

4-23-2014

Speech to the Hope Academy of Senior Professionals, delivered at Hope College on April 23, 2014

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Making of a College President

I. D Father's Influence

A. Hope's President's Residence 1945-53

1. High School and College years
2. House (home) as a classroom D
3. D Back of my mind – wanted to be a college president

B. D Central College – Part I – 1934-45

1. D Lived in a President's residence – age 3 to 22 and from 29 to 70
2. Loved the life – friends of students & coaches – immersed in athletics – poor loser

C. D Rutgers – 1953-56 & 1958-59

1. D Graduate School in History
2. D What can you do with history? Granny Randolf
3. D Remained immersed in the Reformed Church – NRTS library, youth leader in Franklin Park, wife's home church, occasionally invited to preach

D. Wittenburg – Springfield, Ohio

1. Taught history and political science
2. Invited to become Vice President for Development at Central

E. D Central College – Part II

1. D Remembered my father's success – like inheriting the business, but not owning it
2. President left after one year & Board after intense search accepted the recommendation of the Faculty to appoint me President

3. Inherited good faculty and low enrollment 5
4. In 8 years enrollment grew from 450 to 1350 5
- 5.5 Gifts increased from \$125,000 a year to \$600,000 – small numbers big percentages
- 6.5 Winning athletics from losing athletes – Ron Schepper – Hope grad made it happen in football – 1974 National Championship

F. Grand Valley

- 1.5 Seidman came to visit June 1968
- 2.5 Planning to marry Nancy
3. Start a new life with Nancy and my three children in a familiar place
4. Came to GVSU in January 1969

Making of a University

- I. Founding – Dartmouth College with a twist
 - A. Four colleges of 1500 students each – local support set stage for continued community involvement

- II. Implementation of the 1960's
 - A. Grand Valley State Colleges
 - 1. Each college its own educational philosophy
 - 2. Thomas Jefferson, William James, Kirkhof College, College of Arts & Sciences
 - 3. _____ competition greater than competition with other colleges and universities

 - B. Public Television Station
 - 1. License given to GVSU by local group
 - 2. Ford Story
 - 3. Extended _____ to all West Michigan

 - C. Recession of 1979-82
 - 1. End of experiment – part of National trend
 - 2. Need for more efficiency
 - 3. Drastic cuts – Faculty leadership-Rod Mulder
 - 4. Cut deeper than necessary to reposition the institution for the future

 - D. Fieldhouse
 - 1. Closed in 1978
 - 2. How politics works – Helman cultivation and his leadership

3. Caused drop in enrollment
- E. Move downtown & elsewhere
1. Consolidate courses spread throughout Grand Rapids
 2. Case to the Press – first major fund raising - \$9,000,000
 3. First use of eminent domain – asking \$950,000 approved at \$67,000
 4. Eberhard Center dedicated in 1988
 5. Expansion of campuses, Holland, Muskegon and Traverse City
 6. Expansion beginning in late 1980's still going strong
- F. Strategy for Winning
1. Keep the faith – Liberal Arts Core
 2. Concentrate efforts on building a strong undergraduate curriculum
 3. Add professional programs needed for professional and economic development in West Michigan
 4. _____ & Ohio of Michigan – story and objective
 5. Result 19,000 undergrad application for 4000+ places – 2nd largest freshman class in Michigan – total enrollment 24,500

A President's Way of Administrating

1. Make sure students are coming and the budget is balanced – President keep control admissions
2. Pay attention to good architecture – people are affected by the space in which they work – spend a little more
3. Have the best housing – keep ahead of the competition as best you can
4. Be sensitive to community needs and how the university can best meet them
5. Formulate your objectives and work toward meeting them with the constituencies you need to achieve them – Faculty, legislators, the governor, students, alumni, donors, civic groups
6. Be flexible as you move toward achieving objectives –do what is possible when it is possible. Planning examples. Problems with planning.
7. Keep Board well informed and participating when needed, and always remember you work for the Board
8. Build trust as well as programs – understand that it is President's job to help everyone succeed – every job is needed and has dignity – positive thought theory
9. Have more work required of each position than it may be possible to accomplish easily
10. President is responsible for vision, institutional priorities and inspiration, fund raising and relationships
11. Remember that the good of the institution is at times more important than the President's personal positions on a given issue. – concert issue, condom issue, same sex health benefits. Principled pragmatism.
12. Actively engage in the intellectual and academic life of the university.

A Few Matters of Consideration for the Future

I. Visions of the Future

- A. Edmund Burke – British parliamentarian and political philosopher – author of conservative political thought that is part of conservative heritage
 - 1. “You can never plan the future by the past”
- B. Patrick Henry – of “Give me liberty or give me death” fame – took strong conservative state’s rights position in our early national period
 - 1. “I know no way of judging of the future but by the past”
- C. Can we resolve the paradox? – only in the _____ theological answer, “We come closer to the truth in the paradox” – I will invoke both Burke & Henry

II. Grand Valley and Hope College

- A. Demographics require some new strategies – or at least new emphasis in recruitment
- B. Facilities – a significant part of the competition equation – both in good position
- C. Hope – is what it is going to be – strong Christian liberal arts college
- D. Grand Valley is still in the state of becoming. Requirements for facilities may be different for the two institutions
- E. Is virtual education a threat? - both schools will have to decide what they are going to do
- F. Grand Valley will be involved in defining what a state university of the future will be. From 1969 to the present support from the State has dropped from 75% of the budget to 14% - the State is the longest donor
- G. Hope College will have to define itself as a Christian College – Authors of Can Hope Endure had it right. Hope’s tensions are between the conservative and the more conservative. In the past the conservatives demonstrate more than the more

conservative – keeps Hope in the mainstream of Protestant Colleges – evangelical but not restricted by theological rigidity

H. President Knapp Inaugural Address

1. He indicated, I believe, the correct direction for the college as a distinguished academics college
2. Broadcast academic quality effectively throughout the nation
3. Academic objectives first. Christian definition and mission was his third topic – right order

I. Homosexual Issue – needs resolution

1. In the past – “Don’t ask, don’t tell” – knew who gay and lesbian students and faculty were. Worked well
2. “Don’t ask, don’t tell” no longer possible on most campuses – homosexuals demand openness
3. Prof. Meyer at Hope – Nation’s leading Christian authority on homosexuality – for most genetic condition
4. Majority Hope students – non issue or pro acceptance - tell Albion story
5. Problem reflects conservative vs. more conservative issue at Hope – Look at it as holdover of Dutch Calvinist battles – could be looked at as most evangelical vs. _____ evangelical
6. Where issue is going in American colleges is clear. Hope is not officially there yet. If it doesn’t get there it will be a different kind of college than it has been in the past
7. There will be another moment of truth – will it be quiet or noisy? Will the waves of the culture sweep it along? Will it require more statements and definition or will administrative discussions set the course?
8. Give new President time. Eventually he will lead the college on the issue.

Closing

I. Quotes on Education

- A. Alfred Adler – “There can be but a simple goal of education and that – education to courage”
- B. Aristotle – “On one occasion Aristotle was asked how much educated man were superior to those uneducated: “As much”, he said, “as the living are to the dead”
- C. Horace Mann – “Education is our only political safety. Outside of this ark all is deluge”