

THE LINDENWOOD PROFESSOR

LINDENWOOD



Freedom to Grow • Time to Teach

FACULTY

As the members of the faculty file to their seats at Lindenwood University's commencement exercise each May, visitors are likely struck by their diversity. Some are in their twenties; others in their seventies. Nearly half are women. They represent a fair sampling of the world's ethnic groups, and indeed many are from countries far from Lindenwood's leafy campus.

Yet behind the faculty's apparent diversity is the shared conviction that the overarching goal of a university is to develop well-educated, productive men and women of strong character. That conviction has in turn established Lindenwood University as one of the pre-eminent examples of a new category in higher education: the teaching university. While the great majority of traditional colleges and universities attempt to serve multiple constituencies—with the student being just one of many—Lindenwood has thrived by dedicating its efforts and growing resources to high quality teaching.

In keeping with its diversity, Lindenwood's faculty has arrived at the school via many different avenues. Its ranks include newly minted PhDs, alongside professors who have taught at the university for over thirty years. Some of Lindenwood's professors have spent their entire working life in higher education; others came to teaching after distinguished careers in other fields. Regardless of their paths to Lindenwood, they share similar views about their profession. Specifically, they

- Regard themselves first and foremost as teachers
- Are committed to assessing and improving their teaching effectiveness
- Believe that student advising is an important component of education
- Command a comprehensive knowledge of the subjects they teach
- Share the university's goal to create a new model for higher education
- Are imbued with a strong work ethic.

As proud members of the Lindenwood University faculty, we conceptualized and developed this booklet as a task force assignment that we gladly accepted. Our goal was to express the unique role of today's Lindenwood professor—a role that combines excellent teaching and mentoring with professional development—as well as the contagious enthusiasm with which we and our colleagues embrace the opportunities for actualization presented by the University. We have a system that enables professors to focus on what they love—teaching and learning—while fostering personal choice and professional accountability. This teaching/learning culture sets us apart from the mainstream in higher education. But we realize that the best system for optimizing faculty service on behalf of the student has yet to be created. The Lindenwood way will continue to evolve as we continue to assess and improve it.

Task Force on the Lindenwood Professor

Peter Griffin, Ed Morris, Ray Scupin and Sue Tretter

FOCUS ON TEACHING

“No one should teach who is not in love with teaching.”

--Margaret E. Sangster, *An Autobiography From My Youth Up*



Professors who seek their professional recognition and self-fulfillment in the classroom find Lindenwood a most welcome place to work. The university provides such individuals with an environment largely free from the conflicts that arise at many universities where publication, rather than teaching, is the professor's primary professional responsibility. Many Lindenwood professors conduct important research and publish widely, but “publish or perish” apprehensions are absent on the campus.¹ And while several Lindenwood professors have been awarded grants in recent years, writing grant proposals and applying to various agencies for research funding are not job requirements.

Lindenwood's professors are also spared one of the great consumers of time in the academic world—committee meetings. The university operates with a clearly stated, teaching-centered mission statement that simplifies decision making. The budget battles, turf wars, and endless meetings that typify other campuses are a rarity at Lindenwood. Rather, the lines of authority for faculty governance of the academic programs are clearly delineated, and three standing faculty committees—General Education, Educational Policies, and Assessment—operate in an efficient, straightforward fashion. Because these standing committees set well-defined agendas and are results oriented, they typically meet for no more than 15 hours per academic year. More focused academic initiatives and issues are handled through ad hoc committees —faculty task forces— that are quickly formed to tackle a new challenge and then are disbanded just as quickly. It is unusual for a faculty task force to spend more than 10 hours in session during an academic year.

Department chairs—with the political and energy draining activities too often associated with such positions—do not exist. Rather, the necessary administrative functions within academic disciplines are easily dispatched by “program managers,” a position that is periodically, and without fanfare, rotated among the faculty.

With limited administrative and non-teaching responsibilities, Lindenwood's professors are free to answer their true calling: classroom teaching.

COMMITMENT TO ASSESSING TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

“The Assessment Committee has made significant progress in making academic assessment useful and widespread at Lindenwood.”

-- *Higher Learning Commission*

Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit, Fall, 2003

With its focus on delivering quality education, the Lindenwood faculty is well suited to face one of the most powerful challenges to today’s higher education: the demand for accountability. With the rising costs of education, colleges and universities are justifiably under pressure to demonstrate that they are actually providing their students with the educations for which they are paying—often without help from their parents or other third parties.

That pressure for accountability has led to an increasing emphasis on assessment, which constitutes a wide variety of measures used to determine whether or not students have gained the knowledge and skills laid out in educational objectives developed by faculty in general as well as specific objectives for particular courses. Assessment is thus a valuable tool for finding out what works best.

At Lindenwood, serious assessment has long been a priority. In the 1990s faculty members from all divisions and programs, with substantial support from the administration, revamped Lindenwood’s assessment program. Each year the assessment process is further refined as professors continue to develop ever more meaningful and objective measures of classroom learning.

Today a culture of assessment pervades the Lindenwood campus, a conclusion shared by other education professionals. After completing its most recent accreditation review of the university, the Higher Learning Commission stated that the school was in the forefront among institutions of higher learning in assessing the quality of classroom instruction. The favorable reaction from the HLC is a concrete illustration of the commitment of Lindenwood’s faculty to providing genuine value for students.

ADVISING

“Of all the challenges that students and faculty choose to mention, good academic advising ranks number one.”

--Richard J. Light

*Making the Most of College; Students Speak Their Minds*²



Besides formal classroom interaction, the Lindenwood faculty spends a significant amount of time with students on a one-on-one basis. Each professor establishes at least ten office hours each week for individual student advising and tutoring. Professors also work with student-advisees, assisting them in course planning, the selection of an appropriate academic major and, in many instances,

arranging off-campus internships.³

Not all advising is strictly academic. Campuses in the twenty-first century, including Lindenwood's, are populated by an increasingly diverse student body—traditional and non-traditional students; students with different levels of academic preparation; and students from a wide variety of social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Some universities continue on as though such changes are of little consequence.⁴ But at Lindenwood that increasing diversity is accommodated and moderated by intensive mentoring programs and a great deal of face-to-face contact with students. As a result, much of the interaction between student and professor—sometimes scheduled, sometimes not—focuses on the holistic development of the student.

Most Lindenwood professors also give their time freely to act as the faculty advisor for one or more of the 63 university-sponsored clubs and activities. The school is unusual among universities in that the majority of its professors advise in extracurricular student activities on a voluntary basis.



BROAD SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE

“Lindenwood University offers values-based programs leading to the development of the whole person: an educated, responsible citizen of a global community.”

--Lindenwood University Mission Statement

A demonstrated commitment to teaching is the primary requirement of a Lindenwood faculty member. Equally important is a firm mastery of subject matter. Such mastery is evidenced by the extent and nature of the professor’s own formal education. Advanced, and preferably terminal, degrees are required credentials. Lindenwood professors are also encouraged to stay abreast of the developments in their field and many pursue research projects and creative endeavors that are related to their discipline. They also belong to professional organizations in their academic field and attend a variety of academic conferences where they frequently present papers.

In keeping with Lindenwood’s emphasis on producing broadly educated graduates, however, the faculty is not pushed towards “silo” research into a narrowly circumscribed field. The university’s general education curriculum is designed to broaden its students intellectually and morally to equip them for the ever-changing global economies and societies of the twenty-first century. Since narrow specialization does not usually foster the generalized intellectual skills and critical-thinking abilities needed by its graduates, the university encourages wider, more classroom relevant research among its faculty.

LINDENWOOD’S PROFESSOR-FRIENDLY MODEL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

“We are a cohesive university with a holistic approach to education...We eschew bureaucracy, fragmentation and nonsense. We provide a quality higher education for citizens of today’s world.”

--Lindenwood University 2003-04 Self-Study



Lindenwood professors are drawn to the university by a new and effective model for management of higher education. The appeal is especially strong for professors coming from other universities, as well as those professors who were employed by “the old Lindenwood” of the 1970s and most of the 1980s. Freed from the non-essential components of university governance and extensive committee commitments, Lindenwood professors concentrate on delivering quality education. The removal of an outmoded tenure system has all but eliminated political infighting among the faculty, replacing in its stead a genuine collegiality among its members. Under a more horizontal organizational structure, the various divisions of the university are no longer divided into factions competing for students and resources, but act as one body focused on creating an affordable and high quality education for students.

Lindenwood is one of the few academic institutions that have successfully reinvented themselves. It has done so by sharpening its focus and eliminating those practices, policies, and administrative staffing that do not contribute to the delivery of high quality teaching. While global competitiveness has streamlined American industry in recent years and brought about more enlightened management practices, much of higher education continues to function as it did a century ago. Most universities, both public and private, are still encumbered by bloated, bureaucratic administrations. Moreover, those administrations and their faculties are too often locked in contentious issue disputes reminiscent of the labor versus management struggles that dogged America in an earlier time.

The transformation of Lindenwood from the old model to a “professor friendly” institution may be unparalleled in the academic world. The change is reflected in the numbers: In the latest fifteen years, from 1989 to 2004, student enrollment, including both traditional and non-traditional students, has increased roughly tenfold. During that period the full-time faculty increased from 40 members to over 180. Even more remarkably, non-academic staff was reduced by over two-thirds, from 369 to 116.

REWARD FOR PRODUCTIVITY

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

—Luke 12:48

Professors from other universities, when first exposed to Lindenwood, often remark about the heavy teaching load its faculty carries.⁵ In fact, the typical Lindenwood professor conducts five classes per semester, compared to three or four at most other schools.⁶ But with its student-centered focus, Lindenwood's faculty would not have it any other way. The alternatives to extensive classroom time (*approximately 15 hours per week*) are large lecture classes and the use of teaching assistants with a limited mastery of their subject matter, alternatives that leave little opportunity for significant student interaction and the real learning that results from student-professor dialogue.

Lindenwood recognizes that a faculty as diverse as its own represents a wide range of professional lifestyles and aspirations. Accordingly, the University offers a flexible faculty deployment system that enables each professor to tailor his or her work assignments in several ways, subject to the university's needs. Although teaching five classes per semester is the norm on its student-centered campus, any Lindenwood faculty member may negotiate a "conventional contract" with a reduced teaching load. Likewise, any professor may request an "enhanced contract," which includes professional duties beyond the normal nine-month academic year in return for value-added compensation. It is probably a commentary on the faculty's dedication to teaching that only a handful of Lindenwood's professors opt for the conventional contract, with the majority choosing the enhanced-contract alternative.



The Lindenwood faculty is compensated well. In addition to the professional satisfaction created by a highly individualized teaching and advising environment, Lindenwood professors enjoy significant monetary rewards. Before the emergence of the

“new Lindenwood,” professors worked at salary levels that languished in the third quartile among those at independent colleges and universities. Today their salaries are in the first quartile.⁷ The university believes that significant benefits have accrued to both Lindenwood and its professors by offering enhanced contracts under which the latter are paid full-time salaries for a full-time commitment to their home campus. This arrangement has eliminated the need for moonlighting, a practice followed by faculty members at some other colleges and universities where instructors need to teach part-time at other schools to supplement their incomes.

A major driver of increased compensation levels has been Lindenwood’s adoption of merit-based reviews. Each faculty member submits a yearly individual development plan for approval by his or her dean, the provost and the president. The plans are meant to stretch each individual’s professional competencies and achievements. When professors achieve their self-imposed goals, they are rewarded accordingly in the following year’s contract.

The university’s individualized compensation has made unnecessary the collective bargaining arrangements existing on most other campuses. Such arrangements inevitably lead to pay levels that advance in lock step without due recognition of individual initiative and productivity. For that reason, Lindenwood attracts and retains individuals who have a strong work ethic and the ability to thrive in a merit based compensation system.

RESULTS

“This historic university succeeds only because its students succeed.”

--Dennis Spellmann, President of Lindenwood University



Dennis Spellmann

The ultimate measure of a teaching university is the quality of the education it provides. At Lindenwood, students receive a superb education. The grounding they receive in the liberal arts and the Judeo-Christian ethic—a grounding rarely available today in higher education—equips them for a rapidly changing and unpredictable world.

The focused education they receive in the wide variety of specialized studies and academic majors complements their general education curriculum and provides skills for entering the workplace. Lindenwood students are employable and enjoy one of the best graduate-placement rates in the United States. Those who choose to go on to professional or graduate schools win acceptance into some of the country's most respected programs.



Educational quality is also evidenced by student satisfaction during their stay at Lindenwood. Through confidential questionnaires, students evaluate their professors at the completion of each course. Although it appears to defy common sense, over 80% rate their instructors as “above average.” That enthusiastic response probably reflects a standard based on their experiences at their secondary schools and other colleges and universities they attended prior to Lindenwood. Student and parent satisfaction with the Lindenwood professor is more tangibly confirmed by the remarkable growth and enrollment and diversity of the student body.

Owing importantly to faculty dedication and productivity, Lindenwood is on a firm financial footing. Almost daily the news media report that programs are being cut or eliminated at other universities due to fiscal problems. Lindenwood professors read those accounts secure in the knowledge that they work for one of the few institutions that is debt-free and generates positive cash flow. They know that the university's financial strength provides the wherewithal for attractive and merit-based salaries that do not depend merely on the elapse of time or on factors extraneous to teaching. They know they enjoy job security that is real, rather than based on the vicissitudes of a tenure system.⁸ Finally and importantly, the university's financial strength makes possible the construction of new facilities and the modernization of the “heritage” portion of the campus, which in turn leverages teaching effectiveness for the benefit of the student.

MOVING FORWARD



In large part, Lindenwood's success has come about by recruiting talented professors with a student-centered vision, providing them with first-class resources and facilities, and rewarding their achievements appropriately. Yet the job is never complete. Lindenwood must continue to evolve and improve as a teaching university in a rapidly changing world. Its professors are committed to doing their part in that process by adapting and shaping

their roles in ways that best achieve the university's mission: developing the whole person, an educated, responsible citizen of a global community.

FOOTNOTE

¹ During the typical year, approximately thirty Lindenwood faculty members present their research in scholarly publications or at academic conferences. Lindenwood University 2003-04 Self-Study, p. 160.

² Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 84

³ On average, the Lindenwood professor acts as advisor to 28 students. Lindenwood University 2003-04 Self-Study, p. 85

⁴Op.cit. p. 2. Professor Light quotes a "senior dean from a distinguished university" who states that the philosophy of his school is to "admit good students and make a special effort to get out of their way."

⁵ They also note that professors are actually in their offices and working on Friday afternoons and that there is no faculty dining room conducive to long and sequestered midday meals.

⁶ In any semester the typical Lindenwood faculty member teaches more than 130 students, carries five classes involving between three and four course preparations, and supervises one or two independent student projects. Lindenwood University 2003-04 Self-Study, p. 84

⁷ Based on faculty salary data published in the MDHE Statistical Tables Publication of Missouri's Coordinating Board for Higher Education. In addition, Lindenwood faculty members received a package of fringe-benefits, including health insurance and institutional contributions to TIAA-CREFF that adds approximately 19% to base compensation. Lindenwood University 2003-04 Self-Study, p. 87.

⁸ The Lindenwood rate is very low, between 5% and 8% depending on the year. Most severances are voluntary. Lindenwood University 2003-04 Self-Study, p.

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