

Shaping the College Curriculum: Academic Plans in Context, Second Edition

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Transition Guide

Major Changes to the Second Edition

- Chapters have been reorganized for improved understanding of the academic plan model on which the book is based.
- Greater emphasis is placed on the sociocultural contexts that influence curriculum planning.
- Includes a new chapter on institutional influences that affect curricular decision-making.
- Two coordinated chapters on learning and selecting instructional processes provide practical suggestions for instructors.
- A new chapter on curricular change suggests multiple strategies for promoting curriculum development and revision in varied contexts.

Chapter 1: Curriculum: An Academic Plan

Chapter 1 sets the stage for an extended discussion of the development and revision of college and university curricula by explaining the academic plan model and its advantages. This chapter (formerly Chapter 2) is updated from the previous edition. Introductory material formerly in Chapter 1 has been moved to the preface. The academic plan model introduced in this chapter reflects the evolution of the authors' ideas, based on advances in research and theory as well as users' suggestions, since the first edition. The model now explicitly accounts for the sociocultural context in which curricula (as well as institutions, faculty, and students) are embedded. Accompanying text defines and describes this sociocultural context. The definition of

learners as an element of academic plans is also clearer and more functional. The new model now includes two critical sets of influences on the educational environment: external and internal. Internal influences are divided into two subsets: institutional influences (formerly called organizational) and unit level influences. In the first edition, the model and text focused on three sets of influences. The new version more strongly emphasizes the close interaction of institutional and unit-level influences on most college and university campuses. Finally, Chapter 1 includes a summary of contributions by various scholars to evolution of the academic plan model, replacing the more detailed discussion previously found in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2: External Influences: Sociocultural Context

Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of social, cultural, economic and political forces and debates that have shaped higher education curricula in the United States. It condenses material formerly discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 12. Chapter 2 retains the emphasis on the long-term trend toward diversification that has characterized American higher education and the key issues and recurring curricular debates that have accompanied this trend. By tracing the evolution of several elements of the academic plan (for example, educational purposes, content, instructional processes, learners, and evaluation) this chapter reveals the sources of contemporary thinking about postsecondary programs as it provides a historical perspective on their current state. The statistics, examples, references, and time lines in this chapter have been updated. Notable additions are discussions of (1) for-profit higher education which has emerged as a major player in recent years, (2) the academic preparation of students for college, and (3) changes in instructional processes resulting from advances in technology. The curriculum reform reports of

the 1980s and 1990s, formerly discussed in detail in Chapter 5, are now summarized and incorporated into Chapter 2 as part of the broader historical context.

Chapter 3: Internal Influences: College and University Contexts

Chapter 3 focuses on the varying institutional structures and cultures of colleges and universities that influence curriculum development, consolidating information about institutional and departmental characteristics that was embedded in several chapters in the first edition. It will be particularly useful to expand familiarity with different higher education sectors, and offers a primer on faculty and administrative roles and responsibilities related to curriculum in US colleges and universities. This chapter also identifies and discusses recent trends in faculty roles and appointments (for example, non-tenure-track hiring) as well as information about curriculum planning and delivery in the for-profit sector.

Chapter 4: Internal Influences: Academic Fields

Chapter 4 examines the strong and pervasive influence of socialization in an academic field on an instructor's view of what, why, and how they should teach. Formerly Chapter 7, this greatly revised chapter now follows a discussion of institutional influences (Chapter 3), reflecting our understanding of academic fields as powerful internal influences on the educational environment, as well as on planning activities. The new chapter also recommends strategies for sensitizing instructors to the assumptions they use when they engage in curriculum planning so that they may bridge differences to work more effectively in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary groups.

Chapter 5: Creating Academic Plans

This chapter describes typical curricular planning processes at the course, program, and institutional levels. Recent research findings and examples drawn from a wider range of academic fields buttress the empirical foundation of what was formerly Chapter 6. The concluding section of the chapter contrasts current practice with strategies that might be more effective and describes several systematic design models that hold promise for improving curricular planning.

Chapter 6: Learners

Chapter 6 contains material on learning that is unfamiliar to many college and university instructors. Like its predecessor in the first edition, Chapter 6 briefly describes how instructors typically consider (or do not consider) the needs of learners when planning courses and programs. It argues that a better understanding of research and theories of learning could broaden the vision of instructors and administrators as they develop academic plans. Through a concise synthesis of an extensive body of literature from various social and behavioral sciences, this chapter presents an interdisciplinary treatment of how students learn. Care has been taken to select learning theories and research directly relevant to college level study, as well as those that consider how personal and cultural background can influence how students learn. A table in the concluding section conveniently summarizes recent research and provides some “rules of thumb” for instructors to consider as they plan courses and programs.

Chapter 7: Instructional Processes

Chapter 7 translates the information on learning presented in Chapter 6 into potential instructional strategies. This discussion of ways to engage students and promote learning is dramatically expanded from the first edition. It includes a review of what is known about typical practices in selecting instructional processes (included in Chapter 8 of the first edition), but now also makes suggestions that will help instructors deal with student diversity and choose among alternative methods of interactive learning and classroom assessment.

Chapter 8: Evaluating and Adjusting Academic Plans

This chapter is similar in content and structure to Chapter 10 in the first edition. It describes current course and program evaluation practices, but also makes suggestions and recommendations for improving classroom assessment, program review, and accreditation, all of which are prominent in the minds of educators during an era of accountability demands and financial stringency. New research and new techniques from a wider variety of academic fields and types of institutions are reported, including ideas for evaluating instructional resources. References to evaluation tools no longer available have been removed.

Chapter 9: Administering Academic Plans

Chapter 9 focuses on current and potential roles of administrators at program, department, and college-wide levels that support academic planning. It retains the basic structure of Chapter 11 in the first edition, but adds results from new department-level research by the authors and their colleagues. These findings support and extend ideas about administrators' roles that formerly were hypothetical, highlighting the idea that provosts, deans, and department chairs are critical in

establishing the local educational environment in which successful curriculum planning can flourish. The chapter preserves the lists of guidelines for administrators from the first edition.

Chapter 10: Models and Strategies for Curricular Change

Much material in Chapter 10 is new or expanded (replacing Chapters 12 and 13 in the first edition). The authors present multiple theories of organizational change, useful for academic planning, as well as theoretically and empirically grounded guidelines for faculty and administrators leading change. Consistent with findings from the literature on organizational change, the authors argue that the use of multiple change strategies is often appropriate. In keeping with the academic plan concept, which does not advocate any particular curriculum or type of change, this concluding chapter distills information on change into sets of guidelines intended to promote successful curricular change efforts in a variety of educational contexts. A key thesis is that successful curricular change results from learned behavior about how to change; thus groups of instructors must learn together how to pursue the task of curriculum development.