

Administration and Faculty Representatives in Europe

Ron Schlundt has ably provided an account of the beneficial relationship between Heidelberg administration and faculty representatives during the years before the Europe Division fell under Adelphi's stateside direction. I can add a few points to that record of administration-faculty collaboration.

I became one of the faculty representatives during the late 1990s, but not exactly under my own volition. Heidelberg administration announced that it wanted to hear from faculty members involved in the newly created Europe-wide Distance Education program. This led to a call for a new DE representative who would join the existing five faculty reps and meet regularly with administration.

My recruitment to the new position is now a somewhat hazy memory. I had stopped in at the Heidelberg headquarters to pick up a wayward Distance Education course paycheck, and while there I bumped into Mathematics Coordinator Robert Scott. Robert invited me to his office, where a number of staff and faculty gathered for a Friday-End-of-the-Week wine-tasting social hour. I remember joining a euphoric crowd of Marylanders, celebrating with grinning faces and popping corks. One of the participants handed me an odd, somewhat acidic tasting glass of wine, and I soon thereafter experienced a severe sense of vertigo followed by total blackout.

Early next morning I awakened in a seedy hotel across the street from the train station. In my left breast pocket I found a 10-year contract confirming my appointment as the new Distance Education faculty representative. The contract bore an official state seal of Maryland, a signature from the President of the United States, and the smudged name of a witness that I later deciphered as Satan.

My ensuing plunge into representing faculty revealed an administrative world that required complex planning and large expenditures of energy. Administration faced daunting tasks ranging from textbook procurement, contract negotiations with the military, modification of the curriculum, staff and faculty pay issues, and the enhancement of classroom performance. The Europe Division campus extended across an entire continent, which further complicated affairs, and at short notice that campus could suddenly broaden to faraway operations in the Balkans, the Middle East or even Afghanistan.

The Heidelberg administration relied greatly on faculty in order to achieve success. Producing a rigorous classroom experience for students served as the overriding goal. This end was largely achieved with the commitment and allegiance of a full-time faculty. Part-time adjuncts were certainly a part of the program and indeed those instructors offered much to the Europe Division, but long-term faculty members provided classroom experience and institutional knowledge necessary for delivering an authentic university education.

The collaborative administration-faculty approach was never a perfect experience. Disputes

arose, and many were not easy to resolve. Faculty reps sometimes had to rework an argument for a second or even a third hearing in order to bring about some reforms and policies desired by faculty members. Administration quite naturally made the final decisions.

Despite the potted road on which we sometimes travelled, the relationship worked. There was no imposition of administrative growth strategies to attract students by compromising the classroom experience. The Europe Division, for instance, did not eliminate final exams or classroom textbooks, two policies later implemented by UMUC's worldwide program. Further, Heidelberg administrators were not tempted to cut labor costs by staffing 90% of course offerings with inexpensive part-time instructors, a practice that appeared later in the global program under Adelphi leadership.

Indeed, the notion of managerial indispensability had not taken root in the Europe Division and would only appear when Adelphi imposed its "strategic plan" over both the Europe and Asia divisions. The Europe Division relied heavily on a large core of faculty that had years of graduate, post-graduate, and university teaching experience under its collective belt. This model of administration-faculty collaboration was ultimately replaced by a costly stateside managerial oversight regime set up to achieve standardization and scalability.

In general, the senior administrators in Europe were hard working individuals. This was certainly true of the Director, Paula Harbecke, who ran the enterprise with a rare coupling of intelligence and tension-easing graciousness. That same model of administrative leadership was later assumed by John Golembe. Lured out of his gloomy backroom office to take over as Director during the post-Harbecke period, John presided with his insightful thinking and dry wit.

As with any institution, there were a few onions to be found in the administrative ranks and, for that matter, within the ranks of faculty as well. Overall, though, administrators like Paula Harbecke, John Golembe, John Floyd, Paul Brewer, Elizabeth Trousdell, Dave Glaser, Robert Scott, Joe Shapiro, Monika Denburg and many, many others usually succeeded in both ironing out problems and improving the performance of faculty, staff, administrators, and the overall institution.

Europe Director Andrew Chambers, once said, "We aren't Harvard." Well, yes, that was certainly true. On the other hand, administration, faculty, and staff successfully presented a university quality education while preventing the emergence of a profit-oriented Ding Dong School. Delivering university courses to a student body spread over an entire continent was quite an undertaking. Those who pulled off that feat deserve a pat on the back. A further reward could include a cordial invitation to a future Robert Scott End-of-the Week wine fest.

Nice work, you Overseas Marylanders.

Bruce Hull