THE LIBRARY AS CLASSROOM: A LABORATORY FOR DIVERSITY

DAVID UNDERWOOD MEMORIAL LECTURE

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by

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Carl, thank you for that very kind introduction, and thank you, my colleagues and friends, for your applause.

I want you to know that if you should care to hear it, Jack Ballinger has offered, almost begged on three occasions since commencement, to give a talk he has prepared on Vitamin C.

This occasion is a momentous one for me and in a way a validation of the fact that I do belong here, that my hiring in 1967 was a good thing. You see, I was never quite sure why I was hired because of something which happened just before my interview. First, I wasn’t sure it was my fate to be here because the day before my interview in April 1967 I drove for the first time ever to North County in order to locate the college, and after coming to a detour on West Florissant, I became hopelessly lost in a blinding rainstorm. Eventually I ended up on Fee Fee Road. To this day I can’t tell you how I got there.

On the following day I struck out again for the college, and as the sun was shining brightly, I found my way here easily. I made my way to the library which at the time was in Building 300 on the old campus, on the hill to the west. Betty Duvall was to interview me, but she hadn’t returned from lunch off campus. Catherine Thomson, the circulation librarian, tried to make me feel comfortable, but I soon discovered that I was allergic to some plant life in what was still a countryside. I excused myself to continue sneezing in the hallway and to try to compose myself before Betty arrived. I stood in the hallway outside a door which I assumed opened to a closet. I was just disposing of a tissue when the door opened - outwardly - rapidly, the doorknob slamming into the small of my back, sending my then-skinny body literally flying across the hallway, a water fountain on the other side. In the air I thought quickly, "how can I make myself seem less foolish? Oh, I know; I'll pretend that I'm rushing across to get a drink of water." And I did land with my hand on the button beneath the water fountain. Roger Schnell, who had exited the offending door in what I was to find was his customary haste, rushed to my side apologetically. When he determined that I was, indeed, not greatly injured, he returned to the library to tell Catherine what had happened. One of them said in pure jest, we'll have to hire him now that he's injured." So you see, I've never been sure...

I am especially honored to be the Underwood Lecturer because Dave Underwood was one of my early mentors here. I am one of the fourth generation of a family of educators; both of my parents were college
professors, so I was a "faculty child" who grew up with dinnertime stories of academic political intrigue, favoritism, awarding of mediocrity, theft of income and ideas, and administrative ivory towers. My father warned me to avoid such places in my career, but when I observed Dave Underwood, I thought, "Now here is a different breed of administrator, one whom I can respect." Those early years here at this college were very exciting for us all. Many of the faculty were young and willing to try new and unconventional methods of instruction. The campus was small enough that faculty from widely diverse disciplines still discussed and planned cooperatively outside of committee meetings. Our biggest distractions were Western Weekend, the naming of the Troll Queen, following the antics of the student, a self-proclaimed witch, who flew about campus making dramatic entrances in a black cape, and as time wore on, the occasional streaker. Academically, these were special years and a big reason for that was Dave Underwood.

I agree with Ken Boyer's assessment of Dave Underwood as a "walking administrator", an educator who, though not regularly in the classroom after 1967, never stopped teaching. The entire campus was his classroom; faculty, staff and students were his students. He made an effort several times each day to visit every building, not only on his way to meetings but in a concerted effort to remain close to the front lines: to keep abreast of what was taking place; to know what the issues were from staff and from students; to listen and to learn, especially from conversations overheard by chance; to learn outside the structure of meetings. He was able to interrelate various sides of issues expressed separately by individuals who had not had the opportunity to speak to one another. Not a snoop, he was rather a person who recognized early that the campus would grow rapidly in size and direction, with an increase in students with differences and special needs, and that opinions, feelings, teaching and learning could be swallowed up if not tended and fed.

In his forays out of his office, Dave Underwood fled to the library at least twice daily. He knew when a new shipment of McNaughton books had come in. He knew what classroom instructors were requiring library research because he shadowed library faculty as we taught research methods to individual students and to groups. Early on he knew of library faculty's struggles to identify and to assist students with developmental needs. He observed firsthand the outright refusal of some European-American students to allow me to help them and the hesitation of some African-American students to allow anyone but me to assist them. He not only listened, but he asked questions, and in his commonsensical way, he offered suggestions, food
for thought which allowed us to solve our own problems. Above all, he believed in and encouraged Dr. Cosand’s ideal that Instructional Resources should be at the heart of the instructional process. The library was the classroom without walls where all disciplines were represented and where branches of knowledge, artificially separated by divisions and departments, could be interrelated. Dave Underwood believed in faculty status for reference librarians because from the beginning he understood the partnership which, if students are to be served, must exist between classroom faculty and reference librarians.

I must admit that I have been looking forward to the possibility of this day for some time. In the very first Underwood lecture Mike Marty defined its purpose as the opportunity for a faculty member to discuss with his colleagues how David Underwood’s humanistic ideals could be furthered at Flo Valley, by and within the lecturer’s discipline. As early as 1980 when Lee West gave her Underwood lecture about the role of Counseling in the instructional process, I began thinking that, if ever I were chosen the Underwood Lecturer, another faculty member outside a traditional classroom like Lee, at least part of what I would talk about is what I do. This would serve to review with all of you who serve students how library services, specifically reference services, support, extend and enhance the learning which takes place in the classroom.

Such limited and hackneyed descriptions as bibliographic instruction, library instruction, and information literacy have been used in the literature to attempt to describe what I do, but my job is much more complex. For groups of students I develop and teach discipline-specific, and hopefully course specific, library orientation lessons on subjects as diverse as English Composition with an emphasis on the sixties to advertising design, from an introductory lesson on nursing to a lesson on the state statutes and use of the case law books for a Human Services class. With luck I have a week’s notice that I have been assigned an orientation lesson, no more than two preparations per day, and an hour’s time between lectures to set up and prepare.

For individuals I answer simple questions: what colleges in Colorado offer a bachelor’s degree in physical therapy? where would I find a picture of a metals tension testing machine? do you have historical information on the U.S. Navy? . . . to the more complex, but still ordinary questions: would you help me find materials on upward mobility in the health care professions? what sources would I use to find all that is available to support the topic of
my paper on anger and communication? Even these questions may seem simple, but they involve discussion of the focus of the question or the paper to be written, learning the limitations set by the classroom instructor or the student himself, working within the length of a time a student has for researching, discovery of how independent, connected, energetic, experienced, active or passive, and committed each student is to learning and carrying through the research process. Some students don’t understand their assignments, cannot spell the keywords if the assignment was given orally, or worse, cannot read the written assignment given. Many students don’t understand that they must focus their research and their papers, a lesson they would learn in English Comp I and II if they would take those classes at the beginning of their studies. Some students don’t even understand the words "viewpoint" or "focus." They don’t understand that to take as controversial a subject as abortion with its religious, psychological, physiological, and ethical ramifications and to write a six-page paper without narrowing the topic is a meaningless and impossible chore. We can’t say, "this would be meaningless and impossible", but must coach, cajole, advise, encourage, and push the student by discussing the various aspects of the subjects. We will not choose a topic or an aspect of a topic for a student, but will help him to make his own choice. (In 26 years how many of Bob Murphy’s students have I helped choose a book for his required book report after they have grumbled at reading a book and so cannot choose a topic. When I ask one of Bob’s students what about politics or the country makes him angry, almost immediately he will have a topic.) Once this is done, we teach the student how to use the resources and indexes available: LUIS - the online catalog, the print and electronic magazine, journal, and newspaper indexes with their varied formats, the pamphlet file, etc. We teach the basics of boolean logic, normally covered in a semesterlong course, in five minutes. When allowed by the student, we teach him the need for and the process of evaluating, synthesizing, and organizing the material he discovers. We urge him to return during the writing of the paper or as the course progresses because as he learns more from his reading, additional questions and issues will arise. We librarians, and all of us who teach, must be ever vigilant against short-circuiting the learning process by helping students to reduce knowledge to predigested information retrievable by preset procedures. If allowed by the classroom instructor and the reference librarians, many students will treat their library research materials as texts to collect, word by word, the way they have learned to collect phrases from the blackboard and regurgitate them on tests. Reference librarians have long recognized that people in general, students in particular, need more than just a knowledge base; they need techniques for
exploring it, connecting it to other knowledge bases, and making practical use of it. We want students to develop independence and sophistication as researchers. We want students to view every field they study through a window of individual consciousness so that the library becomes a vehicle of personal expression and gives a view to the realities of other people. As one library educator put it, we want students to become explorers, not merely hunters.

In this partnership with the classroom teachers we become coteachers, hopefully always enhancing and extending, sometimes explaining, the lessons which begin in the classroom. (I recall the three hours in two days this past summer which I spent with one of Jon Hake’s students: assuring her that he wasn’t being unusually mean by having her read both Antigone and Suddenly Last Summer all in one semester; reviewing with her the process of writing her own thoughts about literature and supporting those ideas with the words and ideas of critics; telling her stories to let her know that thousands have gone down this very path before her.) As a team, we work with the classroom instructors to make these students thinking and information literate people.

Our best students, the ones with whom we have stimulating conversations about their research, are those who discover quickly how to make full use of all the library has to offer in terms of physical and intellectual resources. While using the reference staff as resource people, they develop independence and creativity in the use of the indexes and the reference collection on their own. They return again and again when working on papers, bounce new ideas off the minds of whichever reference librarians are on duty, and learn to use the library as the center of their studies. These are the students who use technology as an extension of the thinking process and who will be ready for the literacy of our radically shrinking world.

Then, there are others who give us the questionable advantage of learning one-on-one about the deficiencies of many of our students. Perhaps I’m preaching to the choir here, but folks, we now have the population which Dave Underwood warned us would be coming. Many of our students are among the 85% of teenagers and 45% of adults in the U.S. who never voluntarily read. These are the students who, as Yeats said, want their vessels filled, not their fires lit, and having half-filled their vessels, were passed on out of high school knowing little and lacking the desire to learn more. Dr. Jane Healy in her book Endangered Minds: Why Our Children Don’t Think, tells us that television has given today’s young people information which they could not have gotten any other way sometimes. However, television has presented
information is such a way that youth are allowed to receive it passively. Unless parents are attentive, these students are given no opportunity for immediate human interaction. They are not challenged to use their imaginations or to interact verbally, so when they try or are forced to, they are unintelligible. Since their primary mode of learning has been visual and passive, any other methods introduced devalue the information presented. Even information received similar to what they already know, if received in a nonvisual form, will not automatically connect. The student asked to name a city on each coast of the United States cannot do the assignment until he knows what a coast is. A student doing a paper on abortion will never be able to find information if she continues to spell the word "abortion." A student looking for books by title in LUIS and instructed to skip the articles at the beginning of the titles won’t be able to find them if he doesn’t know that the articles are "a" "an" and "the." A student who wants to do a term paper on running shoes, not a comparison theme on types or brands of shoes, a ten-page research paper, needs more than a minute’s help. How but by discussion could we help a student who, having failed to support her thesis statement that mathematics, English and political science are important in everyday life, wanted a book from which to find examples? Such questions make requests to "find that little red book on criticism again" seem simple.

Still other students arrive on campus without the capability of reading, writing or doing simple mathematics. As far back as the mid-seventies I began to notice more and more the presence of those who didn’t possess the skills that I expected in a college student. I felt as many of you still do that students who cannot read, write, or add should not be allowed into college, but the reality was that they were here. I joined that group of frustrated faculty members who formed the Developmental Studies Committee in 1978. We discussed at length, for years, what to "do" with these people who are not prepared. The measures we were allowed to try showed us many times that students needing remediation are not necessarily unintelligent. Then, how did they come to need to be "developed" in college? I recalled the ten mostly very quiet, some very angry, people in Row 5 of my eighth grade classroom, classmates collected along the way from classes ahead of mine. Among them was Jimmy, a math whiz who couldn’t read past the third grade level, Felix who always tried answering questions but was laughed at when he was consistently wrong, Peggy who could read well and who gave outrageously funny, marginally correct answers in class discussion but who could not write. Each student was different but all shared a history of missing some key information early on, falling behind, having his successes ignored, needing special attention in other
areas but being neglected by teachers who didn’t have time, energy or the training to provide it. They were set aside in the fifth row and made to feel different. Recess and dismissal became the high points of the day.

How many of our students, never engaged in their grade school years, could these examples describe? How many students do we have at Flo Valley who missed something key in the second or third grade and, terribly discouraged, decided to just sit quietly after being laughed at for a mistake; or lacking the proper home environment, slept through essential pieces of information given in school; who, craving attention at school because of none at home, acted out and became known as a "bad kid." How many of our students simply barely tried in school and are still following that pattern? How many of our students did well in the first three grades when the focus was on feeling, socialization, and process but fell hopelessly behind when group work shifted to thinking, individual competition, and details? How many of these students continue to be made to feel different and isolated today? However they come to be that way, students with developmental needs are alike in their history of being wounded by neglect, damaged with accusations of stupidity and worthlessness. In competition with children with more parental involvement, children who become connected earlier, children viewed perhaps as cleaner, prettier, more advantaged, a child can very early begin to think of himself as unworthy and stupid, and this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Such students come to us with the feeling that they are different from the norm. In a typical semester over one-fourth of the students registered at Flo Valley are enrolled in one or more developmental courses.

Of course, it is impossible for us in the library to identify a student as developmental by looking at him unless he reveals what class he is in or asks for help with an assignment which has the name of the class on it. There are little clues which help my colleagues in the reference area identify developmental students, and we watch for these so as not to embarrass the students: defensiveness or an "attitude" when asking a question, hesitation and frowning when the reading level of a reference book is too high; a grumpy facial expression when not enough algebra books in LUSI have the words "basic" or "simple" in their titles. When we know or guess that a student has developmental needs, a shift to a simpler reference book, perhaps one with more pictures, relaxes the face and even brings a smile without an embarrassing word being spoken. Such students express gratitude for our noncritical attention in a world which has, more often than not, laughed at their failure.
For these and still other students the problem may be one of variant learning styles. My experiences at work and at home have taught me that people learn in many different ways. Unlike at home where my children are upfront with me when they fail to understand, in the library we recognize when students are just not getting it when their eyes glaze over. Never was the existence of varying styles made more clear to me than by a speaker at last Spring’s National Association for Developmental Education (NADE) Conference. Habib Sosseh of the Annandale campus of Northern Virginia Community College teaches several sections of English-as-a-Second-Language, 25 students in each section from up to 12 different countries. He explained the difference in learning patterns and expectations of students in bargaining cultures, in masculine versus feminine cultures, in shame versus guilt cultures, fate versus man-as-God cultures. He told of the difficulty of teaching students with varying language patterns, all different from the directness we expect in standard English: zigzag in Semitic cultures, roundabout or looped in eastern cultures. Although most of our students come to us from American high schools, those not-so-homogeneous schools are in different neighborhoods and are themselves populated from a variety of neighborhoods. (Substitute subcultures in our American culture.) From reading, which I have come to realize I did later than most of you, I have learned that students may mentally perceive and order information taught in different ways and that learning may be affected by a student’s social and emotional well-being, the physical environment (light, room arrangement or temperature), how he feels about himself in general and in relationship to the subject being learned in particular.

The person who most clearly showed me the need for adjustments to varying learning styles was my friend Dorothy McGuffin in Counseling; she kindly led a debriefing session for my Personal Growth and Identity class after my students had taken and scored their own Meyers Briggs tests. Students discovered themselves on paper, revealed through a four-letter code which told whether they were extroverted or introverted, sensing or intuitive, thinking or feeling, judging or perceptive. Dorothy explained what each type would be like as a student and as a teacher and with what kind of teacher each of my students would succeed best in a class. The discussion was most animated as my students analyzed past teacher/student relationships which had not been successful.

If my teaching style, as with many teachers, tends to be either sensing-thinking or intuitive-thinking, am I reaching only sensing-thinking or intuitive-thinking
students? How many of my sensing-feeling students are not connecting? How is an INTJ teacher like me to connect with an ESFP student? Whose responsibility is it to make the connection? Should my student change his style of learning to accommodate me or should there be some accommodation on both sides? How can I know each student’s learning style so that I can adjust my teaching strategy? How do my students view my teaching style? Should the Meyers Briggs test be given as a part of our basic assessment battery as is done at some other colleges? Students in the library, dependent upon their age, attitude, background, learning style, and personality, regularly resist using the online catalog, the electronic or the print indexes, reference book indexes and tables of contents. What I try to do when working with a student is to begin with his strengths to give him confidence and teach him to stretch, to use a different learning style, one perhaps required by the resources he needs to use. Many writers on the subject agree that a major obstacle is fitting knowledge about learning styles into a system which is not set up to accommodate individual differences. We in the library, when we are working one-on-one, have that advantage over classroom instructors.

Expressed another way, no student should feel isolated, no matter what his developmental needs are, what his learning style is, or by his color or national origin. We speak of America as being a great melting pot where people from all over the world have blended together to build a life. A walk through the Student Center on any midday will show you that we have not blended; African American students often segregate themselves in the Game Room, and single-race groups of students cluster together in the halls, assiduously avoiding contact with one another. A look at the nightly news or the Post Dispatch will show that at times and in certain places in the world, we are barely existing together, that this is a larger, societal problem. Arthur Schlesinger in his Disuniting of America says that the reason the United States’s unitedness is so precarious may be that it does not rest on a solid foundation of respect for personal identities or cultural pluralism. Geographic proximity, merely sitting together in a classroom, does not by itself reduce social distance. As a multiethnic person with ancestors from Africa, four European countries, and two native American tribes, I am hurt when I hear racial slurs or racially based remarks, no matter what their origin. I was saddened when I heard an African-American female student say, "He white; he can’t do nothin’ for me." I was equally saddened when a European-American student said to me of his instructor, "She’s black, but she’s a wonderful instructor." The first student had in eight words written off the opportunity to interact with and learn about an entire race. The second student had at last learned that African-Americans
can be good teachers; so many years missed! You should know that our students observe our actions and learn, positive lessons or negative reinforcement, from how we treat each other. An African-American student reported overhearing his work study supervisor comment to a colleague, "No, I'm not going to interview him; I have enough blacks in this department already." Another student heard a conversation between two office workers of one race about a person of a different race who had just left the office; the conversation ended with, "you know how they are." In the last couple of years here over a dozen students have commented to me that they will never return to this office because of the way they treated or take a class with that instructor again, regardless of their grade, because of the way they were treated, something that was said or the perpetuation of stereotypes; whether the mistreatment was racially motivated or not, their perception was that there could have been no other reason for it. I believe that racially motivated remarks and actions are made due to ignorance, insensitivity and fear; I also believe that in the workplace in general, on a campus in particular where we staff are supposed to be enlightened, such remarks and actions have no place. These remarks and the presence of only nineteen African-American faculty members out of a total of one-hundred thirty-four may be a contributing factor to the feeling of isolation of some African-American students and the ignorance of some European-American students about the intellectual capabilities of African-Americans. We nineteen can and do teach valuable lessons to students of all ethnic backgrounds by serving as role models. But so too can faculty and staff of good will and of any race or ethnic background serve as role models to any student.

What is Sid talking about, you may be asking. I don't act this way toward my students and I don't know anyone who does, you say. May I suggest to you that if you have never been at the receiving end of a prejudiced act, you may not recognize that it is happening all around us. But please believe me, I am not suggesting that most staff here are not people of good will. I have raised this very sensitive subject, so difficult to speak about, because the number of conversations concerning prejudice which I hear or am a part of in the library indicate that we have a problem somewhere on campus. And if students are talking about the problem here, you can be sure that those conversations are being repeated in the community. What is happening here is a microcosm of what is happening in the larger world around us, a larger societal problem which we will not erase entirely by any amount of effort. But there are steps that can only be taken by us as individuals of good will to create a new image and a new reality. I am speaking, among staff members, of the care we must
all take to show ordinary courtesy and respect, the way that we would want to be treated ourselves. As far our relationships with students of a different race, I am suggesting that we as the authority figures here have valuable lessons that we can teach those in our charge by tackling the intellectual basis of racism. And, we must take care that we are not sending the wrong messages subliminally. Just as a developmental student does not wear a big, red "D" on his shirt, it is nearly impossible to tell by looking what scars a person carries from past incidents involving race. I am blessed to work with colleagues in the library who make every attempt to greet each student as if he were just the person we were waiting to help. We have found that such actions as asking to be of help to students who approach the desk tentatively, an immediate response to a question asked, a reassuring smile, and a caring tone of voice are inexpensive ways to put any student at ease and to encourage him to learn.

In my Personal Growth and Development class we discussed the difference between preference and prejudice. To have a preference does not necessarily indicate a prejudice. Prejudice is to judge beforehand without knowledge, to make assumptions. My first consciousness of prejudice came in 1948 when I singlehandedly integrated the Jefferson City diocesan schools. For years it was a lonely time, a time of isolation, a time when neither European-Americans or African-Americans would associate with me or my family. Now, as an adult I realize that we all have prejudices; we are human. I distrust anyone who claims not to have prejudices. As for myself, I prefer not to be around people of any race who are not clean or who have unkempt hair, but I also prejudge them. Instinctively, I try to avoid them, and I make up for them a whole lifestyle and set of circumstances which may or may not be true. The key here is for me to recognize that I have this prejudice but not to act on it, to make a special effort, begun with a prayer for forbearance, to keep my feelings to myself, off my face and out of my actions, to keep an open mind, and to treat people with these conditions in my customary, professional way. Oftimes, my openness has taught me valuable lessons about people toward whom I am prejudiced.

May I point out that an unclean person can take a bath, but a person's skin coloring is, dependent upon your belief, an accident of birth or a gift from God? To lump all people of a different skin color into a separate category and to treat them differently is to deny that each person of that color an individualism with which he was born. For instance, I was at one time among those guilty of thinking of the CASS students as one unit; instead, they are
individuals, men and women from a variety of homelands, each with a greater or lesser facility with English and Spanish, each with his or her own personality, each with his or her special abilities and needs. We may assume some things about their needs as participants in the CASS program, but beyond that, each student is an individual.

Let me speak briefly about multiculturalism here, one of those buzz words which some of us are tired of hearing and others fear, but like it or not, acknowledged or not, we have for a long time been a multicultural society. 80% of those declaring themselves African-American have at least one European-American ancestor; 20% of those declaring themselves European-American have at least one African-American ancestor. And, how many of us have a Native-American ancestor whom we don’t mention on the census forms? Those cultures which may have been submerged are and will be coming more to the fore in schools, in the workforce, in life. The nation’s roots have changed from two-hundred years ago when 90% of the population was European-American with 10% "other." Now, about just under 80% are European-Americans and the other 20-21% are from other areas; these are the conservative figures given by the Census Bureau. We have had a melting pot mentality with one principal ingredient in the pot, but now the accent flavors are being added or acknowledged in greater quantities. As this happens, the cultural pluralism which Schlesinger wrote about will have to be accepted; this will mean the equal coexistence in a mutually supportive relationship of people of diverse cultures. People would center their view and evaluation of the world on their own continent or continents of origin but would learn about and be taught to respect the viewpoints of all groups. No one race would be the norm; there would be no outsiders; no one would feel isolated because of ethnic background.

Cultural pluralism was expressed in another way at the NADE conference by a European-American, Brooklyn-born Director of Admissions at historically black Fayetteville State University. Instead of a melting pot where all the flavors blend and lose their individuality, he spoke of the ideal society being represented by a salad in which all the ingredients complement one other, work well together, but retain their distinct flavors. In order to prepare students educationally and socially for an enlightened and peaceful world, I believe that we need to begin making a salad here on campus rather than a pot of soup. Of course, this effort is not one which we can make entirely as individuals; it also requires leadership from above to take us in this direction. However, individually we need to prepare, in the classroom and outside, for
this major, necessary change in our lives. It would be naive to assume that
the education our students receive here can, by itself, change the world, but I
think that we have an opportunity and the responsibility to learn and to teach
a new reality and one by one, to cause change and growth in the lives we

On a personal level one of the challenges I love most is to discover a hostile
European-American returning student during a library orientation tour for the
Careers for Homemakers program, to concentrate on that student, give her
occasional but definite eye contact during the lesson and reveal by my words
that I am sensitive to whatever hardship brought her to this program.
Afterward I seek to assist her individually, to smile at her and be all the more
gracious and helpful to her the more she exhibits hostility to me, to attempt
to discover if her hostility is a mask for her sheer terror in returning to
school. I make every effort to make her realize that her fear of me,
resentment toward me, or assumptions made about me are unfounded. After
much more work on many more occasions as she returns to the library, my
reward comes two years later when she rushes to introduce me to her family
at graduation.

Like it or not our fates are linked, whether we are literate, illiterate and
aliterate, whether we have roots in Europe, Africa or Asia, whether we are
female or male. John Donne’s words

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the
continent, a part of the main...any man’s death diminishes me,
because I am involved in mankind... 

do not speak of people as being more or less human, more or less involved in
humankind. Donne speaks of inclusion. If we fail to do our part to include
any student who is making an effort, that student may give up, and we and the
student are diminished by that. I believe that we as individuals can increase
retention by doing our part, whatever our position, to make sure that every
student here feels included. A start may be to view differences among
individuals as subordinate to the humanity which we all share.

Last April a Human Resources representative told the Faculty Negotiating
Team that administrators deserve to make more money because their jobs are
more complex. His statement only confirms what we already knew, that he
and those of his mindset may be able to quote our mission statement word for
word but have no idea what it takes bring that statement alive on a daily basis. If complexity of duties is the criterion upon which we are to base our salary schedule, I believe that anyone who deals with students - the dean who must tactfully handle a student complaint, the faculty member who must adjust his/her teaching style to accommodate a variety of learners, the professional staff person who must prepare a student who has never worn a suit for his first job interview, a classified staff person who intercedes in a student attempt at suicide - anyone who deals with students has a more complex job than those who do not, and our reward for doing what we are called to do merits more than a "take it or leave it" posture at the bargaining table. Our products are our students, and for many of them, we are their last hope. Our students need for us to be cheerleaders for their successes, as Mary Seager and Roy Pearson and many, many others are. Whether those students are in Phi Theta Kappa after one semester or in developmental courses for three semesters, whether they are African-American, Central American, European-American or Asian-American, whether they are intuitive or feeling, we are successful only when we make honest attempts to find each student's teachable moment, meet him where he is, and help him to grow. That is why we are here.

By this point you may have wished that Jack Ballinger given his talk on Vitamin C. So, to close, it has been said that some teachers are born and others learn along the way. I've been learning for twenty-six years, and I look forward to the challenge this coming year will bring as we continue to learn together.

Thank you.