



APDP and Joint Degree Programs

*Research to Understand APDP in the Context of Inter-Institutional
Joint Degree Programs in U.S. Higher Education*

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I. Introduction

Presently, the Kern Family Foundation is working with 28 institutions that are implementing Accelerated Pastoral Degree Programs (APDP). By design, these programs bring together bachelors' and masters' programs with a view to deliver accelerated, streamlined and rigorous ministerial training that reduces both the time and cost for enrolled students. By nature, these innovative programs require differing layers of collaboration between departments and programs within a given institution as well as, in some cases, collaboration between different institutions.

A growing trend in U.S. higher education is various forms of collaboration and joint or dual degree programs. In a 2003 article discussing joint degree programs in American higher education, Michael and Balraj point out that collaborative or joint degree programs between institutions are on the increase in American higher education, but little is known about such programs nor has there been much research or scholarly writing on them (Michael & Balraj, 132). Their work is a helpful start in understanding both the nomenclature and models associated with joint degree programs and providing a framework for better understanding this phenomenon in higher education.

The research set out to learn from this trend in U.S. higher education and investigate several questions: What factors contribute to the success of joint degree programs and what can we learn about advantages and disadvantages of joint degree programs? The hope is that the findings from this research will provide a backdrop for the FWE team to better understand APDP in the broader context of collaboration and joint degree programs in U.S. higher education; and thus reflect on potential ways to leverage that understanding for greater effectiveness of APDP.

II. Methodology and Scope of Research

The research began with a review of the research literature related to joint degree programs specific to U.S. higher education. Subsequent to and based upon the findings of the literature review, an interview protocol was developed and the program directors of 6 different colleges or universities¹ involved in inter-institutional joint/dual degree programs were interviewed during the summer of 2020. Those interviewed were asked the following questions:

1. What defines success for the collaborative joint-dual degree program?
2. What factors contribute most to the success of the collaborative effort?
3. What have been the greatest challenges or obstacles to the program?
4. What are the advantages of collaborative dual-degree programs for the students and/or institution?

As well, interviewees were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 (5 being "very important", 1 being "not at all important") how they viewed each of the four factors suggested by the research literature as contributing to program success:

- Relationships of trust
- Awareness of similarities and differences in institutional mission and culture
- Frequent and transparent communication
- Faculty buy-in

As the literature review progressed, it became clear that scholarly work related specifically to joint/dual degree programs is still relatively scant—even seventeen years since Michael and Balraj observed in 2003 that:

¹ The six institutions that participated in the interviews were: Vassar College (VC), Georgia Institute of Technology (GT), Duke University (DK), Dartmouth College (DT), Colby College (CB) and Bard College at Simon's Rock (SR).

The number of joint degree programs is increasing and future demands on higher education most likely will compel institutional leaders to encourage this kind of collaboration. However, the literature on joint degree programs is thin, offering limited information for institutional leaders contemplating joint degree initiatives. (Michael & Balraj, 131)

In spite of the relative paucity of research specific to joint degree programs, related broader areas such as curricular joint ventures and inter-institutional collaboration in higher education provided helpful insights into the research questions posed for this study. But indeed, as Lightcap noted in his 2013 doctoral dissertation, “*the higher education literature is not deep with respect to understanding how to determine the effectiveness of collaborations*” (Lightcap, 5).

This report presents findings from the literature review of research and the subsequent interviews that took place.

III. Preliminary Observations

Michael and Balraj provide a helpful summary of models of joint degree programs in their 2003 study. They define four types of degree programs commonly found on higher education campuses in North America:

- **Type 1: Traditional degree** programs which describe the majority of programs offered on campuses,
- **Type 2: A single degree program offered jointly by separate institutions.** When one of the institutions is a non-degree-granting partner, such a program is described as “**collaborative degrees**”; when both institutions are degree granting, the program is a true **joint degree program**.
- **Type 3: Dual degree programs** describe two separate degree programs combined together as a joint degree but offered by a single institution.
- **Type 4: Joint dual degree programs** describe two separate degree programs offered by two separate institutions, but joined together as joint degrees. Under this arrangement, two different institutions combine efforts to provide two degree certifications; also referred to as a **joint/dual degree program** (Michael & Balraj, 138-139).

Using Michael and Balraj’s taxonomy, the type of degree programs that research is concerned with are “inter-institutional” joint degree programs where collaboration exists between different institutions, thus, Type 2 and Type 4 collaborative efforts as outlined above. Specific to the APDP, *Type 4* would be the category that many APDP’s fall into.

IV. Findings – Parameters of Success

The research literature did not offer substantive data on parameters defining success for inter-institutional degree programs. However, interviews of directors at six different colleges and universities shed light on this issue. All six institutions defined success in terms of program retention and graduation or in terms of job and career placement or advancement or in two cases, a combination of both. Four of the institutions spoke in differing ways about job placement and career success as an important indicator of success and four spoke of program retention and graduation as the parameter for success. Below are just several of interviewee comments when asked what defines success:

Graduates’ trajectory 3-5 years out from graduation has been very strong, some have gone on to PhD work and others have stayed in the marketplace. When we hear from 90-95% of the students that come back and they report having a challenging but great experience (VC).

We have our own career services office and a 90-95% placement rate for our graduates within six months of graduation (DT).

We look at success as academic success at the partnering school, once they leave here as well as what they do with their degree after graduation—in terms of their career. Unfortunately, most of that is anecdotal (SR).

Performance of partner schools' students in our program. We track their incoming GPA and outgoing GPA as they graduate. We want to see kids graduate and experience academic success (GT).

The perspective of deans and program directors on what defines program success is not surprising and is in many ways self-evident. However, the unique nature of joint/dual degree programs that offer opportunities for students to receive two degrees from two distinct programs and colleges in an efficient and integrated way begs the question: What factors lead to such successful collaborations?

V. Findings – Factors Influencing Success

Analyses in the research literature related to joint degree programs at the masters and doctoral level across varied fields including nursing, education, public health and law provide helpful insight into the questions posed by our research. As well, insights from Michael and Balraj's research, other studies on curriculum joint ventures and inter-institutional collaboration provide additional insight in discerning common factors related to the success, advantages and disadvantages of collaborative or joint degree programs in higher education.

Two success factors emerged across the research literature that contribute to the success of inter-institutional joint degree programs in higher education: strong personal relationships between stakeholders in each respective institution and faculty involvement and support. Additional success factors that emerged as common to at least two of the programs studied include: commitment of institutional leadership, attention to organizational culture and mission and effective communication.

What follows is a brief discussion of these factors from the standpoint of the research literature and augmented from the findings of interviews of the program directors from six different institutions involved in joint-dual degree collaborations.

A. Personal Relationships

One of the factors that emerged in the research contributing to the success of either joint degree programs or collaborative efforts in higher education is the importance of strong personal relationships among individuals at the partner institutions. In Eckel's 2008 study of three different curricular joint ventures, he suggests that attentiveness to the relational aspects of partnership development is at least as important, if not more important than developing curricula and determining financial and operational structures. He writes:

The most salient question regarding academic alliances is not how we organize ourselves to get the job done effectively, but who are we and how do we figure out how to work well with one another. . . . One important difference between the corporate sector and the academic one is that colleges and universities have little organizational slack to innovate. This fact might suggest that because they lack the resources to invest broadly in innovation, any useful activity with a trusted partner is worth considering (Eckel, 634).

Kezar observed that the importance of relationships and networks may indeed be a distinctive feature of higher education collaborations because stakeholders are influenced and

persuaded by peers and rewards tend to have less importance than prestige; thus relationships and networks have a much deeper influence in successful collaborations. (Kezar, 857). Lightcap researched perspectives that leaders in higher education have regarding effective inter-institutional collaborations. He notes that personal relationships among key actors in collaborations across social sectors, not just in higher education, have a direct effect on the success and longevity of collaborative efforts (Lightcap, 26). Citing Lunnan and Haugland's work:

Personal relationships serve the role of smoothing company relationships by providing points of contact for resolving conflicts, discussing future developments, guiding interactions, and enhancing information flows. Direct personal interactions provide a foundation for developing trust. (Lunnan & Haugland, 2008, p. 548 quoted in Lightcap, 26).

The aforementioned works complement the research done by Kanter on successful business alliances in the 1990's. Her research of 37 companies across 11 countries suggested that in the business world, successful alliances cannot be managed or controlled merely by formal systems but require a dense web of interpersonal connections and internal infrastructures that enhance learning. (Kanter, 97). The importance of the relational side of collaborative efforts was also reinforced in Offerman's 1997 study of a collaborative nursing degree program involving five schools of nursing in the University of Wisconsin system. Offerman interviewed faculty and staff associated with the development of the program to get their perspectives on the variables critical to the success of the program. Among the variables perceived as critical was the human relations aspects of the emerging collaboration that created a sense of co-ownership and interpersonal connections. (Offerman, 47)

The deans and program coordinators of six schools involved in joint-dual degree programs were interviewed. Five institutions represented in the interviews offer dual-degree programs at the Bachelor's level and in the science or engineering fields. The other institution (Duke University) is on the Master's end of a BA (or BS), offering a Master's in environmental management or forestry.

Three of the program directors interviewed alluded either directly or indirectly to the importance of strong, interpersonal relationships among individuals at the respective institutions responsible for seeing the to the success of the collaboration. The dean at Georgia Tech, which partners with numerous smaller, liberal arts colleges for engineering emphasized that "*our most successful partnerships are if we have a good relationship at the faculty level and at the administration level.*" (GT). Several smaller, liberal arts colleges that partner with Dartmouth University in a dual-degree engineering program highlighted the importance of the strong personal relationship with the program director at Dartmouth. Indeed, Vassar College noted: *Whenever I need help, they are always there.* (VC). The Dartmouth program director emphasized the priority she places on traveling to the partner/feeder schools regularly.

When asked to rate the importance of *relationships of trust* for the success of the collaborative program, five of the six individuals interviewed rate this factor very high, either a 4 or a 5. The average score for this "success factor" was 4.5—underlining program directors' view that trust relationships between staff at respective institutions are important to very important for the success of these collaborative programs.

B. Faculty Involvement and Support of Institutional Leadership

Though not surprising, faculty support and involvement in the development and implementation of joint degree programs is a common factor that emerged in the research literature. In a collaborative, inter-institutional Master of Arts degree in education offered by two state universities in Maryland, *the involvement of faculty from both campuses working together on course development was an invaluable asset to program continuity and implementation* (Anderson and Whitford, p. 4). In analyzing factors that influence universities' collaborations on joint doctoral degree programs in California, Harris and Williams interviewed 14 university leaders responsible for developing or administering joint programs for the University of California and California State University systems. One key finding was that strong faculty interest from both collaborating institutions is essential in creating and developing successful programs. As well, prior professional collaboration and relationships between faculty members from partnering institutions also contributed to program effectiveness (Harris and Williams, 129).

Hueston's research on joint programs in veterinary medicine and public health also support the importance of faculty engagement in program success:

A successful joint program requires strong advocates at both the college of veterinary medicine and the school of public health. Support is required from both faculty and administrators. Furthermore, a critical mass of committed faculty must exist at each institution (at least three . . . at each partner institution) (Hueston, 156).

In a 1997 analysis of a joint nursing degree program among several institutions in New Jersey, researchers discuss the importance of true institutional commitment of each school for the joint program to succeed. Faculty members were seen as playing a key role in solidifying institutional commitment: *Because joint programs must be housed in specific departments or schools of partner institutions, the faculties of these academic units must become integrated and focused on the program's goals* (Quinless, Elliot & Saiff, 302).

Quinless, et al. concluded that one of the most critical factors to developing successful joint degree programs is clear and strong support from the institutions' president and boards of trustees. *Presidential support must cascade publicly throughout the partnering organizations to ensure initial and continued cooperation of various operational units. . .* (Quinless et al., 300). Offerman's research in factors contributing to successful joint program development revealed that the support of top administrative leadership is also critical to successful program development. Several respondents' comments were telling:

One respondent stated that support of deans and vice-chancellors was "absolutely critical" and that these people "have got to be right there from the get-go". Another respondent stated that such support "empowered the faculty" (Offerman, 43).

One of the six schools we interviewed mentioned faculty buy-in as an important factor for program success. Georgia Tech, which partners with over 12 liberal arts colleges and universities in a dual-degree engineering program stated that *"Georgia Tech faculty have to say this is important to us. Our most successful partnerships are if we have a good relationship with the faculty members <of the other school>,"* referring to what makes for a successful collaborative program. Another smaller college, Bard-Simon's Rock, which partners with several larger universities pointed out that some partnerships haven't worked out due to *administrative morass* and that success *"requires investment and buy-in especially*

at a high level and that the accepting school has to have a willingness to commit energy to the program”(SR).

When asked to rate the importance of *faculty support* for the success of the collaborative program, five of the six individuals interviewed rate this factor high or very high, either a 4 or a 5. The average score for this “success factor” was 4.33—underlining program directors’ view that faculty support and buy-in at respective institutions are viewed as important to very important for the success of these collaborative programs.

C. *Effective Communication*

For any collaboration or partnership to be effective, whether at the personal or institutional level, common sense dictates that effective communication among parties is essential for there to be any degree of success. In differing ways, the previous aforementioned factors all depend on effective, ongoing and honest communication. Establishing personal relationships of trust across institutions requires effective and frequent communication; engaging faculty in planning and program implementation necessitates wise, honest and diplomatic communication with and among faculty members. The commitment of institutional leadership to joint programs and inter-institutional collaboration must be genuine, winsome and comprehensive, touching all stakeholders.

Among the cases studied, Anderson and Whitford (1997) underscore the importance of open, ongoing and honest communication for the success of the joint MA degree in teaching at the University of Maryland. Hueston (2008) emphasizes the importance of good communication and proactive problem solving early on in joint degree program development which also helps develop long term trust and credibility—factors which also complement and underscore the importance of strong personal relationships between institutional stakeholders. Quinless, et al suggest that all communication is “effective” in joint nursing degree efforts and considers communication as the overriding ingredient to success of such programs (Quinless, et al. 305).

Of the six institutions interviewed as part of this research, four highlighted the importance of frequent and effective communication between partners institutions. Referring to her counterpart at the partner institution, the program director at Vassar stated: “*we talk all the time and interact about students, their needs, housing. We also have sat down and gone through all the curricular changes. . . . Whenever I need any help, they are there always*”. (VC). The dean at Georgia Tech emphasized keeping students’ needs at the forefront and that effective inter-institutional communication is a big part of that: “*We need to make it seamless for the kids who are freshmen. . .making sure we have the right procedures in place for course selection and sequence . . . so we communicate with the person who runs the program at the partner institution—we have a relationship with them.*”(GT).

When asked to rate the importance of *communication* for the success of the collaborative program, four of the six individuals interviewed rate this factor as either important or very important—a , 4 or a 5 and two interviewees rated communication at 3 and 2.5, suggesting it is less important. The average score for communication as a success factor is still over 4.1, suggesting that overall, it was rated as an important factor in contributing to successful collaborative degree programs.

D. *Attention to Organizational Culture and Mission*

Every university or college has a distinct organizational culture that is influenced by a variety of factors including institutional leadership, faculty roles, institutional mission and processes as well as its institutional history. Sporn (1996) asserts that a university's culture also involves congruity between goals and strategies as well as between beliefs and behavior. In the study of joint doctoral programs in California, researchers found that differences among the organizational culture of participating universities were often the source of challenges encountered in program implementation and a mutual understanding of respective organizational cultures goes a long way toward program effectiveness:

Joint doctoral collaborations are most effective when administrators understand each other's university system processes, which can be thought of as component of an institution's culture and language (Harris & Williams, 129).

Papalewis and Minnis observed that institutional cultures and processes unique to a university express themselves through unique organizational "languages". In joint degree programs where two institutions are coming together to create a unique program, learning the "language" of the partner institution is necessary for successful joint programs (Papalewis & Minnis, 24).

Attention to differences in organizational culture were also noted in research on joint degree programs in public health and veterinary medicine. Hueston asserts that differences between public health professionals and veterinarians in their professional cultures must be understood as well as the cultural differences in their respective educational enterprises. *The teaching hospital looms large in the overall management of a college of veterinary medicine. . . schools of public health in contrast, tend to have proportionally larger research components. . . . These professional and organizational differences represent both opportunities and challenges (Hueston, 157).*

A study of joint nursing degree programs in New Jersey suggested several ingredients for a successful joint academic partnership, including an awareness and understanding of the differing missions and organizational cultures of the respective institutions. In terms of university mission, both similarities and differences need to be understood by all parties with a view toward potential impact on curricula. Differences in mission are not viewed as an undermining factor, but rather as a potential strength as each institution can contribute in their area of strength without necessarily expanding beyond their stated mission. Understanding organizational culture was also essential in terms of faculty performance expectations as well as an understanding of the formal and informal mechanisms in the way things are accomplished in the respective institutions. (Quinless et al, 305)

Though our interviewees touched on institutional factors that they viewed as contributing to program success, nobody directly alluded to awareness of institutional culture or mission as determinants of program success for collaborative degree programs. However, such an awareness was implied in the comments of several schools. Duke's program director highlighted the quality and value of a Duke education as an inherent factor to successful collaborative efforts. The simple statement: *"They get a Duke education"* implies an institutional conviction and awareness of the value and worth of a Duke degree: *Duke is one of the top 2 or 3 programs in the country and students love it. . . . we believe we have something very special that we can offer the students. . . they are getting cutting edge coursework, our program is very personalized. (DK).* As well, Dartmouth's program director highlighted that their dual degree program is highly competitive and attracts top students; noting that among the advantages of the dual degree program is simply that *"it's*

Dartmouth". Like Duke, this statement implies an institutional conviction of the value and worth of an engineering degree from this Ivy League institution.

It is noteworthy that the six institutions interviewed are all part of collaborative efforts characterized by either a “*small college – big college*” relationship or a “*liberal arts college– technical university*” relationship. Such “blended” partnerships were seen by those interviewed as highly advantageous to the students because of the opportunity for students to experience the unique benefits that each educational context affords a student. The dean at Georgia Tech stated it well: “*the dual program combines 3 years at a small college to get your mo-jo and small college experience—and get your feet on the ground and then they come to us—these dual degree programs open a world of opportunities*”(GT).

E. Additional Factors - Institutional Reputation and Institutional Flexibility & Friendliness

Institutional Reputation. The interviewees from both Duke and Dartmouth suggested that their schools’ reputation and prestige—be it the program itself or the university’s reputation as whole contributes to program success and also attracts top students. Structurally, both institutions receive students who complete the final year or two years of the whole dual degree program; thus students receive their BA or BS degree from their initial school and finish with their second degree from either Duke or Dartmouth. The program director at Duke emphasized “*the quality and value of a Duke education . . . we believe we have something very special that we can offer students*”(DK). In the case of Dartmouth, students can choose a traditional 3-2 scenario where they finish their final two years at Dartmouth. However, most opt for the 2-1-1-1 option: Students complete two years at their liberal arts college, take their junior year at Dartmouth, return for their senior year at their college to complete their BA degree and then finish the Bachelor’s in Engineering in year 5 at Dartmouth. Dartmouth’s program director pointed out that students who choose the 2-1-1-1 option and return to finish their senior year at their liberal arts college, speak very highly of the “*reputation of the program at Dartmouth*”—such word-of-mouth PR of the quality of their first year at Dartmouth is seen as a significant factor in program success.

Institutional Flexibility & Friendliness. Five of the six schools interviewed suggested in various ways that institutional flexibility and friendliness contribute to the success of collaborative dual-degree programs. The red thread in all of the interviewee comments suggests that institutions be “user-friendly” when it comes to students’ encounters with the administration and the necessary processes and systems to apply, participate and ultimately succeed in the program. Doing what it takes to “*avoid administrative morass*” (SR), “*breaking down institutional walls and becoming more personable. . . it’s so important to us as an institution to be both excellent but also hands-on and personable*” (GT), having “*infrastructures set up that allows student to communicate with the school*” (CB), “*treating dual-degree students the same as all other students*” (DK) and working hard to create “*institutional stability through a consistent cadre of mentors and advisors*” (DT)—these statements suggest that friendliness, clarity and flexibility of institutional procedures and culture all play a significant role in program success from the standpoint of the deans and program directors.

VI. Advantages and Challenges of Joint Degree Programs

Advantages. To varying degrees, the joint degree programs represented and discussed in the literature alluded to both advantages and challenges experienced in program development and implementation. Three of the studies indicated that joint degree programs provide or strengthen the chance for minority or under-represented populations to participate in higher education programs that would otherwise be

perceived as inaccessible (Anderson & Whitford, Quinless et al., Michael & Balraj). This was emphasized especially in one of the institutions that participated in our interviews. Georgia Tech's dual degree program in engineering has nineteen participating schools with five of those institutions being historically black universities or colleges <HBUC>. The academic dean of Georgia Tech pointed out that the program began in the 1980's with Spelman and Morehouse Colleges, two HBUC's that were within walking distance from Georgia Tech. He stated: *Today, we graduate more African-Americans than anyone at both the grad and under-grad level. If you eliminate our 3-2 program, we could not make that statement. . . these dual degree programs open a world of opportunities" (GT).*

Another advantage of joint degree programs is the pathway they provide for greater efficiency, cost-effectiveness; passing on an economy of time and cost to students. (Offerman, Quinless et al., 306). Michael and Balraj suggest a number of other advantages to students including exposing students to a broader range of educational experiences, providing them access to more resources and the potential, depending on the degree program, for students to have their feet in two professional worlds. Advantages to the institutions include the potential to enhance their educational offerings and capacity through the synergy created by the joint program— attracting students that otherwise may not have shown interest in the institution (Michael & Balraj, 135-136).

In our interviews, several directors mentioned both the cost and time savings afforded to participating students (Duke and Georgia Tech) as well as the opportunity for students to experience different educational environments and pedagogies. As alluded to earlier, the dual-degree programs give many students the chance to experience a “*small-school-bigger school*” environment. As well, students benefit from the “*liberal arts – technical education*” combination as well. Several interviewees pointed out the chance students get to have a different kind of educational experience—“*a liberal arts experience at Vassar with a team and project-based class experience at Dartmouth*”(VS).

Four schools emphasized the recruiting and PR advantage that dual-degree programs provide their schools. Vassar College pointed out that because of the dual-degree program offered in partnership with Dartmouth, “*we get applicants to Vassar who wouldn't otherwise apply*”(VS). Two of the other liberal arts colleges interviewed expressed similar sentiments. Duke emphasized the positive impact the dual degree program is overall for the institution's reputation, “*the dual degree program gets our name out there, it's very positive publicity and shows we are flexible and like to work with students*”(DK).

Challenges. In their discussion of joint programs among institutions in Oregon, Ford and Ziegen note that the historical framework in American higher education was primarily individualized and thus the structures and culture that emerged in higher education reinforced individualized work rather than collaborative work. Citing the work of Kezar and Lester (2009), they point out that the reward systems overwhelmingly support individualistic work and collaborative efforts can run the risk of becoming ancillary (Kezar & Lester cited in Ford & Zeigen, 5).

Other challenges mentioned in the research literature include overcoming faculty resistance or suspicion (Anderson and Whitford, 5); learning to navigate well differing organizational cultures, (Harris and Williams, 128); students potentially having to deal with dual bureaucracies and getting institutional clarity on “who owns the degree”, especially as institutions compete for state funding based on the number of degrees conferred (Michael & Balraj, 137).

In our interviews with the program directors of the six schools, the most common challenges cited relate to the differences in institutional cultures, pace and rhythm, which is also supported in the literature. Differences in academic pace was cited as a challenge as well as simply the institutional and cultural differences students experience between a small liberal arts institution and then going to a larger state or private university. One program director discussed the challenge of harmonizing between their

semester-hour system and the quarter-hour system of their partner school—not insurmountable, but a challenge, nonetheless.

VII. Discussion and Summary Conclusions

Research reflected in scholarly literature on joint degree programs, especially inter-institutional joint programs is relatively sparse. However, the findings of this research, both in the literature review and in our interviews suggest a number of important factors that contribute to the success of such inter-institutional degree programs.

Strong and positive personal relationships of trust between individuals working in both partner institutions are important both as a foundational starting point for collaborative effort and for sustaining long-term, effective joint programs. The program directors interviewed rated this factor as very important in contributing to program success and indeed underscores the importance of peers who are responsible for program implementation to know and trust one another. Trust at multiple levels in collaborating institutions is important as well—both at the senior leadership level as well as those responsible for implementation and on-going engagement. The literature alludes to the importance of institutional trust at senior levels especially when new collaboratives are being forged. In her research on organizational and corporate alliances Kanter notes that “*successful company relationships nearly always depend on the creation and maintenance of a comfortable personal relationship between the senior executives*” (Kanter, 99). She also notes institutional trust at the level of senior leadership eventually needs to become institutionalized and that success in the on-going engagement phase of any alliance depends upon healthy balance between the personal and organizational: “*rapport between leadership must be supplemented by approval, formal or informal, of other people in the organization*” (Kanter, 102). Our interviews with those leading the implementation of joint/dual degree programs highlighted the necessity of positive, trusting personal relationships among stakeholders at both institutions. The comment from one program director is instructive as she reflected on her relationships with her counterpart at the partner institution: *Whenever I need help, they are always there (VC).*

Faculty involvement and support as well as the commitment of leadership in both partnering institutions of a joint degree program are contributing factors to success. The literature suggests that engaging early on diverse faculty in both relationship building and planning is important. As well, assessing and leveraging faculty members’ relationship constellation with the faculty of the partnering institution can contribute to the success of the program. Program directors interviewed rated this factor as important-very important in contributing to program success. The dean at Georgia Tech said it well: *Our most successful partnerships are if we have a good relationship with a faculty member—like we do with Morehouse College (GT).*

Effective, frequent and transparent communication is essential for program success and closely tied to strong inter-personal relationships among those leading and coordinating the collaborative programs. Program directors interviewed rated this factor as important in contributing to program success. The director at Colby College put it succinctly: *Dartmouth people are easy to work with. Jenna responds to my emails (CB).*

Understanding and awareness of the unique value that one’s institution brings to the collaborative effort as well similarities and differences in institutional mission and culture and that of the partnering institution is important. Though the program directors interviewed rated this factor as less important in contributing to program success, each director or dean interviewed was very aware of and articulate in expressing the unique value that their institution brings to the joint/dual degree program. The director at Georgia Tech said it well: *Being a state university to promote progress and serve our society is inherent to who we are. These dual degree programs give us an opportunity to give kids a different level of success. They can think of being a mechanical engineer instead of just a mechanic. . . These dual*

degree programs open a world of opportunities and it's so important for to us as an institution to be both excellent and hands-on and personable. We are not MIT, but we are a great school (GT).

Institutional friendliness and flexibility are a contributing factor to program success. Higher education institutions have the potential to be daunting and intimidating in terms of their complexity and potential bureaucracy—especially to students who are the principal stakeholders such institutions exist to serve. Institutional flexibility and friendliness was a common factor that emerged from our interviews as a contributing factor to program success: Institutions are made up of people. . . so we try to break down institutional walls (GT).

VIII. APDP Implications and Concluding Remarks

The five factors summarized in the previous section suggest a number of implications for future APDP initiatives that seek to leverage inter-institutional collaboration. These implications fall into two broad categories—structural implications and other practical implications.

A. Structural Implications

The importance of ownership and support at both the faculty and institutional leadership level cannot be over-emphasized. Such a synergy of ownership will be essential to maximize the potential for a successful inter-institutional APDP and we recommend two related structural implications:

- *Structural Implication 1:* When forging new inter-institutional APDP's, positive relationships of trust should be cultivated among senior-level executive leaders—president, provost and deans at both institutions. The support and endorsement of leadership at both collaborating institutions should be sought after and obtained early on and prior to program design and development. The FWE team at the Foundation can play a critical role in brokering such support with institutional leadership.
- *Structural Implication 2:* Institutional leadership from each partner school should consider appointing a faculty advisor to serve as a representative from each partner school to provide guidance, faculty interface and input to APDP program directors. This advising role can begin during the initial program development phase to foster faculty buy-in from the beginning and continue on during program implementation.

Program directors are key individuals in the success of current APDP's and will be essential to the success of future in inter-institutional programs. Two additional structural implications reflect this reality:

- *Structural Implication 3:* When developing new inter-institutional APDP's, participating institutions should ensure that APDP program directors have the necessary responsibility and authority to be proactive in identifying and responding to potential institutional challenges or blockage points that students may encounter. This highlights the importance of the program director being the face of the APDP and having the influence to foster institutional friendliness and flexibility on behalf of students.
- *Structural Implication 4:* Program directors (or those charged with leading and stewarding the development and growth of APDP's) should foster a growing professional relationship of trust and collaboration with their

counterparts at partnering institutions. Such a relationship should also include effective and timely communication with their counterparts.

B. Other Practical Implications (PI)

- *PI 1:* The program director is the key person for the effective development, stewardship and growth of the APDP. Institutions should ensure that prospective and current APDP program directors have strong, personable communications skills and are effective and efficient in verbal and written communication.
- *PI2:* Program directors who coordinate the Masters' level degree should make personal visits to partnering undergraduate institutions at least annually to promote the dual-degree program among prospective undergraduates and prospective in-coming freshmen.
- *PIF3:* For future inter-institutional APDP's, each participating institution should articulate in what way and to what extent the APDP reflects or expresses their school's culture and mission, recognizing that each institutional partner brings a unique value to the collaboration. Such conversations around culture and mission and unique value should also take place among senior leadership and will help foster both mission alignment and senior leadership support and endorsement.
- *PIF4:* When developing new APDP initiatives and corresponding structures and processes, ask the following question: How will students experience this program and the processes being put in place from an institutional culture standpoint—friendly and personable or aloof and overly hierarchical and cumbersome? If institutional friendliness and flexibility indeed contribute to program success then creating structures and processes that are clear, simple and efficient from the start will be important.

C. Concluding Remarks

The factors contributing to the success of joint/dual degree programs that emerged from both the research literature and from our interviews are not un-related, nor surprising. Developing and leveraging healthy trust relationships among institutional leadership, program directors and even faculty are dependent upon and necessitate effective, efficient and frequent communication. When collaborative efforts are characterized by these realities, institutions become more user-friendly and flexible for students as well as for institutional staff and stakeholders. It is also important for stakeholders at respective institutions to be aware of both their unique value as well as their institutional culture—the similarities and differences vis a vis the partner institution in order to better navigate challenges as they arise.

At their foundation, collaborative joint/dual degree programs are human endeavors and should exist to serve students' educational, vocational and professional aspirations and goals. The potential that exists when educational institutions of diverse demographics, culture, programming and emphases join together to create a new educational pathway for students can indeed be greater than the sum of the individual institutional "parts". The positive and unique educational experience created by the collaborative combination of "*small-liberal arts college*" and "*larger-technical engineering university*" is but one example of this and was cited by the majority of our interviewees.

If *Accelerated Pastoral Degree Programs* between differing undergraduate and graduate institutions become more prevalent, then significant potential exists to leverage the unique value and contribution of those respective institutions. And as those institutions join collaboratively, they can create educational experiences for students that have the potential to be greater than the sum of the individual institutional programs and parts, forging yet new pathways to equip ministerial church leaders for our changing world.

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