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2025 Conversation - 3/27/2013

The College at Brockport

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College of 2025 Dinner Conversation – Alumni House
March 27, 2013

Host: Susan Stites-Doe

In attendance: James Cordeiro, Mary Derleth, Julie Pruss, Nancy Ensman, Dan Askew (Note that several persons scheduled to attend cancelled that day.)

Common themes: Concerns about online education and what it would mean for us to go in this direction more fervently; this came out immediately. The belief that we need to achieve a good balance in our teaching approaches in order that we may retain our natural DNA-like advantages and uphold our traditions. There was recognition that we may need to do things differently in terms of the offering of summer programs and other non-traditional offerings. If I had to summarize the advice offered in two words they would be these: Balance, flexibility.

ARE universities going to be obsolete? There is lots of gloom and doom about f2f education in light of online learning.

The college has to adapt to change... e.g. the emphasis on online learning. Facebook is a very useful tool to connect with students, and staff members can better serve the students through these sorts of media.

We need to adapt to teaching ways, methodologies, and ways of contacting students.

If students go more online what do you do with buildings? You need to find a "value added" way of encouraging students to come to campus... the interactions that students have with faculty, the organizations we offer students, the opportunities to make connections.

Some say that just because kids are hooked on cell phones this doesn't mean you have to cater to them. We want to be careful about cultivating narcissists. Harvard and MIT put their courses online for free to create a two tier educational system. We don't want to throw out the baby with the bath water. You have to decide how to negotiate MOOCS.

Perhaps some sort of compromise can be struck whereby we allow some coursework to be taken via MOOCS and/or online courses whereas others will need to be f2f.

Key question: How do we get students to engage MORE interpersonally.

At Kodak they didn't get out ahead of change... what can we do? In order for us to get out ahead of change we have to achieve balance.

Perhaps we can compare online learning with cliff notes. If you use cliff notes you deprive yourself of learning. If you use cliff notes IN COMBINATION with other tools, including original course content. An illustration of this is ITUNES University.

The students on campus have changed. Are we going to try to put a square into a circle? Or... should we find a way to reach out to the new students?

There's no way around it... we MUST adapt to the new environment.

The point is that we should AUGMENT learning using a variety of tools.

The product that we sell is unique... tradition, and personal connection.

Because the student body will change, so will we... the faculty will need to address minority issues, for example.

AS the demographics change, without losing our soul we need to offer new products and services that meet students' needs, e.g., language skills.

Do have adequate services for students of diverse backgrounds?

What makes us unique?

Small town appeal. Parents feel safe with their kids here. Its big enough and small enough. It fits the view of what a campus should look like. Hartwell Hall is a big part of the deal. It's what college should look like. At Brockport you can discover what you want to be. There is a lot of opportunity here. Our Study abroad programs are unique in SUNY and even nationally. We offer the best of both worlds... the small town environment, and the means to discover the world beyond it.

We should build on the traditional appeal of the college. Spend more money on landscaping. Pay attention to the things that ARE part of our wonderful traditions, e.g., Lindsey's garden in front of Hartwell.

We should also continue to strive toward more small classes. Perhaps we can preserve small classes in some areas, or for some classes, whereas other classes.

When we talk about technology... for our grandparents things were the same for many years. It feels like things will need to change and we need to move along. Focus groups with kids about what they want would be useful. A focus group of Ellsworth scholars with "rank and file " students would provide a cross section.

12 or 13 years from now the current students may be parents themselves. If we believe our students are important why aren't they here in these meetings?

In the future will we be... organized by the department?

Years ago we talked about CLUSTERS of programs. This fell through. One of the opportunities that we could take advantage of is breaking down silo's across campus. Giving people the opportunity to work across campus would really help... when people don't communicate they don't focus on a common goal... the students.

Contractual undergraduate degrees would be an option, for example.

Modular possibilities are a real possibilities... faculty who teach in clusters and not in departments. This would help students too. The UK has lots of these sorts of programs...

WE need students to engage more. In 2025 they will be more engaged IF we actively pursue the effort to encourage them to engage. Engagement includes service learning.

One way to pull students who are not entirely comfortable with engaging with faculty is to create opportunities for them to earn credit for these sort of things in organized, goal-centered ways.

How to we build our veterans into what we want to accomplish in the future? These are students who have terrific backgrounds and a lot of leadership experience. Why couldn't we bring students in through Empire College? They give you life experience credit.

We could more actively advertise the CLEP program... college living experience program. You can earn as much as 12 credits in Spanish.

The college should make a connection with Alums so that we can offer 2nd, 3rd, 4th career paths for students throughout their life spans. We need stronger relationships with alums. We should permit students to keep their email addresses for life.

Communication improvements will be very important.

We really need to solicit input from STUDENTS on the matter of 2025.

What time frames will students learn in? Semesters? In the military there are many courses that are 1, 2, and 4 months in length. One member was very concerned about the dead time during the summer... we have to find a way to turn summer into a revenue generating venture.

So, the issue is flexibility. Weekend classes, a robust summer session.