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2025 Conversation - 4/10/2013

The College at Brockport

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“BROCKPORT 2025” DINNER AT ANDREA RUBERY’S HOUSE ON APRIL 10, 2013

Participants: Joe Torre, Steve Jurek, Donna Kowal, Alissa Karl, Alisia Chase, Dena Levy and Andrea Rubery (Laurie Allen could not attend)

The event went very well. Here are some general summaries of things discussed:

1. In terms of community engagement, most thought that the College needs to do much more in terms of local outreach. For those programs we are already involved with (ie local high schools and their use of our facilities, etc) – we do a poor job of making these community members feel welcomed. (ie. difficulty with parking; difficulty with helping local schools provide their own means to earn money from selling of food snacks, drinks, etc) Apparently, BASC took away their ability to bring and sell their own food and drinks, as a means of fundraising at these events. Also, even during spring break, when there were no students on campus, we still did not allow for public parking near the sports facilities being used. Please check these issues out.

Also, why do we not have more on campus programs for seniors in our community? Summer classes for community members? RIT and U of R do an outstanding job of engaging their local citizens in these outreach programs. Plus, all agreed that these could be great revenue streams for the college.

How good are we at engaging local businesses with student internships? Western Fingerlakes wine industry? Local farmers for issues of sustainability; organic farming; green alternatives, etc. If we are already doing these things, many on campus are not aware.

Finally, some confusion about the focus of the administration. Should we work to improve community engagement or does this work against us being “nationally recognized?” Many commented once again that they did not know what “nationally recognized” meant. Some argued that it is nothing more than getting our students’ entry scores (SAT’s, ACT’s etc,) up to a nationally, competitive level. Yes? No?

2. Much of our conversation went back to the state of the College now and our present concerns. How can we discuss the nature of 2025 when 2013 is loaded with problems? First, we need to recruit better students. All agreed that our students are largely poor readers and writers. We need to seek out those students who come better prepared for a true college classroom experience. We’d rather put money into scholarships and a SERIOUS push to get these excellent students in the classroom, than spending it on administrative positions or initiatives. All agreed that the College has become too top heavy with administrators and professional consultants.
3. We also agreed that we need a better understanding of what our College wants itself to be. Are we a true liberal arts college or a school of professions, who trains administrators and professionals? Is there a difference between training and educating? We all agreed that we still largely hire colleagues on the “old criterion” of best schools, publications, broad and rigorous scholarly pursuits, etc. We use these traditional models to hire new faculty and yet, we are

asked to think about the classroom in an entirely new way with students who do not read extensively; who are largely a-historic and a-political. Are we not widening the gap between pedagogical expectations and actual competency, on the part of the students?

4. Many of us had serious reservations about online classroom experiences. We don't have a problem with streaming in students with something like skype but the idea of a fully on-line classroom and/or degree program was of great concern. Part of a true liberal arts experience must include the interaction of ideas amongst faculty and students. This push for online courses is wrongly directed. Nothing can replace the face to face interaction in the classroom. The College must avoid falling into the traps of doing ALL THINGS NEW. We are allowing those who have yet to come here to push a pedagogical agenda that is not in the best interest of true learning.
5. The way in which our schools are divided is counter productive to the best interests of each discipline. Many believed that there should be a School of Humanities and Social Sciences and then a separate School for the Arts and Performances. Rarely, do you see all of these combined in one school. Not a good idea.
6. Worries: Our students do not read. They have little agility with language. We don't just need them to read articles. They need to read books....broadly and often. By assessing their knowledge and critical thinking skills, we seem to be putting the cart before the horse. We cannot expect them to think critically when they have a shallow knowledge base and feeble reading skills. We recognize that many of these issues should have been confronted in high school but just because they were not, we do not have to yield and change our standards to meet their inadequate tools and expectations for the classroom. We mustn't expect so little of our students. They understand the idea of goals, expectations and performance in sports – why do we assume that this is too high a reach in the classroom? We need to demand more of them, not necessarily more of us.

These were just some general thoughts and worries.