Faculty work on...

Educational Policy

Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL)
Ann Austin, James Fairweather, and Roger Baldwin

CIRTL began as one of two National Centers for Postsecondary Learning and Teaching in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM fields), funded by the National Science Foundation (funding over two grant periods has exceeded $2.5M). The goal of CIRTL is to prepare STEM doctoral students to be excellent teachers as well as superb researchers. CIRTL efforts are based on an approach that helps future faculty members and professionals learn to bring research skills to the improvement of their teaching and their students’ learning. CIRTL professional development programs occur within institutional and cross-institutional student learning communities, which emphasize the value of learning through diversity. The CIRTL Network currently involves a collaboration between Michigan State University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Howard University, Texas A&M University, University of Colorado Boulder, and Vanderbilt, and is developing plans for an expanded National Network of about 20 universities. MSU faculty members have been and currently are key players in the conceptualization, leadership, and evaluation and research efforts of CIRTL.

Student Involvement: Four HALE PhD students have been deeply involved as Research Assistants in the evaluation and research activities of CIRTL, which has enabled them to participate in survey, interview, and case study research, regular national meetings, conference presentations, and publications.

Trends in Publishing on International Issues Related to College Student Experiences, Development, and Learning
Kristen Reno

This project involves a review of eight US and international higher education journals, from 1998-2008. Dr. Reno is analyzing the contents of these journals for studies that address college student experiences, development, and learning in international contexts. Is such work merely at the margins of internationalization? A goal of the project is to identify areas where more research—or higher quality-research is needed, and to propose a research agenda for this area for the next decade.

Student Involvement: A Student Affairs Administration MA student began working on this project as an independent study and continued it into summer employment; a HALE PhD student has been involved in data collections.

The “New Literacies” in Postsecondary Education
Steve Weiland

Online learning is no longer simply a trend in postsecondary education. It is a permanent part of it, welcomed by many students for the advantages it offers in access, by institutional leaders eager to meet demand and strengthen their financial positions, and by the U.S. Government in an effort to influence educational policy at all levels in a 2010 report Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology. A substantial scholarly literature now considers everything from the design of courses to the administration of online degree programs. Still, not enough of it is skeptical about fundamental assumptions and practices, even within recognition of the role of digital learning in providing unique forms of learning in multi-media. “The Second Subject in Online Learning: Literacy, Old vs. New” considers how online faculty and students go about and understand their online work with its instructional differences, including reading and composing digital texts, and using the Web as a resource for learning and communications. All institutions have roles in determining how the new information and communications technologies (ICT) can contribute to learning. But essential questions about the mind at work in an online course can be obscured by attention to the academic subject being studied. In effect, the new ICT represents a form of the “hidden curriculum,” an idea made popular in the 1970s and after by MIT psychologist Benjamin S. Fried who identified the “hidden curriculum” in a course “and the means to their mastery” as they are “rooted in the professor’s assumptions and values, the students’ expectations, and the social context in which both teacher and taught find themselves.” The “new literacies” are at the center of institutional and national policy debates about the reorganization of the postsecondary curriculum (e.g., in “scaling up”) to meet demand and stabilize budgets.

Faculty Issues in Higher Education in South-East Asia
Ann Austin

A small international team of higher education scholars has been commissioned by the Asian Development Bank to examine major higher education issues within countries in South-East Asia. Dr. Austin’s report focuses specifically on analyzing the internal efficiency of higher education within the region, including consideration of the characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses of academic staff, the nature of academic work, (including teaching, research, and service) employment systems (including professional development, evaluation processes, and incentive and reward systems), and issues concerning institutional and professional culture (including norms and values pertaining to autonomy, academic freedom, integrity, and collegiality).

Revealing the Colonial vestiges in Educational Policy
Riyad Shahjahan

Dr. Shahjahan studies the effects evidence-based education has on the educational system, policy and research, both in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. Through an anti-colonial perspective he challenges the power configuration embedded in ideas, cultures, and histories of knowledge production, validation, and use. This research focuses on the discourse of culling the professor through science based measures, the promotion of machineries of the mind, and the intervention of neoliberal educational policies and global exploitation of colonized labor.

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