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Faculty Response

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ALLAN TEN EYCK

Vision. It's about vision. Sometimes the problem with visions is that they cannot be shared. When shared they evaporate, seem less enchanting, seem to lose their visionary quality, somehow die. So the temptation is to keep visions close to the vest, to not share them, to refer to having had them but not to unfold them. But how does one bring others along in appreciating a vision without sharing it? Well, I guess it is just the risk a visionary must take. Small wonder presidents sometimes do not share their visions, or share them very guardedly.

Without doubt a significant challenge facing us is the integration of the Allendale campus with the Grand Rapids Center. One of the variables that makes this challenge so formidable is that there is disagreement on what to call these centers of learning. Some folks are calling the building in Grand Rapids a campus. All of us seem to agree that Allendale is a campus. Are they then the same? Is there nothing to distinguish the two. Is it size that prompts some of us to call the Grand Rapids enterprise a "center" while others insist it is a "campus?" Why did I use the word "enterprise?" How in the world will we come to consensus when a simple matter of words causes us so much discomfort?

The purist would say that the Grand Rapids enterprise is not a campus because there is no playing field. Will Grand Rapids become a campus when Stow-Davis is officially added to the properties? Not unless one or more of those buildings is razed and a playing field constructed.

Others of my colleagues would say, "What the hell difference does it make? The place is there and if the president wants to call it a campus it will be called a campus. Campus isn't what you are it's what you do."

The Machiavellian among us would say that it indeed makes a great difference. Once you start calling something by a specific name, it begins to adopt the immutable characteristics, behaviors, privileges, airs of the object. Afterall, look at the French, they never would have revolted in the 18th century if someone hadn't told them they were oppressed. They were told so often they came to believe. How could one even think of such a comparison? In France at the time, ninety percent of the people were peasants working relentlessly to make the good city life possible for the privileged ten percent. One can almost see the frolicking on the lawns of the Campus Martius while in the distance the Christians are being thrown to the lions.

What is there about "campus" that annoys, bothers, irritates, nettles? Autonomy?

Does campus mean equality, equity, parallel structures? Dare one project down the road a bit more deans, additional directors, another provost and highest of all power bases, another Executive Committee of another Academic Senate?! It is too much; it boggles the mind; a classic case of fiber-optic, computer-link, state-of-the-art overload.

To the proposition that the major test of the faculty and staff is whether or not enough of us will endorse enthusiastically the role of each campus, one might be inclined to offer a "qualified yes" and a "qualified no." Is this Janus revisited? Not really. Cannot a part of me say "yes" I am willing to make effort, even unusual effort, and commitment to this venture while another part of me says "no" I will not let all of the hard-gained resources of the chartered, mother institution be drained off to keep Flash in town.

It has been said that another key to our success lies in a faculty unified and blended when major decisions are made on curriculum, personnel and academic policies. What an interesting time to try to achieve this one! It has already been said that if a person announced to the faculty that the sun is shining, several would hasten to a window to seek empirical evidence. It is asking a bit much of faculty to agree on such weighty matters considering that in the past when the faculty did agree on substantive issues, too often their agreement was not seen as necessary or useful. Inclusion of faculty, I've heard it said, is not a sometimes thing. To achieve mighty things here inclusion of the faculty must be the starting point, a *sine qua non*. He laboreth in vain who would build a new campus without the faculty.

I have often been impressed by the actions of President Lubbers. I have been especially impressed that when times in Michigan have been especially bad economically, the President will decide to press forward, to build something. He would seem to be a believer in the adage which has stood the test of time: "*Non progredi est regredi*." (Not to move ahead is to fall behind.) While that is laudable and while I pray he will keep that in mind as the opportunity to build a golf course comes up, one is forced to remind all our leaders that faculty are happiest and most effective as faculty when they are made to feel a part of decision making because they *are* a part of decision making, not because they have been *told* they are. The apparatus for collegiality in decision making exists. It needs only to be used. Consultation with the chair of ECS does not constitute adequate consultation with the faculty. We are a responsible faculty, one which wants to be consulted often and long and brought along on new endeavors, not dragged along to add color to a pageant not of our choosing.

In a world full of mixed messages and confusions, let me end by giving you a few that you will surely find inspirational and useful, Mr. President:

Seize the opportunity; but proceed slowly.

Seek advice, but remember that advice is worth only what you pay for it.

Expect nothing and you shall not be disappointed.

Nihil est quod ampliorem curam postulet quam cogitare quid gerendum sit de hinc incogitantes sors non consilium regit. (There is nothing that requires greater effort than to reflect on what must be done; hence, fate, not counsel, rules those who do not reflect.)

Honi soit qui mal y pense.