

Thank God I Don't Have to Thank God It's Friday

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Scenes

I want to describe some scenes, scenes of the past and the present and those I hope we will create together.

Once upon a time, there was a school. It was large, important, presumed to be good for society. It actually was good for society, but it was also flabby and harried, more like a too successful and too tired and too compromising businessman. It was usually, but not always, a happy place. Consequently, people came and went. Not only did the students come and go--students always come and go--but the professors came and went. Then the students stopped coming, and new professors stopped coming. Those professors who remained did so because they had nowhere else to go. Most who left, went reluctantly. Although they too had nowhere else to go, they weren't permitted to remain. The school became an always unhappy place, with occasional displays of gaiety, sometimes around the start of a new academic year, or at Christmas time, or at commencement, or on Friday. It was a "Thank God It's Friday" school. Slowly but inevitably, it was dying of a lengthy terminal condition: purposelessness. Its students would come in large numbers one year and stay away the next. Its faculty were like most Education faculty: fairly bright, fairly competent, good hearted and caring people. Among them was a great professor or two, maybe a few more because, after all, this is a great university. Its courses were catch-as-catch-can, providing evening jobs for some of the professors and day work for the lucky few who taught the real students, the best of the lot, the undergraduates. Final doctoral orals were few and they were uninspiring

secretive affairs conducted in the pinched offices of the senior professors who seemed ashamed that they had a doctoral student or two while others were lucky to get any student or two. Sure, there were still lots of committees, still lots of things to do, but only if one didn't think about what he was doing; only if one didn't remind himself that the committees were after all mindless and purposeless. Sure, there were classes, and assignments, and papers to read. But, even as before, there was no time to read books, much less to write them. It was sad to see what had become of a fine, even if flabby, place.

Let me tell you another story, about a school where ~~if people say~~ "Thank God It's Friday" it's because they have something special to look forward to on the weekend, not something to run away from. Let me tell you about a school where people also thank God there is a Monday, where the school is part of one's life and not a means to enjoy another life. There are rich scenes to describe here. This school is a lively place, but not a chaotic one. It bustles, but with good purpose and not aimlessly, doing things and not looking for things to do. It's what the State Regents call a "high demand" school, an institution that offers admission to but a portion of its freshman applicants, an institution that draws its students as much outside of as inside its immediate region. It's a school that people want to go to and be from. It's a school that suffers no shortages of student applicants and faculty applicants, even in the best of student and faculty "markets." One envisions a School of Education where a doctoral oral is an event, to be attended by many faculty and students, by

people not connected with the candidate or the department but interested nevertheless in scholarly understanding of important problems. This is a school where faculty have time for colloquia, lunches, interviewing candidates, looking up references in the library, browsing in the bookstore, reading, writing, studying, observing, meeting a student, stopping to talk with a colleague, visiting one another, visiting with students, visiting an elementary school, being part of a dinner club. This is a school where faculty know their students, as well as their advisees. And they know each other, and not only to say hello and goodbye but to say something about their work and ideas. Such is the kind of school we must become, else there may not be much reason or need to preserve what we have already achieved collectively and as individuals.

This is the last of three papers which have been presented since the beginning of the academic year. The first dealt with a philosophy. The second with the so-called facts about us. The third, this paper, treats ends and means. I suggest that you read and discuss each paper. I do not want them to be set aside easily. If you show that I'm wrong, the script can be changed. If I'm not wrong, then we must change. I know that some of you must surely be troubled with what I have said, and possibly with how I have delivered "the news." Some have commented to me that I have been too blunt. Others have felt that I have been too gentle. It is possible that I "hit" you too hard to be soft and too soft to be hard. As I noted at the conclusion of the second paper, it hasn't been easy for me to talk to friends the way I have. But there is no easy way.

You may have read on Sunday, September 26, in the New York Times,

that Rockefeller University has been "hit by storm over tenure." This great graduate center with claims of being the leading such school in the world, an institution that has nine Nobel Laureates, an institution with an endowment of approximately 170 million dollars, is in serious trouble, both financially and insofar as faculty morale is concerned. In trying to balance the budget, its president has suggested to several distinguished tenured faculty members that they might be happier elsewhere. The faculty hit back, suggesting that he is, among other epithets, a maladroit bumbler.

There must always be maladroit bumlbers during these times, because decent people have great difficulty in making decisions that may adversely affect personal lives. You should be cautious with those who make hard decisions easy ones and painful decisions happy ones.

The remainder of this paper will briefly: summarize faculty perspectives as expressed in your responses to the series of questions I posed to you on September 20; present the goals of this School of Education as I envisioned them; and suggest means to achieve those goals.

Faculty Perspectives

The faculty perceive that we have problems, not irreconcilable problems but ones we must face immediately. They do not appear to believe that they are primary sources of those problems, although a number of them worry about our unproductive faculty, and few among them see themselves as primary solutions. They feel themselves to be harried to distraction, expected to be too many things to too many people. They believe that they have suffered from unclear goals and policies. They seem unanimous in their belief that we need a new facility, and very soon. Curiously,

many articulate a wish to be told what our specific problems are, and one gains the impression that a number of them want to be told exactly how to mitigate those problems. They feel that we have an outstanding reputation as a School of Education, gained essentially by several professors of national repute, entrepreneurs for the most part who have carved out strong and unique programs.

What do they want? A clear statement of goals and means. A new school. The reduction or modification of school-wide committees. The continuance, indeed enhancement, of an all-university School of Education. Freedom. (You have noted that there is also a call for stronger direction). Openness. Elimination of weak programs. Restructure of the Teacher Education program. Reexamination of extended campus. A decision finally made on the Ed.D./Ph.D. But most of all, they ask for a collegueship, a relationship, purposefulness. That need is pervasive, not only in their written documentation but in speaking with them day after day. The faculty scenario demands return to those reasons that originally brought us together, and to those activities that have been our historic charge. Changed somewhat in light of all that has happened during our lifetimes? Certainly. Focused more than ever before in the community as well as on campus? Certainly. Recognizing not only how we have changed but how society has changed? Certainly. But a return to basic principles nevertheless, and with direction and encouragement and support. This is what I perceive the faculty wants. And I agree with them.

Goals

1. Quality preparation of potential leaders in those fields in which we have unusual strength and national prominence (for example, and examples are always risky business: Reading, Instructional Technology, Special Education, X, Y, and Z.)

2. Quality preparation of teachers and clinicians on undergraduate and beginning graduate levels, emphasizing capabilities to deal with diverse individuals in normalized settings.

3. Quality preparation of non-teaching support personnel to either beginning full time work experiences or to enter advanced training programs.

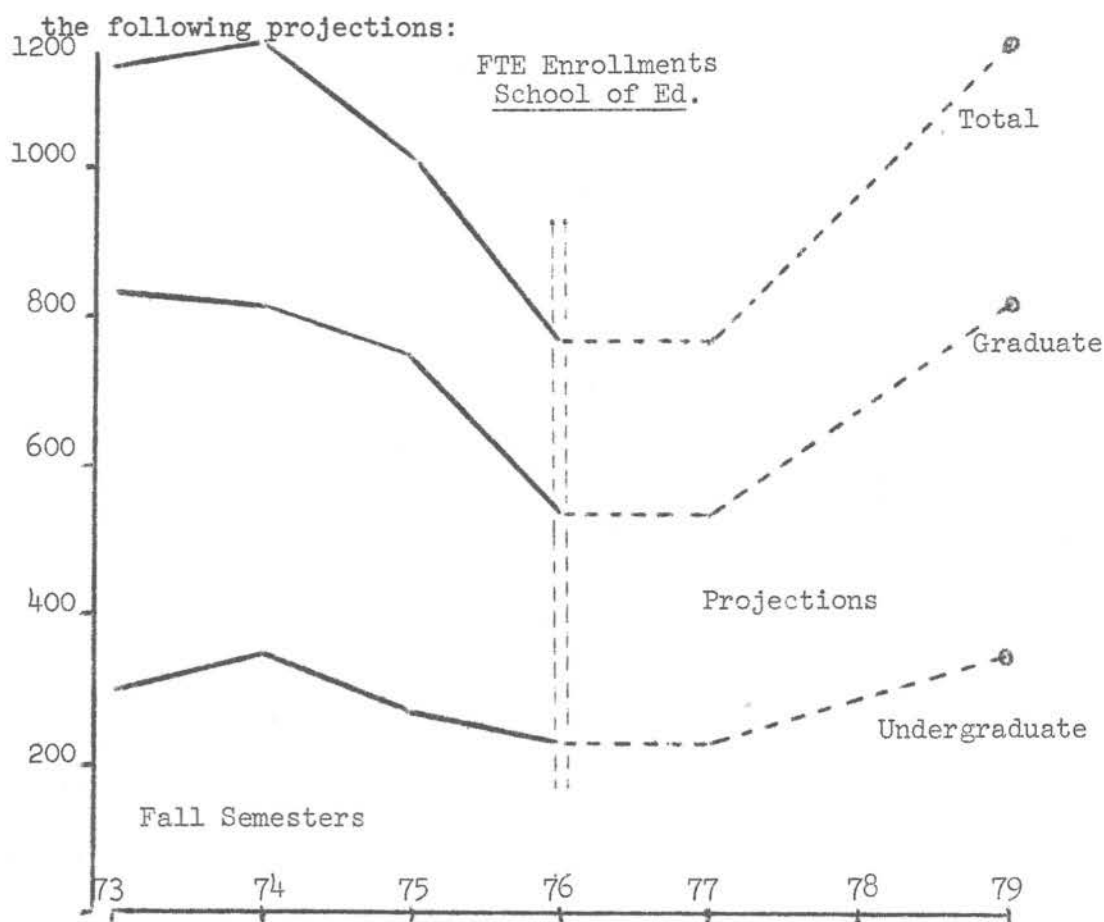
4. The construction of a new School of Education by 1982.

5. The regular creation and examination of learning environments, thereby offering our faculty and students the clinical experiences, research, and other scholarly activities they must have.

6. The establishment of centers and programs of national significance, each focused on problems germane to the education professions.

7. The creation of a School of Education Press.

8. The increase and stabilization of our enrollments, approximating



Means

1. Emphasis on three to four schoolwide program thrusts (e.g.: deinstitutionalization, mainstreaming, planning and policy development, media dissemination), the uniqueness of these efforts enhanced by their capabilities to proceed from theory building to practice while maintaining high levels of productivity throughout.

2. The development of common core experiences ~~undergrad~~: foundations, pedagogical theory, clinical; graduate: research tools, foundations, pedagogical theory).

3. The assignment of specific charges and time lines to committees.

4. Further decentralization of budgets and other decision-making responsibilities.

5. However, further centralization of accountability mechanisms and overall program development.

6. New curricula in: Mainstreaming Children with Special Needs, Policy and Planning, New Careers in Education, X, Y, and Z.

7. As we change certain emphases, develop new programs and wind down others, faculty and other resources must be reallocated to accomplish goals. If budgetary needs are such, staff reductions must come from low yield high cost areas (e.g. elementary education, several secondary areas, teacher education, and others).

8. Deliberate searches for outstanding senior professors, and the appointment of more junior professors who have high potential to make significant contributions to their fields. Quality considerations will take precedence over the filling of particular area openings. That is, the primary consideration will be to fill openings with outstanding people.

9. Each professor should be expected to carry a twelve hour load, with reduced loads for: major administrative assignments, special assignments, a professor's enrollment in a course, assigned onload supervision, approved onload research and study.

10. All extended campus courses are to be onload. There will be no University sponsored overload unless approved by the chairman, the Dean and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, which is current policy. Our office will take a dim view of overload.

11. Professor William Sheldon has been appointed to head a School of Education Capital Drive.

12. Professor Douglas Biklen has been asked to convene a committee to plan a schoolwide press.

13. To achieve the above full-time equivalent enrollments:

a. Elementary Education should increase its undergraduate enrollments by 50% in four years.

b. Special Education should increase undergraduate enrollments by 30% in four years.

c. Teacher Education, Elementary Education, and Secondary Education should increase graduate enrollments by 10% in four years.

d. Special Education should increase graduate enrollments by 20% in four years.

e. Other graduate programs should stabilize or increase selectively.

This can be the best of times. Or the worst. Let us make these the harvest years. Let these be years when our rootlessness was set aside, when we proved to ourselves that the brave and exciting ideas of our youth had been true all along, that they were merely waiting for us to believe them and, thus, to believe in ourselves. Let this be the time when we regain our lost purpose.