faculty participants told us the same story about how their institution had evolved from a teaching college to an elite liberal arts institution, how new faces and aspirations had changed the college. While it is interesting how each of the faculty members explained the origins of the shift, the most important finding here is that a clear narrative had developed in the institutional consciousness, at least as expressed through the faculty. Participants used this narrative as a lens through which they viewed their work-life, the reward system, and institutional decisions. Postman (1995) observes that narratives offer organizational members a compelling way to make sense of what is happening; yet, narratives are often contested and are constantly evolving. Birnbaum (2000) observes, “the social construction of narratives is part of an interpretive process through which contending ideologies vie for supremacy” (p. 226). At the time this study was conducted, the most compelling story at Wayne concerning institutional direction was one of upward lift and of being able to compete with the very best liberal arts colleges (and some research universities) the faculty could imagine. Likewise, Weick (1995) notes that when there is a significant amount of environmental uncertainty, like that created by constant turnover of administrative leadership, sense-making increases.

In these cases actors engage in sense-making to “structure the unknown” (Waterman, 1990, p. 41), and develop, “cognitive maps of their environment” (Ring & Rands, 1989, p. 342). The faculty narrative of Whyne’s upward mobility, aspirations, and its origins with the “new star faculty” seemed to be serving that purpose. These findings are consistent with those of Massy and Zemsky (1994) that in striving environments, the language and ideology of striving can be found in faculty vernacular.

A second key finding was that faculty experienced striving as contributing to an institutional identity crisis that had mostly negative, but some positive consequences. A positive result was that in the words of one faculty member the “inferiority complex” caused by the identity crisis and striving behavior allowed many “flowers to bloom”. In other words, this institutional context somehow acted as fertilizer for the initiation of some innovative programs to further differentiate their institution from their competitors. On the other hand, faculty felt striving contributed to a mindset of comparison and of being second best. Indeed we found many comparisons made by faculty of the resources between their institution and aspirational peers. One such comparison related to student quality. Student quality has been found to be a significant factor in faculty job satisfaction (Hagedorn, 2000). Striving context seemed to cast a glow over how faculty viewed the caliber of their students, their lab space, sabbatical time and related aspects of their institutions and work-life. Interestingly, faculty were most likely to blame administrators or turnover of executive leadership for the negative aspects of striving for institutional identity and direction and likewise looked to future leaders to create unity in direction. Yet Massy and Zemsky (1994) point out that two of the main carrots for faculty work—membership and tenure, reside within departments as they are the main places where decisions regarding course release, and resource allocation are made. Yet faculty attributed both the problem of striving and the solutions as much to administrators as to themselves or to their own colleagues.

The third set of findings relates to faculty work-life in a striving context. While faculty occasionally acknowledged benefits of institutional striving, and no doubt many were interested in seeing their college gain greater prestige, they shared with us more negatives. Faculty in this study felt striving influenced what was considered real work, omitting teaching and service from this new definition. Yet, faculty also reported

institutional striving had made it difficult to prioritize and commit to different parts of their work because of conflicting messages from leaders about what was most important. Likewise, they reported feeling as if their work-life was set in the context of an uphill battle, a quest that pushed them and pushed them without a clear end in sight or clear harvest of benefits for their effort. These findings are consistent with recent research that shows that striving often occurs on the backs of their faculty (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2005) who are both the recipients and sponsors of aspirations for greater prestige. While not a focus of this study, research suggests such environments are less friendly to balancing work and family among women (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2005). Striving environments have been found less likely to acknowledge and reward a broader definition of scholarship in promotion and tenure (O'Meara, 2005) and are more likely to be competitive and individualistic in their orientations toward faculty work-life and careers (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996).

In considering the fourth set of findings related to the impact of striving on the reward system at Wayne, it is important to first offer the caveat that research on early career and the promotion and tenure process has well-documented the ambiguity of this experience for all faculty in all institutional types (O'Meara, 2002; Rice, Sorcinelli & Austin, 2000; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996;). However, the findings from this study suggest that faculty in the striving liberal arts college may have an enhanced or heightened experience with ambiguity about expectations regarding scholarly achievement and about achieving a balance between roles. This was also paired for some with a sort of disillusionment that their careers would be negatively influenced by a lack of time and emphasis within the reward system on research consistent with graduate school peers at research universities. These faculty were hired in a way that was consistent with research aspirations rather than actual resources or mission emphasis, consistent with Finnegan & Gamson's (1996) research, and then disappointed that those aspirations were not being realized. Whereas on the other side of the continuum, faculty in this study reported career "casualties on the road," or faculty disillusioned with how the reward system had tipped toward research while they were focused on what they thought was the primary teaching mission. Again the findings here are consistent with Wolf-Wendel and Ward's (2005) finding that, "the upward mobility the campus desires is often at the expense of faculty and in particular those on the tenure track," (p. 8)

whether it be at the pre-tenure or associate professor stage. However, it is an interesting dilemma because faculty themselves are most often the major decision-makers in promotion and tenure cases. Finnegan and Gamson (1996) point out that “when institutional mission is not used to define the criteria and standards within faculty personnel policies, faculty are encouraged to apply the professional standards by which they were socialized, that is the culture of research (p. 172).” Likewise, research suggests that values held by faculty on personnel committees such as, “the best scholarship brings the most prestige to our positions,” “climbing the academic ladder is who we are,” and “we want our institution to be like other institutions” influences faculty reward systems and the assessment of faculty work (O’Meara, 2002, p. 67). Thus while Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2005) observe that achieving greater prestige is often a burden for tenure-track faculty some responsibility may lie with faculty themselves, and their own mid-career and senior colleagues as sustaining the very standards they may be critiquing.

Implications for Practice and Research

One implication of these findings relates to how striving is framed for faculty and others. It is easy for institutional members to get caught up in the zeitgeist of striving and moving toward greater external prestige that things that have historically been distinctive about an institution are devalued, things such as a unique general education program, service-learning or study abroad programs, or other such aspects of the culture.

Wayne College is an elite liberal arts college with a strong reputation for the quality of their curriculum and teaching. Likewise, the institution has become well-known for its attention to first year students and for community engagement. Both the institution and its faculty are distinctive and have much to be proud of. Yet in this study we found a very conflicted faculty, making comparisons and more aware of the deficits than the assets of their environment. It was as if the striving culture acted as a pair of glasses with which to view their students, colleagues, resources, and careers. These new eyes framed what they considered “real work,” a reasonable teaching load, good students, and adequate resources. These were not necessarily “new glasses” as they reflected research priorities and ways of being a scholar faculty learned in graduate school; however, they were not a “frame” consistent with Wayne’s teaching and service missions. Casting it another way, it was

as if the institution's aspirations had cast a spell of discontent among the faculty, decreasing their satisfaction with their own productivity and the ways in which their institution was supporting it. This spell left faculty frustrated and feeling as if they were in a "less-than" culture, despite knowing innately that there was much to be proud of. Research is needed to understand the leadership strategies and skills required to effectively move department cultures and institutions through striving periods in ways that hold onto distinctive aspects of units while reaching for externally rated brass rings. Academic leaders need to consider how to strive (if that is indeed what they want to do) in ways that do not breed discontent and engender fragmented work-lives, perhaps by challenging the narratives, and "mental models" (Senge, 1990) that faculty are operating under as the institution pursues prestige.

In addition, further research is needed to understand striving behavior and its consequences across liberal arts colleges and other institutional types. This study looked specifically at the faculty experience of a striving environment but similar studies need to be done to understand the impact of striving on students, administrators and the overall missions of institutions. For example, institutions with faculty that emphasize research have been shown to be weaker in student orientation (Astin, 1993; Astin & Chang, 1995; Wawrzynski, 2004). Wawrzynski (2004) found institutions with faculty spending more time on research have a lower percentage of seniors reporting student-faculty interactions and students involved in active-learning. Longitudinal studies are needed to track student satisfaction, engagement and learning throughout self-identified striving periods to see whether there is change.

Likewise, Clara Lovett (2005) warned that the "quest by institutions for places at the top of higher education's prestige pyramid" keeps higher education from meeting external demands for better outcomes for students at lower costs, and increased access for students of all backgrounds (B20). She warned that striving institutions lose their "ability to serve as agents of social and economic mobility" (p. B20). Many would argue this was never Wayne's primary purpose or goal, as they have always served a more privileged student. Nonetheless, it is clear faculty at Wayne, and institutions like them need to consider what they are moving away from as they strive to climb the academic ladder.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that faculty themselves play a significant role in striving environments. Faculty make choices in how to respond to institutional reward systems, and administrators or colleagues who encourage them to forego some activities in service to others that will bring the institution more prestige. Additional research is needed to understand what happens when faculty use their agency to actively resist the values and priorities of striving environments, and to understand how striving environments influence shared governance and work/family balance. Likewise, given that women and faculty of color report affinity with teaching and outreach roles (O'Meara, Terosky, & Newman, 2008) likely to be further deemphasized in a striving environment, research needs to explore whether they fair better or worse than majority faculty in striving institutions. Such research has professional development implications across career stages, as striving presents different challenges at all ranks and appointment types. By better understanding the impact of striving on faculty work-life, academic leaders and those charged with shaping professional development might find ways to help faculty navigate, if not thrive, as they and their institutions strive.

References

- Aldersley, S.F. (1995). Upward drift is alive and well: Research/doctoral model still attractive to institutions. *Change*, 27(5), 50-56.
- Astin, A.W. (1993). *What matters in college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A.W., & Change, M.J. (1995). Colleges that emphasize research and teaching: Can you have your cake and eat it too? *Change*, 27(5), 44-49.
- Austin, A.E., & Gamson, Z.F. (1983). *Academic workplace: New demands, heightened tensions*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Research Report. No. 10. Washington, D.C: Association for the Study of Higher Education.
- Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How colleges work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Birnbaum, R. (2000). The life cycle of academic management fads. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 71(1), 1-16.
- Blackburn, R.T., & Lawrence, J.H. (1995). *Faculty at work: Motivation, expectation, satisfaction*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Bloomgarden, A. (2007). Civic engagement and the 'research college'. *Metropolitan Universities*, 18(1), 56-69.
- Bloomgarden, A., & O'Meara, K. (2007). Harmony or cacophony? Faculty role integration and community engagement. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 12(2), 5-18.
- Bolman, L.G., & Deal, T.E. (1991) *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Clark, B.R. (1987). *The academic life: Small worlds, different worlds*. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

- DiMaggio, P., & Powell, W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 147-160.
- Dubrow, G., Moseley, B., & Dustin, D. (2006). Life at Mission Creep U. *Academe*, 92(3), 24-28.
- Ehrenberg, R.G. (2003). Reaching for the brass ring: The *U.S. News and World Report* rankings and competition. *Review of Higher Education*, 26(2), 145-162.
- Fairweather, J.S. (1993). Academic values and faculty rewards. *Review of Higher Education*, 17(91), 43-68.
- Finnegan, D.E., & Gamson, Z.F. (1996). Disciplinary adaptations to research culture in comprehensive institutions. *Review of Higher Education*, 19(2), 141-177.
- Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Gumport, P.J. (1993). Fired faculty: Reflections on marginalization and academic identity. In D. McLaughlin & W. Tierney (Eds.), *Naming silenced lives: Personal narratives and the process of educational change* (pp.135-154). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hagedorn, L.S. (2000). What contributes to job satisfaction among faculty and staff? *New Directions for Institutional Research*, No 105. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Hartley, J.E., & Robinson, M.D. (2001). Sociology research at liberal arts colleges. *The American Sociologist*, 32(3), 60-72.
- Henderson, B.B., & Kane, W.D. (1991). Caught in the middle: Faculty and institutional status and quality in state comprehensive universities. *Higher Education*, 22, 339-350.
- Jencks, C., & Riesman, D. (1968). *The academic revolution*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

- Jones, G. (1997). The changing politics and policies of Ontario higher education. *International Higher Education*, 7(5), 16-17.
- Kuh, G.D., & Whitt, E.J. (1988). *The invisible tapestry: Culture in American colleges and universities*. (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 1.) Washington, D.C.: ASHE.
- Kuh, G.D., & Pascarella, E.T. (2004) What does institutional selectivity tell us about educational quality? *Change*, 26(5), 53-58.
- Lovett, C.M. (2005, January 21). The perils of pursuing prestige. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, pp. B20.
- Massy, W.F., & Zemsky, R. (1994). Faculty discretionary time. *Journal of Higher Education*, 65(1), 1-22.
- McCaughey, R. (1994). *Scholars and teachers: The faculties of select liberal arts colleges and their place in American higher learning*. New York, NY: Conceptual Litho Reproductions, Inc.
- McPherson, M., & Schapiro, M. (1999). The future economic challenges to liberal arts colleges. *Daedalus*, 128(1), 47-73.
- Meredith, M. (2004). Why do universities compete in the ratings game? An empirical analysis of the effects of the *U.S. News and World Report* college rankings. *Research in Higher Education*, 45(5), 443-461.
- Merriam, S. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Milem, J.F., Berger, J.B., & Dey, E.L. (2000). Faculty time allocation: A study of change over twenty years. *The Journal of Higher Education*, (71)4, 454-473.
- Monks, J., & Ehrenberg, R.G. (1999, November/December). *U.S. News and World Report's College Rankings: Why they do matter*. *Change*, 31(6), 43-50.

- Morphew, C.C. (2002). A rose by any other name: Which colleges became universities. *Review of Higher Education*, 25(2), 207-224.
- Morphew, C.C., & Baker, B.D. (2004). The cost of prestige: Do new research one universities incur increased administrative costs? *Review of Higher Education*, 27(3), 365-384.
- Morphew, C.C., & Huisman, J. (2002). Using institutional theory to reframe research on academic drift. *Higher Education in Europe*, 27(4), 491-506.
- Neave, G. (1979). Academic drift: Some views from Europe. *Studies in Higher Education*, 4(2), 143-159.
- O'Meara, K. (2002). Uncovering the values in faculty evaluation of service as scholarship. *Review of Higher Education*, 26(1), 57-80.
- O'Meara, K. (2005). Effects of encouraging multiple forms of scholarship nationwide and across institutional types. In K.A. O'Meara & R.E. Rice (Eds.), *Faculty priorities reconsidered: Encouraging multiple forms of scholarship*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- O'Meara, K. (2007). Striving for what? Exploring the pursuit of prestige. In J.C. Smart (ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*, Vol. XXII (pp.121-179). New York, NY, Springer.
- O'Meara, K., & Braskamp, L. (2005). Aligning faculty reward systems and development to promote faculty and student growth. *National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Journal*, 42(2), 223-240.
- O'Meara, K., Terosky, A.L., & Neumann, A. (2008). *Faculty careers and work lives: A professional growth perspective*. ASHE Higher Education Report, 34(3). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Patton, M.Q. (1980). *Qualitative evaluation methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Postman, N. (1995). *The end of education: Redefining the value of school*. New York, NY: Knopf.

- Rice, R.E., Sorcinelli, M.D., & Austin, A.E. (2000). *Heeding new voices: Academic careers for a new generation*. (New Pathways Inquiry, No. 7.) Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.
- Riesman, D. (1956). *Constraint and variety in American education*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Ring, P.S., & Rands, G.P. (1989). Sense-making, understanding, and committing: Emergent interpersonal transaction processes in the evolution of 3M's micro-gravity research program. In A.H. Van de Ven, H.L. Angle, & M.S. Poole (Eds.), *Research on the management of innovation: The Minnesota studies* (pp. 337-366). New York, NY: Ballinger.
- Ruscio, K.P. (1987). The distinctive scholarship of the selective liberal arts college. *Journal of Higher Education*, 58(2), 205-222.
- Sarraf, S., Hayek, J., Kandiko, C., Padgett, R., & Harris, K. (2005, November). *The Institutional quality debate: U.S. News quality indicators and the National Survey of Student Engagement*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Philadelphia, PA.
- Schein, E. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership: A dynamic view*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Senge, P.S. (1990). *The fifth discipline*. New York, NY: Currency Doubleday.
- Shaw, K. (2005, November). *What price prestige? Mission creep in striving institutions*. Symposium presentation at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Philadelphia, PA.
- Tierney, W.G., & Bensimon, E.M. (1996) *Promotion and tenure: Community and socialization in academe*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Volkwein, J.F., & Sweitzer, K.V. (2006). Institutional prestige and reputation among research universities and liberal arts colleges. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(2), 129-148.

- Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2003). *Academic life and motherhood: Variations by institutional type*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Portland, Oregon.
- Waterman, R.H. (1990) *Adhocracy: The power to change*. Memphis, TN: WhittleDirect Books.
- Winston, G. (2000). *The positional arms race in higher education*. (Discussion Paper 54). Williamstown, MA: Williams Project on the Economics of Higher Education.
- Wolf-Wendel, L., & Ward, K. (2005, November). *Faculty life at comprehensives: Between a rock and a hard place*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Philadelphia, PA.
- Wawrzynski, M. (2004, November). *The impact of faculty behaviors on student engagement*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Kansas City, Missouri.
- Weick, K.E. (1995) *Sense-making in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R.K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods*. (Applied Social Research Methods Series, 5). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case study research design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zemsky, R., Wegner, G. & Massy, W. (2005, July 15). Today's colleges must be market smart and mission centered. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, pp B6-B8.