October 2012
Senate President’s Report

Remembering Alma Bennett

Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find a remembrance of Alma Bennett (Professor, English), whose passing has left a great void in the heart of the Clemson faculty enterprise. I asked two of her colleagues, Susanna Ashton and Lee Morrissey, to tell you more about Alma. They have favored all of us by kindly doing so. I strongly encourage all faculty to read their words and be humbled, awed, and inspired.

Susanna’s vignette of Alma shows why real student advising and the best student advising is done by faculty members—not by others and certainly not by software! Alma has much to still teach us. I admonish you to attend most closely.

Each of us considers the loss of a colleague in a unique personal context. For myself, after learning more about Alma, I have come to the view that she had all the passion, deep curiosity, intellectual rigor, and incredible professional expectations of a John Silber (my college president), but also all of the civility, optimism, selflessness, joy, and humanity that he seemed to lack at times. What a truly extraordinary combination. What a great loss for the Clemson faculty.

Tobacco Free Campus

Some of you have asked about this, so I’ll simply say I learned about the tobacco free campus initiative when the rest of you did. Recently, President Barker asked me

Cathy Sturkie, Retired Program Coordinator for Faculty Senate

Cathy Sturkie began her tenure with Faculty Senate in 1990, supporting 22.5 Faculty Senate Presidents. In 2002, this included her husband Dr. Kin Sturkie. Cathy also coordinated the Faculty Grievance process, and assisted many University Grievance Board Chairs. She educated herself on the Ombudsperson role and process. Cathy supported the Faculty Manual Editorial Consultant with the Faculty Manual interpretation, editing, and production processes. She also coordinated events with the Board of Trustees, Class of ’39 and Honorary ’39ers and processed several awards including the: Class of ’39 Award for Excellence, Centennial Professorship Award, and Alan Schaffer Faculty Senate Service Award.

Beyond her duties, Cathy served the Clemson community on two President’s Commission: Status of Women and Black Faculty and Staff. She is an advocate for women’s issues, served on the State Board for Planned Parenthood, and earned Clemson University’s Outstanding Woman Staff Member. On campus, Cathy has also been an active ally of the LGBT community and member of Black Faculty and Staff Association. In her free time, she has taught ballet, enjoys reading, and spends time with her Golden Retrievers, Darla Moore and three-legged Bode. Cathy is from Columbia, SC and attended USC.

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Cathy Sturkie
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On her time working with Faculty Senate Cathy has this to say:

- I truly wish all staff at Clemson could experience what I have during the years I have held this position and by that, I mean the respect I have felt by the Senators and Grievance Board Members and the many friendships I have made. I have never felt as if I were ‘only a staff member’.
- In general, I believed my job was to be an ambassador to all faculty on campus – that they were my Clemson family - most especially, the Senators and Grievance Board members.

Some of her favorite memories of Faculty Senate are:

- Watching new Senators listen to the older ones and processing what they heard; then observing how they bloomed and became more involved and found their particular Senate niche.
- Seeing and totally appreciating the loyalty of the more vintage Senators who continue to serve and those who continued to serve the Senate long after they retired from the Senate or even the University – people such as: Holley Ulbrich, Alan Schaffer, Alan Grubb, Fran McGuire, Pat Smart, Antonis Katsiyannis, [and] John Meriwether.
- The most touching time was spending the last year of Alan Schaffer’s life with him. He and I became very, very close during his years as my boss, then as Faculty Manual Editorial Consultant...During his final days...his wife called and said that Alan said words like, ‘Cathy Sturkie may want to see me’.
- The beauty of Alan Grubb being the first recipient of the Alan Schaffer Faculty Senate Service Award – the two of them, being from the same Department; both University ‘rabble-rousers’ – delightedly so in my opinion; and oftentimes on opposite sides of the arguments/debates.
- My relationship with the Faculty Senate Graduate Students through the Department of History. When Alan Schaffer was President, he realized that I needed some assistance in the office and...provided a Graduate Student Assistant...I was always grateful for this.

- I developed a ‘best friends forever’ relationship with Pat Smart and Kathy Headley who were Vice President/President-Elect and Secretary, respectively, back in the 1996-98 years.

As last words of wisdom, Cathy says:

- Keep believing in the Senate and perform your duties and responsibilities for the faculty. Always, always question authority.

In her retirement, Cathy is looking forward to spending more time with family including her “Momma and grandbabies”.

In Memoriam: Alma Bennett

The Senate was greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Professor of English and former Faculty Senator Alma Bennett, who served the University so long and so well.

Departing Senate program coordinator Cathy Sturkie notes that Alma was a true believer in the importance in the Senate, and evinced a quiet but notably powerful voice in the most serious items of Senate business. Alma’s selfless, substantial, and superior spirit of service were duly recognized when she received the Class of ’39 Award for Excellence in 2007. The Senate offers its condolences to the many members of Alma’s extended Clemson family.

Susanna Ashton (Professor, English) on Alma Bennett:

Once you knew Alma Bennett, you were forced to reassess your standards because—let’s admit it—you knew you’d been cutting corners and Alma probably had noticed it, too. Not that she would ever have said anything. The example she set of resolute, relentless, and acutely focused professionalism was always jarring to the more slovenly, and careless types—such as myself. And it would be off-putting or even discouraging if it hadn’t always been couched with love.
In Memoriam: Alma Bennett
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Just last semester, I grew exasperated with how much time Alma was spending with her undergraduate advisees. Her office was adjacent to mine and while my undergraduate advising is adequate but rather perfunctory and, shall we say, uninspired, I couldn't help but notice how she was spending ages and ages with her advisees... often leaving her door open. I didn't mind occasionally overhearing the sessions per se; the problem was that I became increasingly embarrassed with how mechanistic my ten-minute chats with my advisees seemed compared with her long probing questions and concerns... asking students not simply "So have you gotten through that STS requirement yet?" the way I did, but instead having conversations about what was motivating them to read and study literature. What was at stake in their education for themselves? I heard her once asking a student what grounded him to this life and explaining to him that figuring that out wasn't an indulgent personal exploration, it was also an intellectual, professional, and social journey that could impact him and his world. I'm paraphrasing of course, but that was pretty much how she spoke — she was wickedly funny when she wanted to be, but most of the time she spoke with rich conviction and little appreciation for facile irony. Because being facile would have been careless. And she never would have stood for that.

Lee Morrissey (Professor, English) on Alma Bennett
Alma Bennett was among the first people I met on my first visit to Clemson, and from the beginning she showed herself to be colleague of extraordinary subtlety.

When I think of Alma, what I remember are all the occasions over the years when Alma would say something to me with a twinkle, or a whisper, or a groan, or a grin. Usually, it was only a sentence or two, but these sentences always communicated far more than a transcript of them might indicate.

From the two-year process of being on the same committee charged with trying to create a "Foundations" curriculum for the then-new college of AAH (which she also trilled as "aaah," and sometimes as "Oz"), to the time she checked in with this then-new faculty member to make sure I'd signed up for a retirement plan (and whether I was also setting a little more aside, too-important questions tough to ask), to discussion of my meager travel experiences (informed by her time in this part of Croatia, or that district of Istanbul), to wondering why I used the word "British" in the title of my first book, to listening to me rave about time on a Fulbright (and genuinely saying she wanted to hear even more!), Alma's questions and comments always had a way of fixing me on a subject.

It was as if Alma always spoke to us with the powerful compression of poetry, with the density of reference in the well-chosen word, or gesture. Sure there were times when she would refer to her own experiences, but it was always with an eye toward careful and calibrating mentoring.

Starting from Mississippi, she traveled the world (while her brother helped Americans travel through space); in her Humanities courses, such as the one on what she called "The Three Renaissances" (Italian, American, and Harlem), she taught students from every major; she worked with alums spanning from her honorary Class of '39 to the most recent; she was known to my professors at Columbia and at Barnard; she attended every department meeting; and she asked short, strong questions both there and in the photocopy room (i.e., at an English department's equivalent of the water cooler).

With Alma Bennett’s passing, Clemson loses a range of reference that comes from a lifetime of pursuing—globally—what cultures have to offer. What Clemson had with Alma, and has with our memories of her, is a model for how to pursue—globally—what cultures continue to offer.
Parking and Transportation Services

Parking and Transportation Services (PATS), directed by Dan Hofmann, does more than provide permits and arrange parking. It is involved in other transportation services, which are available to faculty, staff and students, including the "on demand" evening Tiger Transit (with CUPD), Research Park, and ICAR shuttle services as well as working with the City of Clemson to maintain the CATbus contract.

New campus-based initiatives include the implementation of WeCar car sharing and ZimRide ride sharing programs, the new and increasingly popular Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) program, as well as the expansion of the Carpool program. Important capital improvement projects include repaving and reorganizing Sikes parking lot and renovation (with Facilities) of Kinard-Daniel parking area, which allowed for ADA compliant upgrades and additional Handicapped spaces. New energy efficient “LED” lighting was installed in the Lightsey Bridge (R4) student parking lot, which improves safety and saves 50% in utility costs. PATS is considering a similar change to Sirrine employee parking lot which will be redesigned and repaved next summer.

To help simplify Visitor parking and Permit holder parking at meters, PATS recently upgraded 125 “single space” parking meters and installed 8 new solar powered “Pay by Space” Multi-Space meters improving the campus landscape and providing a range of payment options (credit card, cash, and in the near future “Pay by Cell Phone”). The metered upgrades are part of a larger plan to provide dedicated Visitor parking for a fee without taking from the supply of permit spaces.

These initiatives and improvements have added many new parking spaces. They also help meet an increasing demand for efficient transit related services and support the sustainability goals of the University. The overall goals of PATS are to provide clean, safe, well-maintained and cost-efficient parking as well as support public transit. Director Dan Hofmann reports that he is working with his staff to ensure that Parking and Transportation Services is held to very high standards of integrity and professionalism in order to provide outstanding customer service to all of their parking and transportation constituents. PATS hope to continue to engage, work with and learn from the Clemson community and welcome input (hofmann@clemson.edu).

Dan Hofmann arrived as the new Director at Clemson in September 2011 with over 30 years of experience in parking and transportation services. Most recently, Dan served as General Manager for LAZ Parking in Chicago where he managed the largest private parking meter operation in the country. Prior to that, he served as the Manager for Parking Services at Harvard University, Deputy Commissioner for the Boston Transportation Department, Chief of Parking Control for the New York City Department of Transportation, and Board Member for the NEW England Parking Council. Dan graduated with a BS in Criminal Justice from St. John’s University.

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to represent the Senate on the task force. If you have thoughts on the initiative, let me know (jking@clemson.edu). Lacking such feedback at present, my primary concern is the messaging going along with this initiative: that tobacco consumption cessation will help mitigate rising health care costs. If economics is the dismal science, then health economics is the theatre of the macabre: alas, I rather suspect the justification being messaged in support of the task force may well not be true. Instead, it is quite plausible that smoking cessation will drive up long-run health costs. To learn more and understand why, e.g., healthy retirees actually face larger long-run health care costs than those with chronic diseases, see http://crr.bc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/IB_10-8.pdf
I believe it is important that faculty educate themselves (and me!) on this issue. While there are multiple other reasons to support this initiative, faculty should carefully consider that it is these long-run costs that threaten fiscal disaster and place pressure on federal and state support of higher education via unfunded Medicare liabilities and underfunded state retiree health benefits.

Even if the desire is not to focus on long-run health costs, but on shorter-term costs, CDC and NIH figures indicate annual health care expenditures due to obesity and diabetes are 60% and approaching 100% larger than for smoking-related illnesses. Perhaps, then, the University ought to consider a task force addressing the Holy Harcombe Trinity: pizza, potatoes, Pepsi (ok, coke). Faculty should consider long and hard the circumstance that the University is not addressing, e.g., diet in a similar fashion, and (more importantly) what this says about the culture of intellectual integrity in which policy is developed at the University.

_Clemson Joins College Completion Initiative_

I call the faculty’s attention to the University’s signature on the recent joint American Association of State Colleges and Universities-Association of Public Land-Grant Universities statement advocating post-secondary “credentials” (audible long sigh!) for 60% of the U.S. population, an increase of 3.8 million degrees produced by four year public colleges and universities, and rebuilding institution-state-federal partnerships to fund all this by 2025.

You can learn a little bit more at [http://www.aascu.org/MAP/PSSNRDetails.aspx?id=5762](http://www.aascu.org/MAP/PSSNRDetails.aspx?id=5762) I found the statement and background material to be rather kitschy, and chock full of mantra and meme. Consideration of or evidence related to a host of important issues (the observed link between economic growth and degree completion, the difference between “credentials” and education, the non-proximate causes of declining state and federal funding for higher ed, the true driving forces leading to the evolution of real disposable and discretionary incomes for the middle class, the price effects of student aid and the financial aid process, K12-based preparation for college level work, etc) is notably scarce or non-existent in the statement or background material. The same is true of what, exactly, this statement commits us and other AASCU/APLU institutions to do.

If I learn more, I’ll let you know. In the meantime, faculty should hope that the signatories are able to engender the use of more critical thinking skills by the students whose education they are responsible for then were brought to bear in producing this statement. Otherwise, I fear that over-and mal-investment of time, treasure, and people in pursuit of this completion target may have the same result as railroads in the early 1870’s, tech stocks in the 90’s, and housing construction and exotic financial instruments in the early 21st century.

_The Near-Term Policy Horizon_

I anticipate that you’ll hear more about several forthcoming University policy initiatives of interest to faculty. Some have been formally brought to my attention; word of others is brought to my ear by the whispering tumble of autumn leaves.

- Given the recent hire of a new Director of Summer School, a rumored new _summer school revenue distribution policy_ seemed inevitable. I know that many of your units rely upon summer revenues to fund important initiatives. I have communicated to the Provost and the VP of Finance and Operations the need for a policy that has clarity and transparency (so that promises made are promises kept) and that also provides funds directly to department/school units, provides faculty/units with pricing flexibility, and has a shared responsibility for fiscal risk mitigation. I believe these features are necessary to maximize the innovativeness, creativity, and resourcefulness of faculty in our new funding landscape.

- Many of you, like me, are in units that use video monitoring in your facilities to enhance safety and security. At present, there is no centralized oversight, installation/utilization approval, or even listing of these
resources. That is likely to change. Chief Johnson Link of the CUPD will speak to the Senate in November regarding a draft video surveillance policy. Based on comments from the Senate’s standing Research and Finance committees, I’ve asked Chief Link to be cognizant of the innocuous and wider spread presence of webcams on personal computers, tablets and cellphones, and video recording utilized for scholarship purposes as well as evaluating teaching when developing this policy.

• A couple years ago, the Staff and Faculty Senates were asked to review a draft conflict of interest policy that all personnel would be required to sign. Senate representatives expressed grave concerns about freedom of speech issues and about personnel actually being able to understand several dozen pages of legalese that they would be signing. Ala Claude Rain's charging into Rick's Cafe, the authors of this policy were shocked (shocked!) at these concerns, but the good news is that the policy went back to the drawing board. I understand we can expect to see version 2.0 soon, and I assure you it will receive the same scrutiny by multiple eyes as the first draft did. While I have not seen the revision, I thank our new General Counsel, Chip Hood, for being cognizant of those concerns and wanting to address them in any new draft.

International Travel Policy
If you or your students are traveling abroad to work or study, then please be aware of the University’s new International Travel Policy, which is aimed at enhancing awareness and safety when traveling abroad. You can learn more about the policy and requirements at: http://www.clemson.edu/academics/programs/study-abroad/safety/travel-warnings.html

FAS, Goals, and Forms 1, 2, 3
In my own Claude Rains moment, I am shocked (shocked!) to report that the Faculty Manual is a bit out of date concerning what some of you remember as the annual Form 1, Form 2, and Form 3 process. FAS has replaced some aspects of this process, and its digital format makes studying issues of workload, performance, etc more convenient. However, current FAS capability is simply not able to replace all the important aspects of the Form 1, 2, and 3 process.

Senator John Meriwether and the Policy Committee are working on Faculty Manual revisions that would remedy this circumstance and move us to a digital Form 1,2,3 process. An additional advantage of this revision is that if performance data can be stored in the HR information system, then the monitoring and carrying out performance-driven market-based compensation could be done rather seamlessly on an annual basis as a maintenance process.

Senate President’s Column
Whither and Wither Intellectual Integrity? P/E Ratios, Fiat Currencies, A Cross of Prestige, and Sorcerer Stones in Higher Ed

While optimism prevents me, honesty nonetheless compels me to share my concern that the same tension sensed by some faculty between intellectual integrity and an amalgamation of some fashion of moral elitism and tokenism in the announced Tobacco Free initiative is present in other recent policies (e.g., LEV parking). Inasmuch as the university rests squarely on intellectual integrity, faculty should carefully observe whether such policies begin to rhyme. For once intellectual integrity is gone, faculty really have nothing left.

The desire to perfect or correct humans by those having well-intended, but parochial, interests is well-known to us all—the queer and oft-tragic consequences are so cliché that they provided fodder for more than one Star Trek episode. Even such efforts outside of academia end up impacting higher education. The head of Student Disability Services Arlene Stewart’s annual visit to the Senate each fall always leads me to poll the students in my classes about what percentage of Clemson undergraduate students they believe are using psychotropic drugs—legally or not. Each year, I’m repeatedly shocked (for real, not ala Claude Rains) to hear a consistent consensus, semester after semester, of 65-75%. Ask your students and see what they say.
If you wonder if and how this can truly be, I recommend this recent chilling article from the Grey Lady: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/09/health/attention-disorder-or-not-children-prescribed-pills-to-help-in-school.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Who or what is ultimately responsible for parents, students, and highly and university-educated professionals banding together in what strikes me as the madness of the biochemically-enhanced learning movement? I fear the answer may be us. We have allowed our institutions to outsource intellectual integrity to external parties that are imprudent stewards. We parrot the results. Parents and students parrot our parroting. Reinforcement. Resonance. Information cascade (see September’s President Column).

Concrete examples are myriad. Faculty often complain about consultants and search firms, but the bigger dangers lie elsewhere: e.g., entities formulating college rankings based on input parameters or metrics with no demonstrable connection to what they purport to measure, and the equating of higher education with credentialing that even the AACSU and APLU have, sadly, begun to parrot (see the President’ Report).

I was reminded of another example by the University’s recent heralding of our SmartMoney payback score. Many of you that own stocks in your portfolios realize that these equity securities are really discounted claims on future earnings (apologies to my Finance colleagues who might prefer me to say free cash flow, or earnings that truly belong to equity owners); equity securities are priced by interactions of market participants to reflect rates of discount and a future stream of earnings. A common valuation metric, then, is the equity’s price/earnings ratio—how many dollars one is paying per dollar of earnings. The reciprocal earnings/price ratio can be thought of as a pseudo-dividend rate.

If one is happy to disregard the benefits of education except for future student earnings, one can similarly “value” a college degree by the alumni earnings/college price ratio. SmartMoney magazine, with the imprimatur of the Wall Street Journal, has been calculating these ratios for a few years now for a selection of just 50 institutions. You can see the “scores” and some details at: http://www.smartmoney.com/plan/careers/which-colleges-help-grads-snare-top-salaries-1348588527234/

The University has adopted this as a metric as part of its self-assessment. That caught the attention of this former SmartMoney subscriber several years ago when I read the explanation of methodology, and found its intellectual merit in question – a danger when we let for profit publishers conduct our assessment. The most obvious defect in the SmartMoney analysis is their use of tuition as cost. Unfortunately for intellectual rigor, tuition does not measure an average cost; it instead is the maximum cost any student will pay. The University is happy, on the one hand, to acknowledge this in noting that no in-state student pays full freight; the University is happy, on the other hand, to ignore this in embracing the SmartMoney analysis. These are the things that make faculty go “hmmmm”.

In 2009, I revisited the SmartMoney results, correcting for the effects of discounting using the percentages of students receiving aid, the average aid package, and a tuition weighted properly for in-state and out-of-state students (it’s not clear if SmartMoney considers the latter); statistics were taken from the College Board. In the table below, I present the ratio of the mid-career annual salary from the Payscale.com database to the resulting average annual discounted cost for 19 institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Mid-Career Salary / Discounted cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clemson U</td>
<td>7.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Georgia</td>
<td>14.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A&amp;M</td>
<td>29.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Texas</td>
<td>25.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA Tech</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auburn U</td>
<td>9.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rice U</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notre Dame</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Chicago</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCSC</td>
<td>45.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purdue</td>
<td>14.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dartmouth       6.08
Princeton       7.63
Yale            6.53
Harvard         7.84
U Pa            4.67
Cornell         4.60
Brown           4.31
Columbia        5.04

There are a number of interesting differences between these results and the 2009 SmartMoney rankings, which are similar to the 2012 ones. In the latter, Clemson ranks ahead of (e.g.) Purdue, Harvard, and Princeton. In my reanalysis, Clemson was outpaced by Purdue and even with Harvard and Princeton. Also, there are competitor institutions (e.g., Auburn and Texas A&M) not in the SmartMoney rankings that outpace us.

Neither my nor SmartMoney’s analysis is econometrically robust as possible. Obvious deficiencies are lack of consideration of: room/board, integrated lifetime earnings rather than annual earnings, possible differences in loan or credit burdens, possible differences in graduation rates, and possible differences in opportunity costs of forgone earnings in college matriculation.

Together, I believe faculty, politicians, administrators, and Boards can do great things. But, when faculty are excluded – when we rely upon outsourcing the assessment of our enterprise to those incapable of performing rigorous assessment – I observe that intellectual and professional integrity (of policies, institutions, and people) is placed in jeopardy. Unchecked, this erosion of the culture of integrity is what allows debacles and spectacles like those at Penn State and U Virginia. I believe Moody’s, who has just downgraded the UVa credit rating due in part to governance concerns, would agree. I believe SACS, who has placed UVa’s accreditation under review due in part to governance concerns, would agree.

Those are tough judgments for a Senate column, but my keen optimism about shared governance and leadership makes me uncomfortable with publishers, politicians, and others shaping the future of higher education to the exclusion of faculty, who possess the vast share of intellectual capital that could be tapped to shape the future of higher education. Many of you see the disquieting consequences of minimal cultures of intellectual integrity in other arenas of public education.

A rich question is the source of the substitution of elitism, tokenism, and outsourcing for a culture of intellectual integrity. When confounded about such matters, I inevitably return to Drucker and his reminder that the long-term evolution of enterprises will mirror that of society at large. Thus, I was struck by the wonderful TED talk The Power of Introverts (http://www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts.html) in which Susan Cain posits the evolution from a culture of character/virtue in early American society to a culture of personality. I would now posit a continued evolution to social media/groupthink/public relations.

This is to say that the currency of higher education is no longer character, nor is it the production and value of Veblen's great “captains of erudition.” It rather seems that higher education's current fiat currency is prestige. Or, as Warren Bennis recently wrote in his reflections on Larry Summers (http://www.businessweek.com/stories/2006-03-05/lessons-from-larry-summers), administrators have become “Captives of Constituencies”.

First notifications of policy in Inside Clemson, popular magazine-driven assessment, and the intriguing difference in Administration reaction to social media as received in the sterile anonymous glassy environment of our Social Media Listening Center and as received in the protestations of some in a Death Valley crowd all seem to vindicate McLuhan’s mantra of medium as message.

That vindication is of little comfort to faculty, so what are we to do? Perhaps if William Jennings Bryan were amongst us today, he would switch sides in an academic currency debate and entreat us not to crucify higher education upon a cross of prestige. Lacking that ironic historical twist, beginner chess strategy is better: Faculty
are playing white with an advantage; trading pieces and waiting for the end game will get the job done. When the current fiat currency collapses, as all fiat currencies do, faculty can provide the gold standard of intellectual integrity. Cling to it without relent — once faculty relinquish it, they have surrendered everything.

When that collapse of the culture of prestige might come is a matter of speculation. Already, though, one sees pushback against it. The president of the AACU, in an article providing a bizarre diametric contrast to the AACU’s own recent college completion statement, bemoans the narrowing of the American mind (http://chronicle.com/article/The-Narrowing-of-the-American/135212/) manifest in current valuations and assessments of higher education. Of particular note are recent efforts in Virginia and Tennessee that are providing information on the link of those states’ higher education degrees — major-by-major — to subsequent graduate salaries.

On the one hand, faculty should celebrate that it only took us 60 years to embrace Drucker’s fundamental principle that the only meaningful assessment of an enterprise’s products is that made after they leave “the factory”. On the other hand, though, reducing and restricting that assessment to dollars and cents alone reflects an erosion of intellectual integrity because it reduces higher education to a Sorcerer’s stone in a JK Rowling novel — a charm which converts the base metals of faculty and students to the gold of economic development and salary outcomes. We may find that gold may to be pyrite.

It also represents a loss of history — though perhaps this is a concomitant result of the narrowing of the American mind. Senator Morrill’s vision contained in the Land Grant acts was not restricted to development of agriculture and instruction in the mechanical arts, but also included a liberal education for the “sons of toil”. The circumstance that this component of the vision has been blurred, that we’re relying on news magazines to conduct our assessment for us, that we are not at the econometric frontier of assessing our own enterprise, that we’re not comfortable dealing with authentic social media even as we desire leadership in virtual social media should all impel us to realize that the full measure of Morrill’s vision is as important as ever, and that faculty may be the only remaining stewards that can see to its fulfillment. There’s never been a better or more important time to be such a steward.