Faculty members who become academic administrators are often asked whether they are able to keep up with their fields and, if not, whether they miss practicing their scholarly disciplines. My own response to this question is that, while I am not able to keep up in the sense intended by the question (reading the current issues of scholarly journals, pursuing research for publication), I have the good fortune to have chosen a discipline that you practice as a way of life, no matter what you happen to be doing. When you are an anthropologist by vocation, you are incapable of not being one. The tools of your craft are always at hand to help you understand the environment in which you are moving, whatever it might be.

I believe our vocation as anthropologists enables us to play an active, creative, and interesting role in moving our institutions ahead in tough and complicated times. Times are indeed tough and complicated for institutions of higher education—that is clear to all of us—and things will no doubt get tougher yet. The alarming decline in government support for higher education has made a major impact on many of our activities and operations—notably, research and financial aid. For some time now, we have been watching Congress the way the ancient inhabitants of Pompeii must have watched Mount Vesuvius.

In the area of financial aid, we have monitored the fate of proposals to tax institutions on their student loans, to weaken or eliminate the interest subsidy on students loans, and to end some lending programs altogether; these proposed changes all threatened to impose severe financial hardship on our students, their families, and the institutions seeking to offer them educations. As of the time of this writing, the picture is brighter than we had expected, with renewed support for some of the major federal loan programs and with the President seeking to use the tax system to encourage investment in education. Yet, the pressures continue because state and federal support will not, in fact, increase to cover increases in expenses; students and their families are, moreover,
bumping up against the limit on their ability to borrow. As we seek in
this environment to maintain student bodies that are both academically
qualified and diverse, we confront financial aid burdens that are becom-
ing unaffordable. Those of us in private institutions live with the general
fear of pricing ourselves out of the market, given the necessarily high
cost of the education we provide.
Meanwhile, we are in the midst of a major technological revolution
that will affect the way we teach and conduct our research, the way our
students learn, and the way we do our administrative business. The pace
of change is rapid, the directions hard to predict, and the costs high both
in material resources and time.
Significant changes are also taking place in the scholarly and cur-
curricular shape of our programs, as the various academic disciplines shift
their boundaries and come into new alignments. Our students have also
been changing, as they come to us from a wider range of backgrounds
and, in the case of undergraduates and their families, bring along an
expanding set of expectations about the services and supports that
should be available to them during their college years.
These challenges have made life uncomfortable for many of us in
the academy, where security and stability have been among our major
fringe benefits. We need, however, to confront our changed circum-
stances and, in so doing, take care to operate as anthropologists and not
simply as natives. We should remember to exercise the good habits we
had to develop to cope with one of the most stressful experiences any of
us has ever gone through, namely, fieldwork.
We should be advantaged not only by the specific theoretical and
empirical perspectives that we bring as anthropologists to the under-
standing of our social surroundings, but also by our distinctive practice,
as fieldworkers, of combining total immersion with a certain detach-
ment. Detachment may not be fashionable in these postmodern times of
free-floating complicity, but if construed in a suitably sophisticated and
critical manner, detachment remains the cornerstone not only of anthro-
pological insight, but also of wisdom and maturity more generally. The
distinctive stance of being observer/analysts of our worlds, even as we
are participants in them, should never desert us, and should provide an
advantage both in understanding what is going on around us and in
addressing it in imaginative ways. At the very least, adopting the role of
participant observer is one of life’s great defense mechanisms, because
any stressful or unpleasant experience can be construed as fieldwork.
Let us turn now to some of the issues before us, beginning with one
that has occupied a great deal of our attention already: the increasing
fluidity within and between academic disciplines, including, in particu-
lar, the emergence of what has come to be known as “cultural studies.”
Cultural Studies and Interdisciplinary Drift

One observer of the cultural studies scene, quoted in *Change* magazine, states: “Cultural Studies is part of the noise made by the great academic ice-flows [sic] of Literature, Sociology, Anthropology, and so on as their mass shifts [sic] and breaks apart” (Collini 1995:9). The same short piece reported on the expansion of the Cultural Studies section of the Harvard bookstore and noted that the same books that didn’t sell well in the Sociology section of Olsson’s bookstore in Washington, DC, sold much better when they were moved to the Cultural Studies section.

In thinking about this, we as anthropologists can congratulate ourselves on our degree of success in spreading the gospel of culture. We can also appreciate all that is positive in the lively interdisciplinarity abroad in the academy—releasing a lot of creative energy and providing the freedom to follow problems wherever they may lead without being held up by disciplinary boundaries that are inevitably arbitrary.

At the same time, it would be fair to say that the game of musical chairs going on among the disciplines—in which literary critics become cultural historians, historians become anthropologists, and anthropologists become literary critics—reflects not only intellectual adventure and creativity, but also a certain element of flight, of ennui with one’s own craft. Or perhaps, to put it in religious terms, a loss of vocation.

In our eagerness to set sail for more exotic scholarly shores, we may have left too much of our valuable intellectual baggage behind. How do we best reach out to other disciplines without losing sight of the distinctive contributions of our own? If we really believe that the field of anthropology, in all its historical contingency, has something of great and unique value to offer, this is an important time to engage in focused reflection on what that something is.

Just as institutions of higher education have felt the need, in recent years, to clarify their goals, to specify their niche, to decide what it is that will take the highest priority when hard choices have to be made, so we must do that kind of thinking within academic programs. The thinking that goes on within programs will determine how their contributions to one another and to the more general purposes of the institution are evaluated. The choices made within departments will affect the choices that one day may be made between departments. To put it in Marxist terms, now it’s time to play you bet your life.

As we think about the future shape, or shapes, of anthropology, we know that it will not be a question of simply continuing to do the same thing in the same ways. However, as anthropologists, we should understand that a distinctive identity and a strong tradition are assets; they are
resources one does not simply squander. We need a compelling narrative to tie who we have been to where we are going—just the way all the folks we study do.

This project of linking past and present is something leaders of academic institutions must take very much to heart as they seek to guide their colleges and universities through times of radical transformation. Those of us who come to academic administration with a background in anthropology have an advantage in this regard. While the influence of corporate culture on the world of higher education has led to the view of college and university presidents as Chief Executive Officers, we as anthropologists are in a position to understand how the president operates as a Chief Interpretive Officer. It is the president who must identify those aspects of the institution’s mission that should be given prominence at a given moment in its history, in order to focus the attention of the community and to move the institution forward.

It is necessary for each academic program, including anthropology, to do similar work: to take stock of the discipline’s distinctive past contributions and to develop a sense of innovative variations on this heritage to move the field into new intellectual territory. This activity takes time, energy, and focus, and it really must be done.

This task of focused reflection and intellectual consolidation is made more complex by the ramifying ties that link a department’s members to a variety of other programs, pointing them in different directions. The proliferation of interdisciplinary programs causes individual faculty members to feel overextended and leveraged out. Those who play central roles in their disciplinary departments also commonly play central roles in interdepartmental programs. The cross-cutting ties are cross-cutting some of us to ribbons.

We will have to find ways to deal with this multiplication of entities in our curriculum and in the social organization of the university. However that plays out, anthropologists must consider the distinctive role of their department within the wider academic institution and their own distinctive roles as individual anthropologists within other programs in which they participate.

In addition to developing ties with colleagues in other disciplines, anthropologists should create new links with colleagues in other institutions. The combination of resource constraints, technological opportunities, and shifts in the intellectual landscape of the disciplines will make it increasingly important for colleges and universities to take better advantage of what they have to offer one another. Consortial relationships of various kinds have developed at an increasing rate and continue to do so. Anthropologists should be very much a part of this process by actively seeking out such ties and exploring faculty exchanges with
neighboring institutions that will expand one's program and one's circle of colleagues.

Multiculturalism and Its Discontents

Our institutions are profoundly affected by an increasing level of cultural heterogeneity, both in the curriculum and in the community. The multicultural dramas being played out on our campuses are very much those of the wider society. However, many in the wider society seem bent on holding academia particularly responsible for multicultural conflict, as we have seen in the continuing backlash over "political correctness" on our campuses.

Anthropologists have had their own arguments with the multicultural movement, which has, in fact, taken some highly problematic directions. We have seen our own message of cultural relativism fetishized to the point where difference has become the terminus of the cultural train of thought and the culture concept has been used to give parochialism a whole new lease on life. If anthropology has contributed to this condition, this is the time to remember that we also have the antidote. We must take special care to foreground certain aspects of our intellectual heritage at this time so that we can play a productive and much needed part in the conversations around diversity going on at our respective institutions. We should be calling attention to our discipline's role in showing how cultures are not separate islands, how their boundaries are not firm and unchanging, how history is made through the contact of peoples and traditions, and how cultural identities are themselves inherently relational. We, as anthropologists, can and must help our students understand how knowledge is gained by the movement from one cultural world to another because this has been at the very center of our project as a discipline.

The flip side of fetishized individual cultural traditions is the prevalent view that any and all interactions between cultures fall within a postcolonial master narrative of power and oppression. This encourages disinclination to cross cultural boundaries and a suspicion that those who want to do so, including anthropologists, are up to no good. While anthropologists certainly have the obligation to engage in a self-reflective critique of anthropology's location in the political scheme of things, many of us have gone overboard in applying a hermeneutic of suspicion to our own professional activities. We have also perhaps suffered too many slings and arrows from colleagues in other disciplines, who have themselves wandered in no forest beyond the groves of academe.
Social Science Illiteracy

We have seen the center of intellectual gravity in cultural studies shift from the social sciences to the humanities. While many welcome and imaginative contributions to scholarship have been produced by this development, much has been lost. Scholars in the humanities often seem to be breathtakingly unfamiliar with social science research and theory in the areas to which they turn their attention. This ignorance on the part of our colleagues, who should reasonably be expected to know better, is but the tip of a vast iceberg of social science illiteracy that afflicts both our students and the wider society. It is time to start worrying about this in a focused way, just as we worry about other forms of illiteracy and innumeracy.

Social science illiteracy is a major ingredient in the anti-affirmative action movement that has been gathering a fairly full head of steam in our country. The opposition to affirmative action rests on the culturally familiar view of society as made up of a collection of individuals; it draws on the culturally familiar inability to understand how membership in a social category or group affects one's experience and life chances. It is all too easy these days to chuck concepts like gender, ethnicity, and class into the PC dumpster and have done with them.

Social science illiteracy is behind so-called identity politics, with its simplified, essentialist views of ethnicity or sexual orientation. Social science illiteracy leads us to see our political life in terms of a play of personalities. This idea is responsible for an interesting reversal of the stance many of us remember from the late 1960s and early 1970s when we asserted that "the personal is political." Where this once meant that we must understand and lay bare the ways in which our personal circumstances are shaped by history and by broader social forces (in other words, C. Wright Mills's ideas about the "sociological imagination"), instead we see today a focus so intense on the personal that it simply absorbs the political. The tools of social, political, economic, and cultural analysis we once used to understand how even our most private lives were shaped now lie rusting in some infrequently visited shed. It is time to be worried that too many of our students may never have used them at all.

Our students need to know where to turn for intellectual help in the work of great social theorists of pre-postmodern times. They must be encouraged to seek that help in addressing specific questions about social identity and social action. Anthropologists, together with colleagues in the other social science disciplines, need to reflect on the contributions they should be making to the general education of undergraduates. Responsibility
must be taken for establishing intellectual priorities in the curriculum of the social sciences. Our increasingly decentered approach to course offerings and requirements is not serving our students well. However contingent our curricular choices may be, we are still accountable for making them.

Whose Education Is It Anyway?

There is a great deal of public concern about the state of undergraduate education and whether it has received short shrift in universities where the reward structure for faculty revolves around achievements in research and where there is an inverse correlation between prestige and teaching load. We are already seeing an increasing emphasis on undergraduate education in universities, and this will continue. For financial reasons, there will be continued pressure on some universities to increase the size of the undergraduate student body as other sources of funding shrink. In any such plans, careful attention must be paid to the quality of the undergraduate experience. The cost of higher education is right up there after the cost of health care as a national concern, and people are paying a lot of attention to what they are getting for an investment that is becoming for many people financially comparable to the investment in a house.

Anthropologists should seek to play a central role in the curricular rethinking going on at our institutions. We need to pay close attention not only to our own disciplinary programs, but also to general education requirements. This includes the academic program for first-year students, which is of special concern to many colleges and universities.

We as anthropologists must also contribute to another of the currently hot topics in undergraduate education: what has come to be called “service-based learning.” The term refers to an educational experience that takes students outside the university walls and into the surrounding community, where they are expected to contribute as they learn. Anthropology clearly has much to offer here, both in terms of the theoretical and methodological traditions of our discipline, and also in terms of what we have learned over time about the ethics and politics of fieldwork.

A heightened focus on undergraduate education should lead us to build stronger habits of collaboration around teaching that are comparable to the collegial habits we more commonly have around research. This will mean moving beyond the individual contractor model of teaching that generally characterizes our mode of academic production. Academic departments, which are important planning bodies within
colleges and universities, will have to expand the way in which they take corporate responsibility for their programs. We will need to spend more time talking together not only about what we are teaching, but also about how we are teaching.

The incorporation of new information technologies into our teaching will, of course, be an important impetus for such conversations. We will, for example, need to consider the role that lecturing to large groups of students should continue to have in our teaching. How much of our teaching in the future will take the form of directing the work of small groups of students or individual students? How will we best combine real and virtual interaction with them?

And what will all this mean for teaching loads? Up to now, we have been used to talking about teaching load in terms of the number of individual courses we teach in a year: a 3/2, 3/3, 2/2, or 4/4, and so forth. In the future, the teaching loads of faculty members may be put together in different ways, and we may be exploring units of course duration that differ from the semester-long course.

Faculty and Administration

The various issues I have been considering, taken together, raise some general questions about what we might call the social contract between faculty members and their institutions. Faculty members will need to consider their investment in the well-being of their institution as a whole, and not just their own particular department or program.

Faculty who have been blessed with a high degree of mobility and choice in their employment careers should be where they want to be, which is a good reason for commitment. Those who have not been so fortunate are at places where they must be and are likely to remain, which is certainly another strong basis for commitment. Either way, we would do well to appreciate and act upon the fact that our own fortunes will be very much tied to those of our institutions in times we administrators like to call “challenging” and the Chinese like to call “interesting.”

In this connection, it is worth thinking back to a research project that sociologist Alvin Gouldner carried out almost 40 years ago among faculty members and administrators at a small liberal arts college. He was exploring the so-called latent identities and roles people assume in organizations, as opposed to their explicit or manifest roles. Thus, while the manifest roles in the college he was studying would include such things as “assistant professor,” “department chair,” “dean,” and so forth, there were latent roles in which he was particularly interested, and these were the roles of “cosmopolitan” and “local.”
Cosmopolitans were characterized by their greater commitment to their professions or special skill than to the institution for which they worked. They had more opportunity for outward mobility and were disposed to seek recognition outside the institution. Locals, on the other hand, showed a higher degree of loyalty to the institution and a lower commitment to their professions; they found their reference group within the institution.

It is clear that the professoriate in general has become increasingly cosmopolitan since the time of Gouldner's research. This is good news in that faculty suffer less from the occupational hazards of localism, which include intellectual stagnation, parochialism, and underachievement. There has been a cost, however, in the general decline of institutional commitment. Recruiting policies that focus heavily on professional expertise yield faculties who may have minimal loyalty to a particular institution and who will go wherever they feel they can best pursue their specialty. The incentives commonly used to retain star faculty (which, in addition to salary increases, may include lighter teaching loads and greater freedom from other institutional demands as well) are also a part of the syndrome.

These categories of "cosmopolitan" and "local," in their pure form, can be seen as extremes—or, to put it in more technical terms, as Weberian ideal types. We see all around us colleagues who balance both identities, who are both eminent in their professions and deeply committed to their institutions. They have been the backbone of all of the institutions of higher education where I have had the great good fortune to find myself: from Brandeis to Columbia to the University of Chicago to Bryn Mawr to Barnard. We must see that they do not become an endangered species, since we never needed them more than we need them now.

Back at the time of Gouldner's study, administrators tended to fall into the category of "locals." Over time, however, the trend toward cosmopolitanism has affected administrators as well as faculty, drawing administrators into extra-institutional professional worlds of their own. Administrators are also more likely these days to leave one institution for the greener pastures of another. We have seen a trend toward what I call the "Clint Eastwood style" presidency: unlike the president who stayed in office for many years and became strongly identified with an institution, the Clint Eastwood president rides into town, sizes up the situation, sees what the main problems are, tries to solve them, and then rides off. (Or, perhaps, is run out of town on a rail.)

The cosmopolitanizing of both faculty and administrators has increased the distance between them. Each group spends a lot of their time in different academic subcultures. They have, to some extent, developed
into different sociolinguistic communities, speaking different jargons. This problem must be addressed. We have to do everything we can to counter the centrifugal pull between faculty members and administrators because the relationship between the two is, I believe, a major indicator of the health of an academic institution and a major determinant of whether an institution can do difficult, painful things and come out all right at the other end.

Faculty members must be able to look at administrators and see in them colleagues who share their values and who care about the same things they do. Administrators must be able to look at faculty members and see in them colleagues who really understand what it takes to keep a college or university going and to make it strong.

Notes

This article is adapted, with minor modifications, from a paper presented at the 1995 American Anthropological Association annual meeting (Shapiro 1995). Some of the arguments in this article were presented previously in a talk to the Anthropology Section of the New York Academy of Sciences, entitled “Anthropology in a Changing Academy,” on September 14, 1995.

1. Gouldner (1957:287) notes that he has taken the terms cosmopolitan and local from Robert Merton, who used them to analyze patterns of community influence.