

## **1993 Distinguished Teacher of the Year**

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*There is NO FREE LUNCH!!*

Since no one else has mentioned them, I want you all to know that I am ONLY ONE, the lucky one, of nine professors nominated for this honor, one from each college. I apologize to the academic administration for going over their heads and announcing these names. It was felt that doing so would detract from the honor done me. I strongly disagree! I want everybody here assembled to know the distinguished company in which I am honored to be a member. Please recognize and applaud the following fellow honorees:

Dr. Gary Reichard, The Schmidt College of Arts and Humanities

Dr. Jarold Abbott, The College of Business

Dr. Carlos Diaz, The College of Education

Dr. Stephen Engle, The College of Liberal Arts

Dr. Nancie Bruce, The College of Nursing

Dr. Deborah Richardson, The College of Science

Dr. Dennis Palkon, The College of Social Science

Dr. Lance deHaven-Smith, The College of Urban and Public Affairs

As many of you know, I am probably the least academic professor on campus, and it is ironic that I should be giving an address to my fellow professors and the rest of the University community in an academic convocation. Nonetheless, I hope some of what I have to say strikes a responsive note in those who can change the system.

This may not be a conventional Honors Convocation address. Instead it will be a series of observations on campus and national problems that I believe need addressing. I group them in several categories: changes needed on campus to improve the lot of students, OUR REASON FOR BEING HERE; changes in attitude on the part of our

students to improve their chances for success in the future; and changes on the part of faculty, students and parents, voters all, toward those in the legislature who underfund, dramatically, one of the most important institutions under their control, the educational system of Florida.

Changes needed to improve the lot of students on campus are many.

Some of the most important are reorganization of several departments to provide a quality of training which the students are entitled to. I am no politician. I am calling it like I see it. We need an Applied Mathematics Department to teach such courses to the rest of the campus and especially to the hard science and engineering students. We need to man this new department with those professors who genuinely enjoy awakening interest in receptive minds to the wonders and utility of mathematics. There should be a parallel Theoretical Mathematics Department to do research on "way-out" math, and teach graduate students. Psychology has two such departments, if we need a precedent! We badly need to avoid having professors who express their resentment to the undergraduate students on the first day of class, and throughout the semester, when they are required to teach algebra, trigonometry, calculus, or other required math classes but who achieve tenure because they are outstanding researchers!

This problem has plagued the Engineering College for at least 25 years, as far back as I can comfortably remember. To a lesser extent, the same problem exists with the Physics Department, at least for introductory courses. Physics and math, and indeed all university courses, should be taught by the brightest, most enthusiastic teachers available, and their teaching ability should be as important to tenure as the number of papers they have written or the number of research dollars they bring in. I am tired of Tenure and Promotion Committees that give lip service to the three requirements for promotion or tenure, TEACHING, research and public service, while most heavily weighing research and refereed publications. This should change and IMMEDIATELY!

Falling into the category of improving the students' lot are other campus problems, too. For example, usurpation of student (and faculty) parking for campus concerts, religious ceremonies and lectures is NOT fair to the students who pay the tab and are, I repeat, OUR REASON FOR BEING HERE! No student parking area should be used for such activities. One argument is that the non-students bring dollars to the campus, increase our visibility and make us an important part of the community! Very good. But let's not impact the relatively defenseless students.

One wonders why we do not have a comprehensive student healthcare facility, plus hospital arrangements, for the healthiest group in the United States, our young

students. Why is there not a group policy covering at least as many services as the State Blue Cross-Blue Shield policy which protects many of the faculty?

It would be a great help if our campus air conditioning and heating system were more responsive to student needs. Many of my lectures in the General Classroom South building have been with students sitting on their feet and hugging themselves to stop shivering while inside temperatures hover just above 70 degrees. We have the dual problems of wasting scarce dollars on air conditioning in South Florida, through open doors, and freezing students dressed for our summer climate. In winter it is not uncommon to alternate between baking the students and freezing them, often in the same room on successive days.

This is an educational institution! Why, during class hours in the GCS building, do we permit bands to play and rallies to be held, using amplified microphones, in the sunken courtyard or just outside the cafeteria? I have had many of my classes disrupted by such activities. I have been promised by the Student Affairs folks that it would not happen again. When it does, I am told that the signals got crossed or that it was the only place to hold the event!

Changes in attitude are needed, too. Many students take programs that do not promise a reasonable opportunity to make a living, upon graduation! Never forget the basic laws of supply and demand. A large supply of graduates in an easier discipline with few job prospects results in university graduates working two menial jobs to make ends meet, and often working out of their fields of interest and training. I meet students who ask, quite seriously, why the work at FAU is so hard. I meet those who believe that several hours a week should be set aside for fun things on campus. The biggest reason why most engineers get jobs upon graduation is the rigor of their training. Employers know that these graduates must have learned how to apply themselves! This is especially critical in our present recession.

Math, physics and chemistry are potentially difficult subjects, but with effort they can be mastered. While this is not an exhortation for everyone to become a scientist or engineer, if that is your choice, do not let a few difficult subjects keep you from a life's work doing what you'd really like to do. "There ain't no free lunch." Most of you students will work for about 40 years. It's hell to go to work every day kicking the dog, slamming the door and snarling at fellow workers and the traffic, just because you got through school the easy way and are now working at a job you hate! Better to work your butt off for four or five years and spend 40 years eager for the next day's work. There will be travel and vacation time to paint, sculpt, dance, scuba dive in exotic places, keep a marine aquarium and, yes, even play golf if that is your bent. Indeed, there will probably be more time for these avocations, and more money, if you are the

graduate of a "difficult" discipline, because the law of "supply and demand" has never been repealed.

The change needed on the part of all Florida voters is ACTION! If most of us wrote our legislators about the appalling financial condition of the universities, and FAU in particular, we would see major changes in allocation of funds. It is grossly unfair to the students to lead them to believe that they will graduate at a certain date only to find, as that date nears, that the classes normally held will not be offered or are full! Or they find that there is no money for summer classes! We need the kind of parent-teacher attention and organization that K thru 12 gets. Get active. There are few more important causes.

A major change in attitude toward expenditure of tax dollars by the administration or the legislature is also needed. We are desperately short of funds for teaching services on campus, but we do have money for various extremely distinguished professors at extremely high salaries, for beautification of the campus, for beautification of various buildings, for art in public buildings, etcetera. I'll bet the students waiting several semesters to get into Reason and Values or the students who cannot get into the limited sections of Calculus or Engineering Math and, I'm sure, many other required classes, would gladly put off beautification or art for the opportunity to graduate a semester earlier! We can plant palm trees and have art in our buildings when the economy turns up.

My own action agenda for my retirement will include these causes plus a few more. I am absolutely sure the "few more" causes are vital to the salvation of society as we knew it when I was a kid, and possibly to the salvation of Mother Earth. Chief among these is a requirement for negative population growth, hopefully without the need for AIDS or the atomic bomb! The push for growth is, in the long run, self-defeating. Look hard and you can see it now. Students, before you grow old we will have enormous pressure to develop the Everglades, the various preserves and indeed much of what is left of the best agricultural land in the state and nation, all in the name of sustained growth and to provide for a rapidly expanding population!

Unfortunately, there is another of my goals just as difficult as population control. I propose that we start the population control with lawyers, barristers and attorneys! From dawn to dark our lives are controlled by fear of litigation. I'm not supposed to take friends diving from my boat because they might get hurt and sue me! When the child of a neighbor leaves home, breaks through my screened enclosure and drowns, who gets sued? Not the parents who were not doing their job. I do. Dumb juries buy the honeyed words of the lawyers, who, incidentally, take 40 percent of the judgment, that the \$10,000,000 claim will come out of the pocket of the rich corporations or the rich

insurance companies. And who do the rich corporations and insurance companies tap? Right! You and me. Let's get a handle on the present litigation system. We need not Tyrannosaurs, like the one that ate the lawyer in Jurassic Park, but "Barristovores" to cut down our lawyer population.

Retirement will not be free of pressure, free of causes and, particularly, free of University involvement. Nonacademic that I am, I fell in 29 years ago and came out smelling like a rose, a professor of Ocean Engineering. I've enjoyed my position so much that I sometimes think I would pay to be here. At a meeting in this auditorium a girls' assembly asked a panel of professors if they were being paid enough. My answer was "Hell, yes! I wouldn't want to be anywhere else or doing anything else." When asked if the Ph.D. was worth the pain and poverty that preceded it, I can only say again "Hell, yes! It got me HERE."

God bless all of you and thank you!