A Report on the State of Public Liberal Arts Education in Arizona

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After a two-year absence, I have had somewhat of a difficult time in readjusting to the culture and institution that is Grand Valley State University. There was some comfort in the faces of friends and colleagues, and I have even re-acquired the excitement of teaching Grand Valley Students again. My time at Grand Valley, as other faculty who were hired together in the late eighties, has been marked by growth in enrollment, development of new programs and all the concurrent problems that a campus going through rapid change encounters. To look in the Lanthorn and see that enrollment is topping 21,000 with new buildings appearing on both the main campuses and in other communities in west Michigan is heartening. From the stories told to me by senior colleagues about the courage to start this enterprise in the mid-sixties, I've come to the conclusion that even though Grand Valley has had difficult times, some would say even drastic times, it has benefited from careful administration, a dedicated faculty and a favorable population change in Michigan.

I was always interested when my faculty mentors told me stories of the experimental beginnings in William James College, Thomas Jefferson College and the other innovative offerings that were part of Grand Valley's history. They told me of William James College, started in 1971; a liberal arts college that epitomized James's axiom that there could be "no impression without expression." This was a college that emphasized project-centered and cooperative class work that was evaluated without using grades. The programs were custom-designed using
a detailed study plan. Concepts were explored in the classroom and practiced in the community.

They told me of Thomas Jefferson College where the emphasis was placed on the individual and what Jefferson called "the illimitable freedom of the human mind." The curriculum was a "student-centered" exploration of the Great Books.

A council made up of faculty and students ran both colleges.

They told me these stories sometimes with pride in their voices; knowing that they contributed to the liberal learning that continues as Grand Valley’s foundation today. Their stories instilled in me a desire to have a similar galvanizing experience.

So it was with great interest that I became aware of a new experimental liberal arts college that was formulated in the state of Arizona to provide a quality liberal arts college experience in a state with little presence of the small private liberal arts colleges that grace the East Coast and the Midwest. Arizona International College (AIC) had a mission to provide Arizona’s diverse population with a distinctive liberal arts and practical undergraduate education for an increasingly technological and global society.1 It was designed, at some point in the future, to take its place alongside Arizona State University, the University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University: the other public, comprehensive, and doctoral institutions of higher education.

The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) voted on November 29, 2001 to disestablish Arizona International College at the University of Arizona, a little more than five years after its creation.

As Grand Valley chugs ahead in its becoming a noted regional university with a strong emphasis on teaching and balancing the contributions of both liberal arts education and professional programs, it is worthwhile to examine the downside. What happened to a similarly founded experiment in liberal arts education?

**The vision of AIC**

The design of Arizona International College was based on the research of leading scholars in education: Alexander Astin, George Kuh, Ernest Pascarella, Ernest Boyer and Vincent Tinto, some of whom were on the national advisory council.2 Astin, in his capacity as the director of the Higher Education Research Institute, described AIC “as one of the most ambitious and exciting initiatives in higher education to provide a model for the evolution of the liberal arts curriculum in the twenty-first century.” In its five-year life cycle, AIC targeted students for critical thinking, written and visual communication, and understanding intellectual diversity and quantitative and qualitative research of diversity and strength. The college placed, not on a curriculum, a strong emphasis on the experiences and sensitivities to take three years of liberal arts in three semesters. The college accounted many of the experiences the students were struggling to add: internships, study abroad, and community service. It was designed, at some point in the future, to take its place alongside Arizona State University, the University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University: the other public, comprehensive, and doctoral institutions of higher education.

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The academic programs: Core Studies, Interdisciplinary Learning, and Service Learning, as general education, and Academic Studies, as specific clusters of courses in graduate studies. Core studies included cultural, historical, intercultural, and integrative studies. Students seeking em...
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der of the Higher Education Institute at UCLA, described AIC "as one of the most exciting innovations in higher education today...[it] may well become the model for the evolution of American higher education in the twenty-first century." According to its founding documents, AIC targeted the following competencies: critical thinking, creative problem solving, oral, written and visual communication; working in teams; using and understanding information and media technologies; quantitative and qualitative analysis; an appreciation of diversity and strength in ethical discernment. The college placed, not only in its name but also in its curriculum, a strong emphasis on global issues. Faculty recruited had to demonstrate significant international experiences and sensitivities. All students were required to take three years of language training, not the common three semesters. The curriculum, in its design, took into account many of the trends that older institutions were struggling to add: internationalization, service learning, internships, and learning communities. It was not just a catchall for the current buzzwords in higher education, but provided an integrated framework for those practices that through time and current need were seen to be essential additions to the higher education experience. The first North Central Association evaluation of AIC found its curriculum to be strong and creative. The academic program was individualized, integrated and highly interactive, engaging an interdisciplinary model of education with a strong emphasis on basics. Classes were generally small with great value placed on interaction among students and between students and faculty.

The academic program consisted of four components: Core Studies, Specialty Studies, Career Studies and Service Learning. Core Studies, commonly known as general education, would encompass, not less than one-half of the student's total program of study. The curriculum was designed and taught so that multiple cultural, historical, international and scientific paradigms were integrated across a given program of study. Specialty Studies consisted of advanced work in specific clusters of disciplines for students interested in graduate studies. Career Studies involved a vocation or profession and would form the major emphasis for students seeking employment immediately following graduation. It was a focus spelled out in a formal plan of study but was not called a major. Service Learning encouraged a sense of civic and community involvement.

The need for AIC
It began in 1993, when the ABOR appropriated $2 million for a new campus in Pima County. In 1994, the Arizona International Campus was first located at the Science and Technology Park in a southeast corner of the Tucson city proper. In 1995, the college was renamed Arizona International College and moved to the main campus of the University. Finally, in 1996 faculty were offered contracts ranging from 1-5 years without the option of tenure. It was a courageous investment for the state of Arizona and ultimately the taxpayers of the state of Arizona. An editorial at the time of its disestablishment suggested that the Regents had thrown away an investment of $8 million up to that point, but, in doing so, thwarted a thoughtful, long-range plan to create a student-centered alternative to the state's three research-driven universities.

Very early, even before the idea of a fourth public university in Arizona was hatched, the ABOR identified the paucity of high-quality liberal arts colleges in Arizona and the region. The Regents noted in a public report on higher education that, unlike many states in the East and the Midwest, Arizona residents who wished to pursue a liberal arts program in Arizona had only a few options outside of state universities. It was a short list of liberal arts programs outside the major research universities in the
state. The private liberal arts colleges in Arizona that offered bachelor’s degree programs included Grand Canyon College, Prescott College and Ottawa University, a local branch of Ottawa University of Kansas. Much as Grand Valley provides a high-quality liberal arts education to the children of West Michigan’s working-class parents, the faculty at AIC immediately saw the benefit of a public liberal arts program. Surging college enrollment supported the idea of providing additional liberal arts education. Over the period 2000 through 2020, Arizona’s total higher education enrollment was predicted to increase between 102,000 and 162,000 with 34,000 to attend private institutions and public institutions to absorb between 68,000 and 128,000. That projection did not bode well for the capacity of public universities in Arizona. The University of Arizona in Tucson was faced with cramped quarters, difficult parking and an enrollment now at its cap of 35,000. If almost 35,000 additional students were to be added to the UA enrollment, where could they go? The enrollment of many lower-level classes at the UA was above 200 students per section. Departments and colleges within the UA were at capacity or higher. How then were administrators to offer high-quality education with an ample amount of interaction between faculty and students? These were precisely the reasons students gave for attending AIC in its first few years: high quality and faculty interaction. To aggravate the coming problem and provide another challenge for university administrators, current projections indicated that more than 30% of Arizona’s population would be minorities by 2010, increasing the proportion of both older and younger students from ethnic or racial minorities who might be seeking higher education. The large UA addressed the problem and posted a 25% minority enrollment. In the short lifespan of AIC it attracted a student body that was 30% minority.

**The ongoing struggle between research- and teaching-based institutions**

Not new to Grand Valley are the pressures that pull and conjoin institutions to provide the best quality instruction but at the same time develop the sophistication and reputation of a research powerhouse. That balancing act will continue to be difficult to address. In 2002, the state of Arizona had a public debt of $11 billion. The outgoing governor had the unenviable task of making payments to hospitals and revenue sharing to locals. The outgoing governor has already been exempt from an agreement earlier on the exemption, the state, local and education institutions and governments shouldered the federal revenue sharing along with its political unwillingness to foot the bill on higher education needs.

Funding formulas and emphasis on research as a rule of thumb for Grand Valley accounted for the half was provided by tuition, two-thirds of support, one-third from state and for the large research institutions, additional factor is agency that receives money from tuition, one-third from grants, last third from grants. The focus institutions to become available from governments, as the UA asked to development biogenetics consortium, biogenetics won.

The Regents cited pressure in framing the bad disagreement on whether they really needed to focus arts in a market-driven cost of higher education. It was valuable to society to have appropriate faculty time. Some of these questions is the Board of Regents in passing alternative: limited tenure of tenure. The nation...
In 2002, the state of Michigan's main budget of $9.1 billion had been estimated to show a deficit of $500 million. The outgoing Republican governor, John Engler, had the unenviable task of choosing between Medicaid payments to hospitals, higher education, prisons and revenue sharing to local governments. K-12 education had already been exempted and even though there was an agreement earlier to include higher education in the exemption, the state appropriation to the 15 higher education institutions in the state was cut by 2.5%. Local governments shouldered the most burdens, with cuts to federal revenue sharing estimated to be 5%. The state, along with its politicians and citizens, had been so far willing to foot the bill; Michigan's per capita spending on higher education ranks 12th among 50 states.

Funding formulas vary for institutions based on their emphasis on research or teaching. For a long time, the rule of thumb for Grand Valley in Michigan was that tuition accounted for 50% of revenues while the other half was provided by state appropriation. Currently two-thirds of support comes from tuition and only one-third from state appropriation. In Arizona, as it is for the large research institutions in Michigan also, an additional factor is added. The University of Arizona receives money from three sources: one-third from tuition, one-third from the state appropriation and the last third from grants for research activities. Once a part of the funding base, it proved very difficult for research-focused institutions to pass over research money as it became available from private and public sources. Even as the UA asked to disestablish AIC, it was courting a biogenetics consortium to move to Tucson. AIC lost; biogenetics won.

The Regents cited the need for a teaching institution in framing the basis for proposing AIC. There was disagreement on whether students were learning what they really needed to know, on the value of the liberal arts in a market-driven world, on who should bear the cost of higher education, on what kind of research was valuable to society, and on the role of tenure and appropriate faculty teaching loads. Certainly none of these questions is absent at Grand Valley, but the Board of Regents in Arizona forcefully engaged one alternative: limited term contracts versus the awarding of tenure. The national advisory board, the local planning committee (that included UA faculty) and the newly appointed administration made the point very clear at AIC. The college was to focus exclusively on teaching to the point of de-emphasizing research on the part of individual faculty.

Research was framed as desirable in the context of working with students or as individual efforts on the part of students. The capstone project, required of all students, was the undergraduate equivalent of a master's thesis. In addition, AIC was one of a few institutions in the country that did not provide, at its inception, for tenure as an option for faculty. These and other exceptional alternatives that were mandated by the ABOR at the inception of the college would ultimately pit the fledgling liberal arts college against the large PAC-10 research powerhouse.

**Big versus small**

The first location for what was originally called the Arizona International Campus was a research park under the jurisdiction of the University of Arizona. This was a challenging start for the college that already lacked the infrastructure taken for granted at similar institutions. There was no library, no bookstore, no student union, nor any counseling services. Students took the twenty-minute drive from the main campus to arrive at an industrial park designed for research startups. The building originally served IBM, which moved its operations from Tucson in a business downturn. As a deserted IBM facility, the first campus was a sterile environment of cubicles and conference rooms.
Two weeks after his appointment, the new president of the University of Arizona, Peter Likins, renamed the college Arizona International College of the University of Arizona and moved it to six small, vacant buildings on the Northeast corner of the main UA campus. The spartan campus combined efficient flat roof classroom and student structures with previously commandeered southwest “casitas” that had once been part of a Tucson residential neighborhood overrun by the expanding main campus. Prior to coming to the UA, Likins served as president of Lehigh University for nearly 15 years. His engineering background included degrees from Stanford and MIT. He co-taught a freshman course where he insisted students call him “Pete.” His days started early, sometimes with a cappuccino-flavored Slim Fast and a drive to campus in his silver PT Cruiser. The conflict between fledgling liberal arts college and the PAC-10 research powerhouse was drawn even when the initial engagement was at invitation.

Former regent John Munger described AIC as the first opportunity that students in the state of Arizona had to remain in Arizona and go to a small and public liberal arts school as an alternative to a mega campus. Likins cited the need for support services and the availability of main campus courses to help create a more comprehensive academic menu for the college. As for administrative support, it was unclear how long the UA administration would support the college indirectly even though direct support came from the ABOR as a separate line item within the UA budget. Likins said that the school had been given a five-year deadline in which to be self-supporting. Encouraging AIC students to take related courses on the main campus as a part of their AIC programs was later to play against the college.

Although there was significant support from a select group of main campus faculty as they helped plan the curriculum of the new college, other members of the faculty on the main campus were less than supportive. Professors on the Faculty Senate in 1996-1997 presented a petition in October 1997 arguing that the college should be closed. Faculty called the college poorly conceived because of the lack of tenure, research support and loss of academic freedom. The petition went on to describe the college as a waste of taxpayer money and a diversion of precious tenure-track faculty that lacked tenure.

Although there was support for AIC, there was largely support for a tenure-track system that provided for a faculty that could be a part of a tenured faculty. The board of regents and the college had a mandate to create the college. In the plan for the college, Likins was seen as an innovator. He pointed out that the model for other campuses was a model where the conflict between the college and the main campus was drawn. Faculty called the college poorly conceived because of the lack of tenure, research support and loss of academic freedom. The petition went on to describe the college as a waste of taxpayer money and a diversion of precious tenure-track faculty that lacked tenure.
Pacheco, appointed president of Laredo State University in Texas from 1984 to 1988. 

... and a diversion of precious resources. Many tenured and tenure-track faculty were threatened by an institution that lacked tenure.

Although there was no tenure afforded faculty at AIC, there was language in the administrative guide that provided for academic freedom. The absence of a tenure-track system was a condition established by the board of regents. In the throes of disestablishment, newspapers later used the lack of tenure to imply that the college had a much-diminished status as a result. In the plan for the new college, the absence of tenure was seen as an innovative approach. For the college's framers it underlined the importance placed on teaching and in doing so rejected the “publish or perish” model illustrated by traditional institutions. As described in the plan, employers (ABOR) had to act affirmatively to revoke a contact under a tenure system, while under the no tenure or contract system there was no need to act affirmatively; a contract lapsed and the employee was terminated. It is worthwhile to note that traditional tenure offers no protection to faculty when whole colleges are terminated due to what is euphemistically described as “fiscal exigency.” This would be little solace for the 20 faculty members who lost their jobs at the college. Comparisons between the main campus and the smaller scale setting of the college exposed some shortcomings in what was described as “learner-centered” curricula. The sheer capacity problem that the UA was fighting led to many of the same situations that occur at other large-scale institutions: large introductory lecture classes in which the only interaction between students and professors was through teaching assistants. Increased minority enrollment, retention and graduation were also goals of the UA. Even in its short life span, AIC had minority enrollment greater than the main campus. It was an original aim of the ABOR to design a new four-year college in the state that would attract, keep and graduate more Hispanic and Native American minorities. The Regents noted that in addition to the increase in the percentage of women in public institutions, the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities had increased as well; in 1998 these students constituted 22.6% of all students in the Arizona public higher education system. AIC had, in its few short years, achieved above average enrollment, retention and graduation of minorities.

The emphasis on one-on-one teaching was an overriding concern of ABOR. In contrast to the activity and funding of research at traditional institutions, teaching and learning were placed at the forefront of the college. Personnel policies were designed to reflect this. Retention and dismissal decisions were to reflect the mission, goals, and academic plan for AIC. The decisions were not allowed to “creep” towards more conventional standards pertaining to research or publication, since those manifestations of scholarship were not the foundation of the college. Teaching and learning, achieved in the context of close relationships among teachers and learners, were the foundations of the new college.

Not invented here (NIH)

To trace the effect of the NIH syndrome, one would have to start in October 1993 when the then president of the University of Arizona, Manuel Pacheco, appointed 14 Tucsonans to a committee to develop a plan for a new campus in Pima County. Pacheco had been UA president since 1991. He previously served as president of the University of Houston's downtown campus from 1988 to 1991 and as president of Laredo State University in Texas from 1984 to 1988.

By late October 1993, when the university took over the former IBM facility, an outline plan and management structure was in place for the new technology park. The University acquired 1,000 acres of land and two million square feet of modern
industrial plant. Pacheco credited the imagination and energy of former Regent Donald Pitt, whose sheer persistence over a two-year period, allowed the university to acquire the property assessed at roughly $114 million for a cost of about $560,000. With no burden of a large mortgage and with major corporate tenants already occupying about 1.6 million square feet, the real estate deal represented a major opportunity for the UA and the administration seized it. The real estate acquisition model, however, was not the best way to start a new liberal arts college.

Pacheco requested approval for a mission statement and a set of guiding principles for the new college. The Arizona Board of Regents decided to locate the new campus at the former IBM facility as a temporary arrangement, until the university figured out what to do with the property.

Ultimately a significant amount of money was allocated to starting the new campus, and because the college originated with ABOR, the state appropriation for AIC was a separate line item for both revenues/appropriation and expenditures. It was the emphasis on expenses that helped to drive the new president of the UA, Peter Likins, to call for the disestablishment of AIC and describe the innovation as a “noble but expensive experiment in education.”

There are few colleges on any public campus in the U.S. that could be described as self-sufficient except for athletic departments and business schools. Liberal arts programs are not known to be profit generators nor are known to achieve the business measure of breakeven; these programs are the expense associated with an educated and aware citizenry. It is another example of the poor application of the business metaphor to higher education. Are public libraries, public roads or public parks assigned the responsibility of breaking even? Can they be marketed and branded like toothpaste or shampoo with an emphasis on profits and revenues?

Even UA provost George Davis admitted that liberal arts colleges needed high tuition and robust endowments to survive. Since the time of Aristotle, people have understood the importance of the liberal arts, cared about their outcome and have been willing to pay for their existence. Does that make education a service able to be marketed like any consumer product? The answer flies into the face of state governments and institutions.

Is that the case with the State? Was it a careful population growth analysis coupled with favorable currents and episodes, Grand View as a regional institution.

For the chief administration in Arizona, the chief administrative college in Arizona, the chief academic administrator was called. For the chief academic administrator was called. A product of Stanford and higher education, Fernandez was the acting head of the Department of English and had been the executive editor of the university. Rosenblatt, a Scholar in Brazil and a Professor Emeritus of the Creative Teaching Program, had published fiction as well. It is not that Rosenblatt’s tenure could help stabilize the shaky college for its ultimate growth.

In Arizona, former University of Arizona President Paul Rosenblatt had underscored AIC’s problems and ranked AIC as chronically under-funded, understaffed and in need of entire higher educational restructuring. The UA analysis concluded the college could never achieve academic excellence. Rosenblatt’s analysis was never questioned. ABOR hired a new president. ABOR hired a new president. The newly installed Lattie F. Coats was the hired president at North Central.
flies into the face of strategic planning, mission statements and institutional marketing. The answer is no.

Is that the case with the success of Grand Valley State? Was it a careful administration, or favorable population growth and migration? With a combination of favorable currents and withstanding a few agonizing episodes, Grand Valley has emerged as a successful regional institution.

For the chief administrator of this new liberal arts college in Arizona, the university called upon Celestino Fernandez. Fernandez joined the university in 1976 and was a professor in the sociology department. A product of Stanford University and an innovator in higher education, Fernandez steered the development of the curriculum and the offering of the first classes. After a time of negative publicity in Tucson and state newspapers, however, Fernandez returned to his tenured position on the University faculty.

In an effort to calm fears about the cost and controversy surrounding the college, an experienced UA administrator was called in to be the second dean of the college. Paul Rosenblatt was a former dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the main campus, the previous acting head of the Department of Romance Languages, and had been the executive director of Internal Affairs for the university. Rosenblatt had been a Fulbright Scholar in Brazil and Argentina. He had been awarded the Creative Teaching Award at the university and had published fiction as well as scholarly works. It was hoped that Rosenblatt’s tenure as dean of the college would help stabilize the shaky beginnings and prepare the college for its ultimate growth and independence.

In Arizona, former Tucson Regent Hank Amos underscored AIC’s problematic funding. He described AIC as chronically under funded, implying that the entire higher education system, rather than just the University of Arizona, should have shared the cost. The UA analysis concluded that the college would never achieve academic or financial independence. The analysis was never questioned; an independent review was rejected. ABOR took it on faith from the UA president. ABOR was under pressure to agree with the newly installed Likins. Arizona State University president Lattie F. Coor was due to retire, and a newly hired president at Northern Arizona University was asked to resign following allegations of sexual harassment.

**Economic ripples**

The funding trouble in Arizona had started several years before with the repercussions of a slowing national economy. Combined with the effect of lowered tourist dollars in a state highly dependent on sales tax revenues after September 11, the stage was set for bloodletting. The initial estimate was a shortfall of $250 million out of a $7 billion state budget. The figure then began to move higher. Instead of budget cuts, the terminology changed to rescission (a return to the state of already allocated monies) and rose to $300 million. From there it moved to $400-500 million and was estimated further to rise to $600-800 million. Just before the closing of the college, the figure was rounded to $1 billion. Initially there was talk that the state may tap into its “rainy day” fund, but as the perceived deficit rose, Governor Jane Dee Hull told her state agency directors to find ways of reducing their fiscal year budgets by four per cent. Later Hull would fight to limit the four per cent cap on budget cuts.

The four percent budget cut was a small amount for AIC, around $60 thousand. That was not enough for Likins and the UA administration, who saw the budget pressure as a way to prune the UA back to what they saw as its core mission: research. To frame the $60 million that the UA gave back to the state, Likins pointed to other states that had made similar cuts to higher education, ranging from a low of 1.5% (Vermont) to a high of 8% (Missouri). Likins failed
to mention that at the time Michigan exempted all education levels from a proposed 7% state budget cut. Likins' strategy had been heard before: "We cannot weaken every part of the university equally, or we will weaken the whole university." Arthur Naiman, a Tucson author and AIC sympathizer, countered in a letter to the editor of a local Tucson newspaper, "[It would be] fair to make 4% cuts across the board, but Likins has destroyed the single most creative, valuable, and innovative part of the entire university system." Arthur Naiman, a Tucson author and AIC sympathizer, countered in a letter to the editor of a local Tucson newspaper, "[It would be] fair to make 4% cuts across the board, but Likins has destroyed the single most creative, valuable, and innovative part of the entire university system." Likins defended his decision by insisting that the UA main campus had made improvements to its instructional mission so that what AIC had originally offered as an alternative was now present at the University. Likins said, in the past five years, undergraduate programs had become more learner-centered, there were more opportunities for international studies and service and that these were once all exclusive features of the AIC education experience. AIC faculty knew otherwise. Millions of dollars had been spent to dig up the main plaza in the center of the UA main campus. The new integrated learning center was a way for the University to throw an impressive amount of money at the perception that the University, at capacity, was not shorting undergraduate instruction.

In summary, the closing of AIC was not an issue of budget cuts but an issue of leadership. Even President Likins admitted that the plan to dissolve its experimental liberal arts college was a strategic cut that would do little to ease the UA's immediate budget problems. Over the next 4-5 years, the 20 AIC faculty contracts would expire and the funds would be no longer be needed. The closing brings up the question of where the $1.2 million that is separately allocated to the UA to cover the cost of AIC would go?

So what are the other factors if budget cuts were not the reason for disestablishment of the college? Clues are strewn throughout: the conflict between research institutions and teaching institutions, the uneasiness of tenured faculty at the UA who felt threatened by an institution without tenure that might succeed, the disconnection of the idea with the motivation for the idea when a change of administration occurred and finally, the reluctance of state taxpayers to pay for higher education, especially experimental education. The reluctance was characterized as a desire to cover only the essential. The wagons and hunkers were rolled, Tom Wolfe could publish, nervous faculty, blame the taxpayers; all could have a "Vanities." Beyond the personal and most telling fact is Arizona's tight-fistedness in funding higher education, out of 50 states in the period who attend some type of school, Arizona also tied for second lowest in the support of higher education, the known research universities were significantly below. For perspective, in Michigan is a peer institution, A professor of interdisciplinary University in Tempe, Lisa polished that management with excess state system to be forced to spend more.

Other editorialists see downside systemic state-funding for university squabble. They're the community and state that were significantly if not reciprocated efforts. In Arizona's competitors to improve higher education in the cuts of prior years. A state metaphor in desperation in funding higher education, the frontier-state metaphor should have been justified state of Arizona's competitors should have been justified the lowest tuition in the state of Arizona's competitors should have been justified the bottom line, an increase used by administrators, for students get in the way.
Michigan exempted all leased 7% state budget cut. years before: "We cannot university equally, or the University," Arthur Naiman, sympathizer, countered in a Tucson newspaper, "It cuts across the board, but the most creative, valuable, fire university system." by insisting that the UA movements to its instruc- had originally offered present at the University. years, undergraduate learner-centered, there international studies and since all exclusive features. AIC faculty knew had been spent to dig up the UA main campus. center was a way for the useable amount of money at Larry, at capacity, was not sufficient.

AIC was not an issue of membership. Even President dissolve its experimen-
teric cut that would do budget problems. Over faculty contracts would no longer be needed. portion of where the $1.2 needed to the UA to cover itself.

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motivation for the idea occurred and finally, to pay for higher edu-
cation, especially experiments in higher education. The reluctance was characterized by the frontier mentality: cover only the essentials and if trouble looms, round up 
the wagons and hunker down. The saga rivals any that Tom Wolfe could publish—defensive administrators, nervous faculty, blameless politicians and anonymous taxpayers; all could have fed another version of a Bonfire of the Vanities.

Beyond the personalities and finger pointing, the most telling fact is Arizona's track record when it comes to funding higher education. In addition to being 48% out of 50 states in the percent of high school graduates who attend some type of college by the time they reach 19, Arizona also tied Arkansas in being dead last for the support of higher education. At the large and well-known research universities, average salaries of faculty were significantly below those at their peer institutions. For perspective, in Michigan, the University of Michigan is a peer institution with the University of Arizona. A professor of interdisciplinary studies at Arizona State University in Tempe, David Wells, contends that the mismanagement of state funds caused the small liberal arts college's woes. He noted that the tragedy occurred because the Republicans who ruled Arizona's finances for the past decade engaged in massive financial mis-

management with excessive tax cuts that led a university system to be forced to cannibalize itself. Other editorialists in Phoenix wrote that it was a systemic state-funding problem instead of an inter-

university squabble. This position was in contrast to the community and student newspapers in Tucson that were significantly influenced by the UA public relations efforts. In an editorial, Jon Talton says that Arizona's competitors used the flush years of the 1990s to improve higher education: Arizona never made up the cuts of prior years. Talton returns to the frontier state metaphor in describing Arizona's shortsightedness in funding higher education. He insists that the frontier-state mentality about higher education should have been junked. He pointed out that the state of Arizona's constitutional injunction to require the lowest tuition hurt quality. And finally, he faulted the bottom line, an increasingly unfortunate metaphor used by administrators where increasing numbers of students get in the way of academic excellence. This seems an appropriate indictment of research-based institutions. Who receives the value of research dollars? One view is that it has a long-term trickle-down effect on the whole economy. But in the short run it hurts students, precisely those who can have the biggest impact by being educated people, not just technically proficient or vocationally prepared. The contribution of these educated citizens cannot necessarily be measured by their financial success, productivity or university contributions.

Lessons for Grand Valley
So what lessons, cautions, or opport-

tunities does this provide for Grand Valley State University, whose initial collection of small, experimental liberal-arts-based colleges were viewed as highly suspect? Has Grand Valley succumbed to the "creep" toward tradi-
tional conformity when it comes to the community of 15 institutions of higher education in the state of Michigan? What would have happened if Thomas Jefferson College or William James College had been placed in a secluded corner of the main campus at Michigan State? It probably would have suffered the same fate as Arizona International—but wait, didn't it anyway?

Thomas Jefferson College was the first of the experimental colleges that made up Grand Valley State Colleges to close in 1980. William James College followed in 1983. In the re-structuring, College Four or Kirkhof College was disbanded and the curriculum for it and William James was folded into the last remaining college, the College of Arts and Sciences. According to former dean at
GVSC, Adrian Tinsley, a continuing structural problem helped lead to the dissolution of the experimental colleges at Grand Valley. Each of the small colleges had an administrator competing for budget within the Zumberge administration building. When resources became strained in the 1970s with economic recession, it led to the colleges being closed and the University emerging as a new structure in the 1980s. Just as in Arizona, the erosion of the state’s economy, tax revenues and appropriations were blamed for the massive re-structuring. There were, however, other pressures that seem eerily familiar. Parents were worried that students from William James would have trouble moving on to graduate schools without traditional grades. The president of GVSC, Arend Lubbers, was under pressure to close what many in the community described as “wacky” colleges. There was negative publicity about the openness of the types of classes in Thomas Jefferson, where in a course on witchcraft, the classroom was painted black for the appropriate effect.

As in Arizona, it was a combination of both resources and politics that eroded the will to tolerate experiments in higher education. The erosion continues. After Likins closed AIC, he proposed closing other programs on campus: Extended University, Humanities, Library Science, Health Professions, Atmospheric Sciences, Comparative Cultural and Literary Studies, and programs in French and Russian. It seemed that no type of program was spared: be financially or academically self-sufficient or be ready for the ax.

It may well be the same pressure to conform that shapes Grand Valley’s current re-organization efforts. What parts of the proposed changes are needed to manage a pattern of fast growth? Or are the changes propelled by a need for Grand Valley to look more traditional and hence better reflect current institutional marketing practice? William James and Thomas Jefferson would both have had strong feelings about the current state of liberal arts education in far-off Arizona as well as in our home state of Michigan.

Notes
1. New Campus in Pin, Board of Regents, 2.
3. Pamphlet (Tucson, 1.
4. Mary Gwyn Godbey, the Inaugural College of the University of Chi.
7. Higher Education in Report from the Se.
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During structural problems of the experimental college, small colleges had an annual budget within the Zumwalt. When resources became scarce due to the rocky economic recession, it led to the University emerging in Arizona. Just as in Arizona, the cutbacks in revenues and appropriations led to massive re-structuring. Measures that seemed eerily similar to those students from Wilcox, Arizona, were now moving on to graduate studies. The president of the university was under pressure to close programs, which were described as "wacky" college studies about the openness of Thomas Jefferson, where in a new study on education was painted black.

The extension of both resources and tolerance experiments continues. After Likins cut programs on Humanities, Library, Atmospheric Sciences, and Modern Studies, and professors seemed that no type of education, be it socially or academically required, was tolerable. It seemed that no type of education was accepted. Pressure to conform that curriculum was imposed. What changes are needed to overall education? Or are the changes really to go the way of the current institutional changes and Thomas Jefferson, where feelings about the university in far-off Arizona were overlooked in Michigan?

Notes


16 Ingar Sandal, "UA May Have to Pull Plug on College," *Arizona Daily Star* October 12, 2001, A15.


18 *2001 Highlights*, 12.

19 *New Campus in Pima County*, 47.

20 *New Campus in Pima County*, 12.

21 *New Campus in Pima County*, 150.


25 Sandal, "UA May Have to Pull Plug on College."


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37 Jewett, "If We Fail to Act Quickly, Arizona’s Economy Will Slip Backward," B2.