A VISION OF COLLEGES IN THE FUTURE
AND HOW EDUCATORS CAN PREPARE STUDENTS
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Introduction

Statements I have read recently help shape my vision of colleges in the future:

1. Recent consultant on campus: By the year 2000, information will double every 14 months! (Milt Garrett)

2. "75% of the current workforce will need significant retraining in the next decade." (Workforce Education)

3. 82% of the new entrants in the workforce by the year 2000 will be women and minorities. (Workforce Education)

4. Vice President Gore and Commerce Secretary Brown announced recently the creation of an administration taskforce to coordinate the activities of industry and government to speed creation of a high tech communication system available to everyone in the United States.

    a. *Agenda for Action* describes plans for a web of communications networks, computer databases and consumer electronics that "will change forever the way people live, work and interact with each other."

    b. People would be able to live almost anywhere they want and "telecommunicate" via the "electronic highways" of high-capacity cables hooked to computers and two-way television.

    c. "In this grand scheme, they say, students would use similar devises to reach the best teachers and libraries." (*Investor's Business*, 9/10/93, Daily, pg. 31)

5. One more quote, "Within 10 years, schools will be obsolete," says former public school teacher and author Lewis Perelman. In their place, a technology called "video dial tone" will turn millions of American living rooms and offices into virtual campuses. "In fact," he says, "technology for 'video dial tone' will be available within two years."

I. First, let me share some observations from these statements or events that give shape to my vision of colleges for the future.

A.   Colleges of the future will be driven by multimedia computer technology. One writer graphically describes how multimedia computers technology is reshaping the way students learn and professors teach.

> It is two o'clock in the morning two decades from now, and in her bedroom, 450 miles from campus, Sue Smith, a sophomore at a small midwestern college, has just finished a "class" in modern US. History. The subject: the election of 1992. During the 90 minute session on her multimedia computer, Sue watches two prominent historians debate economic issues; "saw" former Vice President Dan Quayle discussing family values; summoned a snippet from an old television show called "Murphy Brown;" looked up an electoral map to see who won which state; searched a Library of Congress database for the phrase "bimbo eruptions;" and answered 20 multiple-choice questions. Now Sue's computer flashes a message from her professor. "Judging by your responses, I suggest that you read chapters 2 and 3 of your computerized text. And for our modem-to-modem tutorial next week please prepare a 30-minute video essay on why Jerry Brown was called "Governor Moonbeam." (*US. News and World Report*, Sept. 28, 1992, p. 110)

B.   Colleges of the future will be international in scope. VP Gore and Commerce Secretary Brown stated as one reason they created the taskforce, "The nation that does the best job building an information infrastructure will dominate the global marketplace. (p. 31)

Another writer stated, "By the year 2000, American colleges and universities will be lean and mean, service-oriented, and science-minded, multicultural and increasingly diverse -- if they intend to survive their fiscal agony." (*Time*, April 13, 1992, p. 54)

Put another way, "US. universities and colleges are a powerful magnet for foreign students in search of freedom and diversity." (*Time*, April 13, 1992, p. 59)

When I talk about the institution becoming international in scope, I am not just focusing on students from overseas attending our schools. Far more importantly, I am

referring to courses, majors -- even a mindset -- that places whatever is being discussed in the classroom in the context of a global community.

C.   Private colleges and universities will increasingly network and cooperate with each other. This multicampus activity, in part, is made necessary because of the "invasion" of the large public universities. These institutions are becoming increasing aggressive in both fundraising and recruitment.

Private colleges like Kenyon College and MVNC must strengthen their "niches" in the higher education market place, and network with each other's academic program needs not offered by one or the other. We should not -- and cannot -- be all things to all people.

D.   Colleges and universities in the 21st century will build and strengthen partnerships with business, labor and industry for workforce education and training. Institutions of postsecondary education can help improve competitiveness by providing training and education, ranging from basic skills to advanced technological skills, to create a more productive workforce -- and, at the same time, create new opportunities for revenue outside traditional avenues. The globalization of the economy makes the need for a well-trained, competitive flexible workforce imperative to the US. economic competitiveness.

The majority of colleges/university students in the year 2000 will be over 25 years of age, and be enrolled part-time for studies while working part or full-time in regular employment.

E.   The colleges and universities of the future will utilize the high tech capabilities to enhance the quality of life for students on campus. From two-way television in the dorm rooms or apartment suites, to multimedia computer technology, to providing instant access to thousands of different sources of information on anything available, the campus setting where this takes place will be increasingly plush and very comfortable. Students are increasingly expecting the college or the university to provide the comforts of home when the "move" to campus.

II.   Secondly, let me share some examples of institutions on the cutting edge of multimedia computer technology in the classroom. These include The University of Texas which has over 18,500 Apple computers at work campus-wide. The computer already plays a prominent role in schools like Stanford, Cornell, Carnegie Mellon Vanderbilt, the Universities of Michigan, Maryland, and Illinois, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Today's most widely used computer program for higher education, experts say, is a chemistry course designed at the University of Illinois that has been adopted by several hundred of the schools. There are also popular courses in mathematics, engineering, physics, astronomy, and graphic design.

At Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, some 200 classrooms and laboratories have been mired with a fiber optics video information system, complete with color monitors, that allows professors to tap into the school's library of films, videos and laser disks.

Anticipating a surge in "distance learning," cable entrepreneur Glenn Jones in 1987 founded the Mind Extension University. This institution beams college-credit courses to 36,000 students across the country, under the umbrella of such established institutions as the University of Minnesota and Penn State. A growing number of students can expect to get their degrees without ever setting foot on campus.

III.   Based on these observations and examples, I want to conclude my remarks by expressing some concerns. Higher education institutions in the future, I fear, will focus on assisting students with "doing" rather than "being." Put another way, I'm concerned with the student as a person in the emerging "high tech -- low touch" institution of the future. Related to this is my concern for teachers -- now and in the future -- as role models of values stemming from our Judeo-Christian tradition.

While institutions within this great tradition seek to:

A.   Utilize to the fullest degree possible multi-media computer technology;

B.   Function out of a global perspective and international context;

C.   Increasingly network in academic programs with and through private colleges and universities; and

D.   Build and strengthen partnerships with business, labor, and industry for workforce education and training ...

We cannot forget that we are working with people, not robots, or "things" -- people who need to experience a holistic approach to their educational experience. Attention must be given not only to their academic pursuits, but also to their physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs.

My great concern for the institutions of the future is that with "electronic highways" of high-capacity cables hooked to computers and two-way television -- the student as a "whole" person will be missed. Technology must be our servant, not our master, as we fulfill our vocation of educating students.

Recently, I wrote an essay for MVNC freshmen and their parents titled, "For this we stand..." and subtitled "Values Underlying the Mount Vernon Nazarene College Faith Community." Throughout the summer I asked myself some fundamental questions:

1.   What drives or motivates Mount Vernon Nazarene College as a Christian college of higher education?

2.   What characterizes us at our best, and convicts us at our worst?

3.   What shapes the lifestyle -- the words, actions, and behavior -- or a faith community?

4.   What are the values for which we stand?

Using the Shema as primary biblical reference -- Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself -- I concluded that the values affirmed and foundational to the MVNC faith community are grounded in this great biblical mandate.

Commitment #1: Love for God. Therefore, we value and stand for...

1.   A worshipping community

2.   A biblical faith

3.   A Christlike lifestyle

4.   A holiness ethic

5.   A global mission

6.   A creation vision

7.   A Spirit-empowered devotion

Commitment #2: Respect for Others. Therefore, we value and stand for...

1.   A magnanimous spirit

2.   A servant mentality

3.   A trustworthy character

4.   A positive influence

5.   A courteous response

6.   A giving motivation

7.   An appreciative attitude

Commitment #3: Responsibility for Ourselves. Therefore, we value and stand for...

1.   An inquisitive mind

2.   A disciplined schedule

3.   A modest attire

4.   A balanced diet

5.   A physical fitness commitment

6.   A reliable word

7.   A lifelong learning and growth perspective

It is in modeling these values that I believe teachers can make the greatest contribution in the college of the future. I am not worried about our lack of technological know-how; I am greatly concerned about the values students embrace in the context of using multimedia computer technology.

And it is at this point precisely where teachers can make their greatest contribution.

My vision for MVNC for the year 2000? It is contained in a decadal agenda developed by a strategic planning committee and adopted by the MVNC Board of Trustees in November 1991.

I have a dream...

that MVNC enters the 21st century as an outstanding liberal arts and professions-oriented higher educational institution within the Wesleyan evangelical tradition;

that expanded and creative undergraduate and graduate academic programs reach and prepare an increasingly diversified student body;

that the campus spirit and environment enable the students to learn and to grow, to witness and worship;

that faculty and staff view their work, collectively and individually, as a sacred calling; and function in individual assignments out of a profound commitment to biblical principles, Christian values;, and our theological traditions;

that students embrace a holiness lifestyle in their lifelong pursuit of vocational excellence, personal growth, Christian service to God and humankind, a global perspective and Christian world view;

that MVNC shapes servant leaders who will make a difference in the 21st century.

For this vision or another one to be realized, teachers must model the values and embrace the vision. Teachers, not technology, will determine if institutions like MVNC will be in existence twenty-five years from now.

Recently I heard the statement, "The teachers must in essence be the quality of the person he desires his students to become." With this fundamental principle guiding them, teachers, wherever they may serve, need not fear the future with all of its technological advances. Rather, with the focus on people rather than on machines, these "molders of dreams" can and will, as William Barclay declared in his *Spiritual Autobiography*, "open doors to others through which they themselves could never go."

May this be the epithet of teachers in values-driven institutions as we come to a close of this century and prepare to enter a new millennium.