

What Are We Doing Right?

Are you tired every morning? During the work day, do you feel like a ton of bricks are upon your shoulders? Have you felt like you could not relax in some time? Is about all you think about, lately, is work? Well, we suspect that you are not alone (Dodson, 2006). The pressure to produce in academia is huge! Whether it is the graduate student/scholar level to the full-professor level, we are expected to go "above and beyond" to be the best (Dodson, 2008). The best in research, teaching/learning, advising and service are becoming the norm, not the exception these days. Yes, the best, even in light of increasing numbers of roadblocks.

Limitations to our success include reduced numbers of grant dollars available for a higher number of competing grant proposals submitted (Dodson, 2006b). How might one obtain grant funding when there is (absolutely) no program in which to submit a proposal? Moreover, if one submits a grant proposal to a level-funded program whereby 200 proposals are vying for five (funded) projects, it is difficult to expect to receive support. In parallel to this, we are expected to perform in an outstanding manner in the classroom even if resources are not available for purchase of media supplies, etc (Dodson et al., 2006c). Personal advising of students seems to be something of the past and "professional advisors" are now taking over advising duties in departments all over the country, which limit faculty contact with (especially) undergraduate students. Centralization of services sometimes leaves the main office of some department's void of any personnel (at times) such that students come for help, and no one is there. While times are changing and the new face of academia means less funding to teachers (even in light of increased costs to students; Dodson, 2011), limited desire to/tools with which to teach, detached (from the faculty) advising and empty spaces in our (once thriving) main offices, are there things that we are doing right?

Dedicated academicians have sized up the changing environment to which we (all) are being channeled into and have (in many cases) chosen a strategy for their work that focuses on what they feel is important. Can research be conducted without an abundance of funding? Sure, and the idea that research teams [perhaps at the international level] may be formed to share what little everyone has to contribute effectively to a scientific field (Dodson et al., 2010b). Teachers are learning how to teach with no one "watching their back." Indeed, one-on-one instruction is not only vogue, but an effective way for not only deciphering the intent of students, but to see who has the "spark" for learning (Duris et al., 2012). Moreover, classrooms (whether plugged in or not; Dodson, 2007) produce a student product that can compete nationally for jobs, professional school or graduate school (Dodson and Benson 2010). This leaves service. What can one say? If a department has been decimated to the point whereby the main office is ran by work study students, something is wrong. Administrators will need to take a look at this and determine the solution. The days of individualized student contact (by all faculty members) seems to be over.

In light of our changing academic climate, it is naturally difficult for a participant to get up (each morning) and head for school. Yet, we keep doing it. That is the astounding part of all of this. Even with all of the stress and more will come each day, dedicated academics keep working and imparting as much wisdom to the people around them as possible. Does it take a toll to "stamp out ignorance" and to motivate students? Sure, but teachers know how to do things right....and will continue to do so.

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