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Editor's Comments

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Our last issue, "Experiments in Education: The Early Years at Grand Valley," brought us more comments from our colleagues than we had ever received: from the veterans, gratitude for bringing back a kind of golden age (and the green of their youth?); from the newcomers (of whom there are many more) gratitude for giving them a history they had known only from rumor. We appreciate the comments. Readers of that issue realize how Grand Valley has changed since its beginning, not only in size, but in scope and purpose, and not a little affected by new technology. Yet the institution has never changed its primary mission—teaching students. As a sequel to our fall, 1996 issue is "Experiments in Education: Contemporary Views."

Our new logo represents the Little Mac Bridge, which connects the two sides of our campus. The logo is meant further to represent other connections at Grand Valley: its past, its present, and its future; its various disciplines and administrative units; its faculty, administration, staff and students—all the parts that, together, make up this institution of learning. Accordingly, we begin with an essay on collaboration by Diana Pace, Bart Merkle, and Kathleen Blumreich. It is followed by Wendy Wenner's essay on assessment, a joint venture now being undertaken by the whole University community.

Our next segment connects us to the last issue and to the past: Christine Rydel remembers a challenging experiment in the team teaching of the great books in the early Honors Program. Her colleague in that venture, Edward Cole, believes (in an essay originally solicited by and published in the *Lanthorn*) that the idealism of the old Grand Valley and its devotion to teaching the liberal arts are being replaced with objectives that attempt to encompass everything else; and, further, that the now-graying proponents of the liberal arts ("old coots and cootesses"), are being condescendingly eased out in favor of a new, young faculty eager to implement those objectives. Two of the younger generation, Kelly Parker and Gretchen Galbraith ("cooties"), respond that adaptation to change is demanded of them, but that they are equally committed to teaching the liberal arts. Cole replies, is given the last word—but only in this printing. Is there really a chasm between the old and the new faculty?

Grand Valley has given the award for Teacher of the Year since 1986. Four of those teachers so distinguished present their views on teaching: Brian Curry compares the profession of teaching to that of acting; Karen Novotny acknowledges her award in the name of a composite ideal math professor, of whom, she protests, she is only one component; Jim Sanford shares some techniques that have led to his success; and Greg Dimkoff speaks to the efforts of the School of Business to improve the teaching of all of its members.

On August 23, 1995, the University sponsored a campus-wide "Conversation about Teaching," at which was announced the opening of a teaching and learning center. After an address by Professor Maryellen Weimar, Associate Director of the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning and Assessment, several

members of the faculty, administration, and staff conducted workshops. Comments from three of the coordinators appear next: Jacqueline Hill suggests methods to help students who are in danger of failing; Barb Roos offers ways to use film and video effectively as teaching aids; and Veta Tucker explains the kinds of problems black students have at predominantly white colleges.

A miscellany of views about teaching and learning follows. Carol Winters writes about her experience as a white teacher who became a learner in a predominantly black high school. Alverna Champion describes how she realized that teacher and learner are interchangeable. Underlining that awareness are poems by Janet Heller, Patricia Clark, and Jim Persoon. Often intermediaries between faculty and students are our secretaries: over several years, Ginny Klingenberg has collected and catalogues here a number of excuses that students give for not participating consistently in their own education. Student evaluation can be the most difficult and unprofitable task in teaching: David Bernstein and Roger Gilles explain their experiments to minimize preoccupation with grades and make the assessment of students more fair and more meaningful.

What kind of impact has technology had on the academy? Although technology, as well as internationalism and multicultural awareness, has changed how we think and what we teach, Patricia Quattrin argues that studying the Middle Ages continues to have great value. After considering whether the new technology will make math teachers obsolete, Steven Schlicker and Paul Fishback affirm that, instead, it will make the teaching of math more exciting. Librarians Katherine Waggoner and Kim Ranger advise that information literacy, requiring "increasingly sophisticated retrieval skills," must play a key role in general education and, indeed, in lifelong learning.

Why, for so long, were women denied a place in the science of physics? Alexandra Tyler reviews Margaret Wertheimer's *Pythagoras' Trousers*, which presents some answers. And Steven Rowe's recent book, *Rediscovering the West*, gets a favorable review from Louis Olivier.

As Grand Valley has grown, so has the *Grand Valley Review*: thirty colleagues from all across the campus make connection in this issue.

—R.S.