David L. Underwood

Memorial Lecture

WHERE'S THE ACTION?

by

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August 21, 1984

ST LOUIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
at FLORISSANT VALLEY
Terry M. Fischer THEATRE
I would like to start this morning by introducing my support group. I didn't know if anyone would sit up front today, so I invited them. They are - of course - very special people to me.

I want to thank Annabelle Underwood and Dave's sister, Esther and her daughter Brenda for being here this morning as we honor Dave. The advice I've received from previous Underwood lecturers, is to strive for three things; be yourself -- be light -- and be brief. And with that in mind, I hope to go 3 out of 3 and have a perfect day.

Pete Kellams gave me a bit of additional advice when I told him this really wasn't my style of presentation. His advice was -- "Don't try and wing it, Ken". I really didn't have that in mind --but perhaps I have over reacted and never have been this ready for anything. I ran out of whiteout yesterday--so its a good thing August 21st is finally here.

The time has passed all too quickly since Pete Kellams informed me last March 5th, that I was the recipient of the David Underwood Memorial Lecture award. I want to take a few moments to share with you some of my thoughts and experiences since that day in March.

I remember the excitement of the weeks preceding the announcement when only Olga and Kim knew. Olga asked if she could tell our children, Dale and Lynn, living in San Francisco and Houston, I answered that it would be alright --but for them not to tell anyone. Perhaps that was carrying the secrecy of it all a bit to the extreme, but I had already joined in the spirit of it by entering a fictitious off campus appointment in my calendar book for the day and time of the award.
I remember the excitement of the days immediately preceding the announcement. It was then that the campus-wide secretarial information network was activated. They began monitoring who was calling me, or who visited my office, or my whereabouts on campus. I found out later that suspicions began when I visited Bill Miller’s office to discuss the award presentation and Bill closed his office door. Evidently when Bill closes his door the Physical Education staff starts asking questions.

Engineering faculty began asking me (and I'm sure they had some prompting) if I knew who would be the Underwood Award recipient. With as much innocence as I could muster, I asked that they let me know when they found out.

I remember the excitement of announcement day. My family was to meet in Pete’s office at a scheduled time. I had come to school obviously not dressed for a special occasion. I not only left my coat and tie in the car but locked it in the trunk—because I knew the secretaries would check the car—and it turned out they did. When I left the office that morning for my fictitious off-campus appointment, I didn't go down to the car and change because I knew they'd be watching out the window—and they were. Instead, I got in the car and drove away—to the student parking lot behind the Phys Ed building, where I proceeded to put on my tie and suitcoat. As I fumbled with the third try at tying the knot, I suddenly thought to myself, "This is insane—what if one of my friends from campus police drive by and sees me in a student parking lot at 11 a.m., with my trunk open, putting on a tie, and combing my hair." Fortunately they didn't come by, because to this date I'm not sure how I would have responded if Bob Hickman had driven up smiled, and said "Ken, can I be of any help?"
To complete this, what now had become in my own mind, an ultra secretive event, I would nonchalantly go up to the third floor of the IR building one hour early—unbeknown even to Roger Schnell who of course was planning the award ceremony and reception. Then—on the stroke of 12:30 I would board the elevator, ride down to the second floor, the doors would open, everyone would be surprised (including Roger), the committee would be relieved that I hadn't chickened out, and I would join up with my family who had been escorted in by Pete.

Well, the plan went bad as soon as I set foot in the IR building. There was Roger waiting inside the door, like the matre dé, ready as usual to offer his assistance. I confided in him with my plan—and he agreed with one exception—you can't get on the elevator without a key—and of course I didn't have a key. Who knows, had I not met Roger in the lobby, I might still be on the third floor waiting for the elevator. Well—I came down the steps instead—which must have worked out alright though, because Anne Zuius later said—in her innimitable complimentary fashion, "You came down those steps like you were going to your high school prom." Thank you Anne.

I would like to thank my friends who have offered their congratulations and support since last April. To those who suggested that I just add an opening and a closing to my acceptance speech and use it again this August.—They didn't think I said much but it sure was long enough.

Thanks to my Associate Dean, Gloria, who after offering her congratulations said not to be concerned about next August, because she knew I would be a model speaker. I knew that coming from Gloria those were sincere words of encouragement, but I had never heard that expression before—model speaker?—maybe that's what they say in Alabama. Still puzzled
that evening, I looked up the word "model" in the dictionary, and of course found it to mean--"a small replica of the real thing"--Still not questioning Gloria's sincerity, I thanked her again the next day and told her she was really a warm person to offer those words of encouragement. Now she probably didn't go look up "warm" in the dictionary, but I knew it means "not too hot". Thank you Gloria.

Thanks to Ann Dempsey for her offer to help with my lecture over the summer. It seems that immediately after the award ceremony last April, before anything else was said, our thirteen year old Mark got me aside and said "Dad you better hope there are not any English teachers here today" Asked why, he replied "Because you said this was the most highest award you have ever received". Confident that I had not made such a grammatical blunder, I asked his mother what she had heard. Well -- you know that when a mother agrees with a thirteen year old, it must have been that way. Sure enough--my fears were confirmed five minutes later at the reception when Ann said she would be on campus this summer and available to assist me. Thanks again Ann, I know your offer was sincere.

Well--as Herb McMahon suggested, I've added an opening--now for the acceptance speech.

In preparation for today, I have listened to the tapes of some of the prior Underwood lectures, and in doing so have discovered the common thread between them all--the high respect they had for Dave Underwood as both an individual and an educator and the importance of receiving this award in each of their careers. I must say that common thread will not be broken by me.
Recipients of the award for the past nine years have all known Dave Underwood, some on a personal basis, some of them working closely as Division or Department chairs, others as faculty members or counselors. In the not too distant future though, the Underwood Lecture recipient will not have known Dave Underwood. When that time comes, neither the significance of the award nor the impact on the recipient will be diminished. But rather, a tradition will truly have been established that will carry forward for the life of this college.

My recollections of Dave Underwood begin in August 1966 when I was interviewed by him in my second round of pre-employment interviews. His role at that time was Associate Dean of Instruction.

I recall later, his frequent visits to the Engineering building which he said were "to get back to the real world" when the pace of his own office became too hectic. He would either go visit one of the labs or just talk shop with faculty in the lounge. Engineering faculty were always amazed at this ability to intuitively analyze technical problems. In his nonscientific way, he would say "Well it seems like" or "It's obvious why that works"—and generally he was on the right track.

I remember participating in meetings that he chaired, where parties with differing viewpoints had already come to an impasse. How he would sit back and listen for awhile, puff on his pipe, offer some possibilities for a solution, make some analogies to other situations, and then sit back again and allow the participants to solve their differences. After he would leave, one felt like saying "Who was that masked man--on the white horse--puffing a pipe. Dave Underwood had succeeded again--in his own special way.
I remember his willingness to break with tradition and try a new idea. In fact, the topic of my lecture today relates back to a conversation we had in October '74. During that period I was involved in developing a number of workshops and special interest courses for the Civil engineering, surveying, and construction industries. I was considering a series of instructional modules, each lasting four to sixteen weeks. They would each deal with estimating the cost of construction for different phases of a project. Students could choose a package of modules that suited any type of specialized construction—such as foundations, painting, plumbing, paving, or many other possibilities. Well—this idea didn't appear to be much different than other modular instruction that was taking place at the college. The difference however was that transcripted credit would be awarded for each module which in most instances would be fractional credit hours. After presenting the idea to Dave his response was "Well, we haven't awarded fractional credit hours before, but that's no reason why it can't be done. Let's put it together and see if it works." That idea, like others, sits on the proverbial back burner waiting the time and resources to accomplish.

I've been present at all of the eight previous Underwood lectures, but it wasn't until this summer that I discovered they have titles. I thought everyone just showed up in the theatre on Tuesday morning of opening week, sat comfortably back, and waited for the message. Well—for all but one, it does work that way—and most likely that one person—who will be standing at this lecturn one year from now is sitting in the audience today—My advice to you—whoever you are—is that it's not too early to start.
As I have listened to tapes of the recent lectures, I came to realize that they were not just extemporaneous happenings, but that a great deal of thought and preparation was obvious. My rude awakening came at the end of June as our family was preparing for a three week trip to the west coast. Jerry Schaeffer had called and left word that he needed to know the title of the Underwood lecture to have it printed in the opening week program.

You have perhaps heard the Bill Cosby routine about his teenage son, whose response to everything—whether he was just kicked out of school, or wrecked the family car, or had just maimed his younger brother—was *No Problem!—No Problem Dad!—Everythings under control.*

Well—that was me up to the day when Jerry called. "No Problem Lee" when Lee West asked how things were going. "No Problem Bill, Everythings under control" when Bill Miller asked if I had it all together. Well—it was then that I realized that I *did* have a problem. Not only did I not have a title, I didn't even have a topic. Now, that presented a real dilemma for me—because being a person of few words, and unlike some others, I have a difficult time saying something when I don't really have anything to say.

I thought back to my high school days when I lived in fear of being called upon in class, because I stammered so, that saying my name was a chore.

I thought back to more than thirty years ago as Olga and I sat in Tony's restaurant downtown. Yes—that's the same internationally known Tony's that we can't afford today, but that was back when a spaghetti dinner was $1.50 and you sat around talking to Vince and Tony Bommarito. As the two of us sat in silence, with me
not having anything to say—as usual, Olga said "Why don't you say something. People will think we're mad at each other if we're not talking." Explaining that I really didn't have anything to say she suggested "Why don't you just say the alphabet." So of course, being an obliging person, I proceeded with great expression to recite the alphabet—and have been doing so for the past thirty years just so she won't forget. I'm not here to recite the alphabet today. I do have something to say—which brings me—finally—to the topic of my lecture—Where's the Action? I figured that if Walter Mondale could borrow the Wendy's commercial, I could too and never be noticed. By its ambiguity I was also left a great deal of latitude as my focus narrowed on a topic.

As my thoughts developed however, I soon discovered that the title should have been, "Where Should the Action Be?" but I didn't think Wendy's would want to change to "Where Should the Beef Be?" so I dropped that idea.

For those that did notice the title, and came here today expecting Ken Smith to tell about all the action in Engineering, you are going to be disappointed—or not disappointed as the case may be, because I'm not going to do that. You're not even going to hear about High Technology again—and all those buzz words—Robotics, CAD, CAM, Fiber Optics, Telecommunications, and all the others. In fact—I'm not going to talk about Engineering at all—other than to use some examples as illustrations of the broader topic. Now that I've really gone off the deep end—and eliminated the only topic I know anything about—we'll proceed with Where's the Action?!!

The Action is—or more appropriately—should be in the development of working relationships with business and industry to deliver both traditional and nontraditional instruction either on or off campus.
The development of such working relationships has been triggered by declining enrollments nationwide. The competition for students by colleges and universities has escalated, and the once low key or nonexistence of advertising has moved to a more hard sell approach. Decreasing enrollment caused by and coupled with fewer high school graduates, a trend that will continue into the 1990s, has prompted educational institutions everywhere to seek other sources of students. Many smaller schools in remote locations have been forced to close their doors. Those located in or around metropolitan areas have joined in the competition for new students from--where else but,--the work force. The size of that group remains essentially stable except for periods of high employment. However, since many of the unemployed return to school, education actually benefits when the work force decreases. The community college has of course, been providing educational opportunities for persons in this group for the past twenty years. Employed, part-time students constitute a major part of our enrollment.

The basic differences in the type of instruction that has been offered to the working force in the past and the new relationships of which I speak are these. In the past (and currently) the emphasis is on credit courses, taught on campus, pursuing standard programs, with the student as the direct client. New relationships may now include nonstandard courses, sometimes for noncredit, course objectives jointly developed with the employer, courses taught on site, enrollment restrictions, and instructional costs paid directly by the employer.
Some may respond that we are already involved in this type of programming, and give examples of McDonnell Douglas, Monsanto, Ford Motor, and others to support that position. After all, hasn't Governor Bond been stressing for several years now the statewide need for developing linkages between education and industry—-and hasn't the Chancellor confirmed that, as an important goal for St. Louis Community College. The answer is yes to all those questions—-but the results have hardly tapped the real potential that remains.

Although this idea is neither unique or a new experience at Florissant Valley, we are still novices compared to others. There are institutions that have been active in this type of instruction for many years—-to the point where they now conduct workshops on "How to Work with Business and Industry" and present such topics as:

- How to Operate in the Protocol of the Business World
- How to Market Your Services to Business and Industry
- How to Plan Seminars and Conferences
- Pricing, Billing, and Contracting In Plant Training Programs

Those who become involved in developing these programs soon discover a very different set of problems. Let me tell you from experience—-it is not doing business as usual!!!!

I want to share with you from a recent issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education. The title of this article is "Contracts to Provide Courses for Workers Can Be a Win-Win Deal Universities Are Learning."

It goes on to read, "At half past four, when the workday is over at the CIGNA Corporation, 250 clerical and operations workers hurry down the hall to the university of Pennsylvania to begin the school day. In classrooms furnished by the insurance company, the workers meet for the core courses in English, literature, history, foreign language, and social science that lead to an undergraduate liberal arts degree."
Their instructors are university faculty members from arts and sciences who teach the same courses on campus.

The article goes on to say that although contracts for liberal arts education are not new, they are still unusual. The majority of the agreements are for business education or technical training in which the programs range from small seminars and workshops to advanced degrees. Pace University of New York, for example, has developed twenty different programs, primarily in business, that it can offer "off the shelf" on corporate sites. Pace now has contracts for undergraduate degree programs with six companies in the New York City area. They plan to expand the number of programs to fifty in the near future.

Since it was developed twelve years ago, the Employee Development Institute at Triton Community College has developed a product line that has resulted in contracts to offer fifty seminars and 250 development and training programs a year for production and office workers, supervisors, and managers on company sites. An additional 3,000 students per year are brought in by this activity.

Higher education institutions and their business partners agree that the ultimate success of any contractual arrangement depends upon the quality and competence of the university's faculty members.

Closer to home, you perhaps saw the article in the Post Dispatch on August 6th featuring the Master of Science in Management program that Maryville College will be offering at McDonnell Douglas—or perhaps SIU's announcement of a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Education offered at Scott Air Force Base. We are, of course, not in direct competition with those programs, but their existence indicates that other institutions are also looking for a piece of the action with business and industry.
As stated earlier, Florissant Valley is not a newcomer to these programs. My personal experience goes back ten years ago when we offered a number of special programs for the Civil Engineering, surveying, and construction industry ranging from one day workshops to full semester courses. These programs involved cooperative relationships with six professional associations, trade organizations, and labor unions and resulted in 500 students coming on campus that year. That was 500 students when the college enrollment was 8,000, not the 12,000 to which we have become accustomed.

More recent experiences at Florissant Valley include an eight week Electronics refresher course last Spring, taught on campus for cash register repair technicians of the May Company. Many in this group were graduates of a private sector computer institute, but turned out to be sorely in need of basic electronics theory.

We will be starting a six week Basic Electricity course at the Consumer Electronics Division of A, T and T in September. The first in a series of special courses designed for workers who test and recondition telephones.

A working relationship with the MCI Corporation, in the process of being developed, has already resulted in a noncredit basic electronics course offered this summer at their site, as well as a 15 week cooperative Telecommunications course to start this month at MCI of which a major number of the participants will be graduates from our electronic engineering technology program. In addition, one of our faculty members has been employed there this summer. The potential benefits of this relationship include development of an Associate Degree program in Telecommunications, donation of equipment, work positions for CoOp students, placement of our graduates, and updating of faculty.
Well--here I said that I wasn't going to talk this morning about engineering--and I am--but remember--only as examples. Similar kinds of activities could be occurring in virtually every academic area on this campus. I do though, want to share with you--one more example--in a bit more detail.

On Tuesday, June 19th, we met with a representative of AVSCOM, a federal agency located in St. Louis, having general military support responsibility. This particular division, with whom we were meeting, has the responsibility of providing flight aviation technicians to service military helicopters located anywhere in the world. Their problem was that the control systems on the helicopters had changed from mechanical to electronic, but their technicians were still mechanical. These very experienced and competent technicians were "bombing out" of the manufacturers' training schools because they didn't know basic electronics. The need was for a crash course in basic electronics for 120 technicians. To fulfill that need, they were soliciting bids from four institutions, two private sector training schools, one four year institution specializing in aviation, and Florissant Valley. The bid submitted would be the cost per student, including all supplies, for a six week, full time, (40 hrs/wk) course in basic electronics that would include all the topics on their hand drafted single page outline. That one page, I have to say, included just about every topic from a two year program, complete with almost a week of math review.

Additional details of the project were:

it must be accomplished in groups of fifteen over a two year period.
In order to maintain combat readiness, they could bring in no more than fifteen at one time.
no six week sessions would be back to back.
the six week periods would not be scheduled to fit our semester
dates.
we would develop all instructional materials
there could be no prior verification of the math backgrounds of
participants (average age would be about 45)
bids were due in ten days.
payment would be upon completion of each six week session.
the contract could be cancelled after any session if their budget
were cut or if things were not working out.
and last, and perhaps the most difficult to deal with, the first
class would start on August 6th.
Now--let me tell you--this is not the kind of instruction to which
we are accustomed. When I say nontraditional--this is what I mean.
The first reaction to all this, was to look for the reasons why we
couldn't do it--and believe me there were many--and then how to graciously
end the meeting. The major obstacles appeared to be the early start
date and how it would be staffed. Fulltime faculty and our regular
part-time staff were ruled out by the schedule, and we couldn't
risk hiring an unknown off the street, particularly since we would
be developing course material as it was being taught.

We mulled all this over for several days and in the meantime the bid
date was rescheduled three days earlier. On Friday of that same week
we reached the conclusion that the only possible way that we could submit
a bid was by assigning a full-time faculty member (with their agreement of
course) exclusively to this project and hire a temporary full-time
replacement one semester at a time as necessary.
With that approval from the Dean of Instruction and a green light to "Go For It", using whatever college resources were necessary, the proposal committee met at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning. At 1:00 p.m. the next afternoon we delivered to AVSCOM a twenty page offset printed, spiral bound proposal complete with graphics. Three days later, on Friday, we were notified that we would be awarded the contract. We were later told that the detail of our proposal and availability of the math learning lab were major factors in receiving the contract. Five weeks later, on August 6th the first class began as scheduled.

I have intentionally avoided using any names associated with these projects, but I have to make an exception. It was Tom Bingham who "put his head on the block" and is right now in class, in the third week of eight hours per day contact - with all apparently going well.

I have taken the time to present this example in more detail to illustrate

First -- that these projects do not fit
   a standard mold and often require
   a nontraditional approach
and Second -- that we are capable of successfully competing against
   anyone. The professional quality of our support services
   go unmatched.

In my experience with these types of projects, it is my opinion that
two critical factors for success are local control and faculty involvement--
and actually they go hand in hand. Full-time faculty are not going
to get involved if they feel the decision making is too far removed,--
but at the same time, local control is difficult to justify if the faculty are not involved.
A fullscale effort by this District toward nontraditional, contract instruction projects cannot be successfully administered from Wilson Avenue. It must happen at the campus level where full-time faculty must get involved. The District function should be to provide overall coordination to prevent duplication by campuses and to administer District-wide projects where on-site supervision is required.

The involvement of full-time faculty in either the planning or instruction of these projects is essential. I have observed a noticeable increase of confidence in the college expressed by Business representatives when they are communicating with a faculty member from their own discipline. This does not mean that every faculty member should get involved. There will be only a small number who have both the interest as well as the special skills required.

Let's consider for a moment the possible benefits to the college if we are to actively pursue these agreements.

The obvious, of course, is the immediate increase in enrollment and the accompanying generation of revenue. The real potential though is in long term enrollment.

Students will be attracted to standard courses and programs offered on campus as a result of their initial experience in one of these nontraditional off campus offerings. Next month they may be participating in a noncredit Basic Electricity course at the AT&T facility, but next year they may be enrolled in Career English and Tech Math I at Florissant valley as they begin work toward an Associate Degree in Industrial Electronics.
Other benefits to the college include the opportunity for faculty to develop working relationships with business and industry.

access to facilities and state of the art equipment that the college is unable to purchase.
the development of opportunities for CoOp work positions and placement of graduates.
the opportunity for faculty retraining through summer employment or leave of absence.
the potential for donation of equipment.
and last but certainly not least--the general support of the Community College by business and industry--such as we needed a little more of in the last election.

There appears to be a number of benefits of nontraditional instruction--and we are already involved--so what's the problem?

The problem is--that the college has not made a fullscale commitment to this type of instruction. You are perhaps familiar with the assessment by Pogo in the Walt Kelly cartoon--"We have met the enemy and he is us."

It's very simple.--Nontraditional instruction is not accepted as being equal to credit instruction. That attitude prevails from the top administration right on down to virtually every faculty and staff member of this college. "If it's not on a transcript with credit hours, then it's not a real college course".

We do not have a coordinated plan to develop nontraditional instruction. We sit back and wait for whatever comes along--and then deal with it on a one time basis.

We have a territorial problem over the administration of credit instruction and nontraditional instruction. Simple instruction does not appear to be a common objective at all times.
With few exceptions, full-time faculty are not involved. Participation by full-time faculty in nontraditional instruction can only be compensated as an overload—not part of their normal workload.

We have no on-campus facility appropriate for conducting short workshops or seminars if regular classes are also in session.

Admissions, registration, and records procedures are often too inflexible to accommodate other than normal business.

So Florissant Valley needs to make a decision—Are we going to put together an organization capable of actively developing working relationships with business and industry? To choose that course will require a commitment of resources that may not have an immediate payback. To choose that course means we must work together to eliminate the internal problems and prejudices regarding nontraditional instruction.

The decision is up to the administration!—but the successful implementation would be up to all of us—administrators, faculty, and staff working together.

Will we be remembered as the community college—Where the Action Should Have Been or will Florissant Valley be thought of—as Where the Action Is.

As I look at my watch I may not have had a perfect day—but where I come from we'll settle for two out of three anytime.

Before closing I want to make it clear that my expenses to the meeting today have not been paid by the Continuing Education office. In fact, I'm not sure they know I'm over here today.

My thanks again to my family and friends for their support and to Annabelle Underwood for her presence here today—and to Dave Underwood—in whose honor and memory we have gathered today.

Thank you.