

Higher Education Is on the Move

By Doris Gordon

A key responsibility of an accrediting agency, such as ACAE, is monitoring changes, reforms, and general trends in higher education today. We need to be ahead of the curve in transforming audiology education. Why? Because we're evaluators who not only confirm that academic programs are in compliance with educational standards but enable them to adapt to changes that bring about genuine improvements in student learning.

Former U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings established the Commission for the Future of Higher Education in 2004–2005 to review what was happening in universities and colleges at all levels. Valid questions about the accountability, access, and cost/affordability of education were asked by the commission. The present U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, is passionate about preparing students for higher education, mandating that secondary educational institutions throughout the country focus on excellence in teaching and achieve higher scores on standardized tests.

Molly Corbett Broad, the recent CEO of the prestigious American Council on Education urges us "to think big...this is a time when the game is changing...hunkering down is not a smart option."

So what is changing? Our worldview, for one. As Thomas Friedman explains in his book, *The World is Flat*,

U.S. businesses, corporate structures, and educational institutions need to cooperate with nations around the globe. During this past year, the rise in international students attending universities for postsecondary and graduate education within the United States has been impressive. The Chinese are leading the way. They have funds for tuition and board and bring ideas and different perspectives to graduate programs. The international influence benefits education for all.

Learning is changing. Robert Zemsky, in his recent book, *Making Reform Work*, reinforces the notion that learning is the "academy's core business and the traditional method of learning with detailed content is changing to a more well-executed learning process." Static learning is decreasing and dynamic learning is more evident, in the sense that learning processes change as the learner gains new knowledge and tackles new problems. Zemsky notes that "the academy today argues that the successful student is much more a clever librarian—that is, someone who knows how to ask the right questions and to recognize good answers."

Technology is revolutionizing education. In an interesting article, "How the iPhone Can Reboot Education," (www.wired.com/gadgetlab/2009/12/iphone-university-abilene/) a small university in Abilene, Texas, recently

completed a pilot program for the purchase of iPhones for its students. "The traditional classroom, where an instructor assigns a textbook, is heading toward obsolescence. Why listen to a single source talk about a printed textbook that will inevitably be outdated in a few years? That setting seems stale and hopelessly limited when pitted against the internet, which opens a portal to a live stream of information provided by billions of minds."

What do these changes tell us about audiology education? Will we have the vision to place audiology on the cutting-edge of science and education? As a member of a rigorous academic discipline, audiology has no choice but to embrace these ideas and include them in the learning environment. **A**

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