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is to turn the tension into creative education...

Reichenbach's phrase "creative education" attempts to encapsulate the dialectical tension inherent in our mission of faith and learning in a diverse world. This tension is perhaps analogous to the tension between the two kingdoms of Lutheran

theology. As members of communities related to the Lutheran church, we have, therefore, a faith perspective that both motivates and facilitates participation in that tension. The tension is never resolved; it does not go away. Creative education inculcates the ability to live in this tension between and with God's love and our rules.

HITTING A MOVING TARGET

Harry Jebsen

Anytime we wish to define our institutions and their missions and hiring practices we have to remember that we are dealing with several moving targets, not just the role of the faculty. We frequently memorialize a past that may or may not have existed. Those of us who are graduates of sister institutions may have a relatively fixed memory of that institution and its nuances. We fix in our minds that institution's persons and ambiance as the "role model" by which we measure other Lutheran institutions as well as our current institutions. During my years as Dean and Provost, the Vice President of Resource Management and I were both Wartburg grads and I know that if Capital people heard, "when I was at Wartburg," one more time they would have had involuntary seizures.

We must be very careful in drawing such analogies across time. The last time I visited Wartburg was to have my youngest son visit. While much was familiar and recognizable, it wasn't "my" Wartburg. Roy's place was gone, the Pub House where I met my wife was gone. Change is the norm at all of our institutions.

Perhaps in contrast to our own personal fixed views are the phrases of current mission statements which are vague and open to a broad range of personal interpretations. One university states clearly that they are "related to the ELCA," and "encourages an environment of respect for all people and diverse beliefs." With perhaps a clearer focus, TLU states that "the College provides an education in the arts and sciences which is given perspective by the Christian faith." My own institution writes that it "promotes thinking, discussion, and debate that enhances ethical, moral and religious values essential to leadership in society and the church..." Each of these statements are certainly open to interpretation by the

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individual who reads them. They were written to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

This issue may be even more vital today than ever. This summer delegates to the ELCA convention in Philadelphia consider formalizing relationships with fellow Protestants from Presbyterian, Reformed, and Episcopal traditions. Some fear the blurring of distinctions. Most of our institutions would not be solvent if we depended upon a preponderance of Lutheran students and Lutheran faculty members. We have adapted to a less exclusive environment and become part of a larger society's educational program.

Most of our colleges were founded by immigrants to insulate their descendants of German or Scandinavian backgrounds from the "contamination" of the English-based nineteenth century American social system. Immigrants sought, with an enthusiastic energy, to preserve the culture of the homeland, to provide clergy and teachers for the now Scandinavian-American or German-America congregations, to maintain a bilingualism that allowed the second generation to appreciate both the mores of the homeland as well as that of the United States. Much like the Turnervereins and Saengerbunds, the Lutheran college was an oasis in which the moral, ethical, and theological norms from Europe could be taught to the offspring.

Our colleges were founded as purposeful institutions with a specific mission. And that was accomplished unapologetically, with pride and enthusiasm. One of our colleges proudly proclaimed that, "Having truth, we pass it on." While not seen in the mid-nineteenth century as a boastful statement, the assumption of truth as something we own certainly could not be the focal point of modern Lutheran higher education in the context of the ELCA. Our institutions today are proud of change as one of the hallmarks of our existence. Goal four at Capital University state that it "must change and grow in order to better serve changing student needs."

As one reads Professor Reichenbach's article, the motto referred to above, and the goal statement from Capital, one realizes how

open and inclusive our institutions have become heading toward a broader and less specific mission which has less concerns about the centrality of Lutheranism or even a broader Christian tradition.

Alvin Toffler in *Future Shock* warned us about the persistency of change. We see it in every aspect of our campus life, making it far more difficult to remain as centrally focused as Reichenbach would prefer. There is no doubt that what Reichenbach advocates is legal and in some religious traditions possible. We see it in modern America in the presence of the evangelical colleges. My youngest son is on the admissions staff at a Mennonite college. Attending a conference on admissions tactics at "Christian" colleges, he was amazed, as a Lutheran college graduate, of the fervency of the decidedly evangelical approach to admissions activity.

Defining the role of our campuses and therefore the role of the faculty on our campuses is clearly a moving target. Just as American society has changed, just as the Lutheran church and its expectations for higher education have changed, just as the students who seek an education at our institutions have changed, the colleges of the Lutheran tradition have evolved into different institutions.

Today I received one of our Lutheran college's magazines. It is beautiful, slick and filled with impressive approaches to improving education, obviously intended primarily for the consumption of alumni. Yet the magazine lacks any centrality to its Lutheran or for that matter Christian heritage. One reference is there to a \$50,000 grant from Lutheran Brotherhood for its chaplaincy program. But in a beautifully presented five page update on the institution's objectives for the future of the college the word Lutheran appears as a subscript in the sixth objective which focuses on the goal of encouraging service and leadership opportunities for students. No mention is made in connection with the typical academic functions.

Let's face the fact that we ourselves become somewhat ambivalent and that we focus on our specific Christian role when it is beneficial and elect not to focus on it when it may be controversial or have a negative economic effect.

Yet it is easy to see why such ambivalence dominates our institutions. The ELCA has been ambivalent about the role of the colleges. From the perspective of a former Provost now faculty member, my observation is that the colleges of the ELCA are viewed as tangential to the primary mission of the church rather than having a critical or central role.

Churches and pastors of the congregations which we serve are increasingly distant from the colleges. Pastors come into their ministries increasingly as second career persons who have been educated in public or non-Lutheran institutions and do not value the impact which Lutheran colleges have had or could have on

their parishioners. I am a prime example of a person encouraged by pastor and congregation to go to Wartburg. The previous pastor in my congregation had been a Capital graduate and somehow the college bound members of that congregation then found their way to Columbus, Ohio.

The ambivalence from the church body allows and encourages ambivalent attitudes on our campuses. It is quite difficult to achieve any consensus on what it means to be an institution which is Christian, let alone, Lutheran. This year at a dinner meeting arranged by the president to specifically discuss what it means to be a church related institution, I allowed as how I thought that it would be difficult since many faculty did not care about the centrality of that part of the mission. An award winning colleague, exclaimed how incorrect I was because Capital was different because of its close atmosphere, she proclaimed that "everybody is nice to each other."

Somehow we have drifted from the theological implications of what Lutheran or Christian higher education stands for to "niceness" as the hallmark. While that spirit of cooperation is a valued attribute of my colleagues, I doubt that it is the hallmark of a Christian institution of higher education. But a group of twenty handpicked faculty and administrators who have a real interest in the question wrestled in vain to come to a conclusion about what it did mean.

While Reichenbach and Marsden place central responsibility on the faculty, it needs to be noted that our institutions have evolved significantly in recent years, bringing to our campuses persons who have less natural affiliation with those institutions that existed in an earlier strong bond with church, congregation, and ethnic society. Even those colleges that pride themselves on having maintained the strong liberal arts focus have seen the demand for professional educations and career focused learning increasing in a rapacious manner. This has revised the focus of what we do at our institutions. Responding to the market place has been an economic necessity for many Lutheran colleges and universities.

Our campuses have evolved out of the desire to respond to the needs of our students. Most of our campuses have readily embraced multiculturalism and the impact of diversity has opened our institutions to include African-American and Hispanic-American groups. Which of our institutions has refused to discuss gender and sexual preference issues. And by the evolving nature of the world in which we live, our campuses house significant numbers of international students for whom the religious conviction of the campus carries little cultural affiliation.

Most of our campuses are no longer teaching to those who learned scripture in Sunday School, Catechism classes, and sang in the youth choir. In order to maintain academic quality, to maintain fiscal integrity, and to reach a broader audience, we

have to recruit a broader range of student. This includes many who could care less about the religious nature of the university. In a required "Cultural Pluralism" class this past semester, we surveyed the religious diversity on the Capital campus. Many of these first year students forthrightly claimed that they did not know or affirmed that they did not care that our campus had a Lutheran tradition. Even though the second sentence of most of our brochures and publications state that we are an institution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, it was bothersome to hear both their lack of knowledge and their disdain for religious education.

It is clear that in the 1990's that faculty at Lutheran and Christian institutions are no longer teaching to the congregation. The critical mass issue impacts not only the faculty but the student body as well. As students become increasingly those who care little about religion and spirituality, those who have little or no education in theology or scripture, including many from Lutheran congregations, and those who have some significant hostility toward theological education, has made the task of faculty in religion and philosophy departments as well as throughout the professorate to make a connection with students and their own spirituality much more difficult. One could argue that it calls upon the institutions to be more explicit about the religious nature of the college, others may find that dealing with the importance of academic, disciplinary issues is far more critical to improving the students who select our campuses as the place to reach toward their professional aspirations.

As Reichenbach has noted, faculty have similar characteristics. In the middle of the 1980's I gave a talk at the Lutheran Dean's Conference in which I talked about the changing nature of the faculty. I used a retired faculty member as a prime example of "Mr. Capital" University. It is alleged that he was so dedicated to Capital that before he became engaged to his wife, he let her know that Capital was, next to his faith, the number one priority in his life. But what these "Mr. Chips" types brought to the campus in the early and mid-twentieth century was a deep seated commitment to the mission of the institution, a TOTAL view of the campus, and a fervent agreement with the specific mission. Strong disciplinarians who were active and visible in the campus congregation, athletic events, committee after committee, and thoroughly imbued with the tradition and the trappings of the institution, they became the personification of what Dana and midland Lutheran stood for.

Each Dean who attended that session talked wistfully about similar persons and how sorely they were missed on the campuses. Each wondered how we would continue to maintain a "critical mass" given the dearth of candidates who were both solid academics and solidly representative of the traditions in which the institution was rooted.

I interviewed many potential faculty in fifteen years as Dean and Provost. It was indeed a minority who really wanted to hear much about the religious backgrounds and persuasion. Many

questions focus on the impact that the Lutheran tradition would have on their individual academic freedom. Indelibly etched in my mind is a conversion with a potential sociologist. We had had breakfast across from the campus and while walking across the campus we passed the religious life center which has a large cross in front of it. The candidate observed before we reached my office that she hoped that the cross really did not mean anything. And she hoped that we did not expect faculty to spend much time in their office since she did not look forward to one on one meetings with students. The candidate may as well not have been brought to campus.

A promotion review committee once asked candidates how their efforts promoted the mission of the institution. I was amazed that I as the Dean received complaints because some faculty believed that the question was irrelevant to what should be considered for promotion and tenure.

Many of our institutions are now universities, no longer liberal arts colleges. Many struggle to call themselves "liberal arts universities," "liberally educated universities," or some such euphemism. But a university by any other name is different from the liberal arts colleges that are intimate, sometimes isolated, and generally tightly focused. The modern Lutheran colleges and universities have extended their mission to include a broader range of educational programs.

Teacher education, nursing, athletic training may be related to the liberal arts and the process of free inquiry, but they all are professionally focused and not a part of the trivium and quadrivium. Business schools and conservatories prefer to be as separate as possible. The Lutheran tradition there seems irrelevant or certainly less relevant. The professional focus of both programs with an emphasis in the community for business and on playing "gigs" for the popular music programs, and very little with church music, allow little focus on the sacred traditions of the Lutheran college.

Post graduate education is equally common. Even the smallest schools are bent on masters programs in Education. MBA programs proliferate in order to keep up with the competing regional institutions. A few, like Capital and Valparaiso, have added legal education to the curriculum. Adult education programs fit into the mission but further cause the shift away from the original foci of the residential Lutheran campus.

The expansion of curriculum has necessitated bringing highly specialized faculty members to the campus. Whether they are committed to the distinctive mission of the university or whether their expertise in biochemistry meets acceptable standards remains a point of contention. I suspect that Reichenbach wrote the article because he sees the expertise winning out over the allegiance to the mission.

That indeed is at stake in the 1990's, and it may be a central

question. But my point is that all phases and constituencies related to the institution have also evolved and should be equally challenged. Pointing to the faculty as the standard bearer is a valuable reference point, but to focus attention on only one constituency, however, critical, is to dismiss what has been occurring among the other constituencies.

Mission must indeed be both academic and cocurricular, it must be seen in faculty, administrators, hourly persons, and athletic personnel. To insist that the critical mass is particularly the domain of the faculty misses the breadth of the modern campus. In an age of specialization both in academic departments as well as in the functioning of the modern campus, all facets of the

campus must be "critical" to maintaining the mission.

But first we need to make sure what it is that the mission is and with some specificity what it means in the day to day life of our campuses!!!! I sense that we are quite ambivalent about the mission on most of our campuses. The self assured days of having truth and passing it on are gone. We as faculty and staff have moved into less self-assured waters and are paddling fast to maintain some ties to the original and revised mission as we chart a new route which may or may not have close ties to the old ethnic, church focused standards upon which our institutions were founded.