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Milo Rediger Writings & Addresses

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Innovation in Education

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Jan 18, 1971
Marion Community
Schools, Administrative Staff

INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

Appreciate the invitation; we could and should do more things ^{cooperatively} ~~in cooperation~~ which are appropriate for the various levels in the total education enterprise. I said I would talk about innovation in education.

Reminds me of last Tuesday evening - Rotarians from Marion and Hartford City were on campus for dinner and a basketball game. (This is an annual event) - One man picked up his fork and began to eat - another nudged him and said, "You can't eat yet; they haven't had the innovation yet." # Well, much of the talk about innovation in education has been like the commercial for a Psoriasis treatment- "It can help provide temporary relief in transitory cases." Or "The reason Ammaben is the farmers' first choice is that farmers have made Ammaben their first choice, and the first choice of farmers is all that matters." Now, the fact that I remembered this and brought it here shows its effectiveness as advertising, but the substantive content is gobbledy-gook.

It should be more like Vogue's ad, "Vogue magazine is read by the overwhelming minority."

We began to be innovative in teacher-education, e.g., back in the early '50's when we created "the professional semester" and sent our student teachers into Marion to live and teach under your supervision on a full-time basis for 8-10 weeks during their senior year. What an improvement, for us and hopefully for you,

over the former fragmented, part-time practice. But can you envision how much innovation, change, and creativity had to precede that professional semester in order for the students to be ready and prepared for that experience?

In the past six years much of our effort has become more visible to the community as a new Taylor rose up out of the corn and pasture fields of our quarter-section south of Upland. But it's not so much the brick and mortar expression of our plans and projections as it is the realization of a great dream and the manifestation of a spirit that speaks of innovation and creation. This was consciously designed of certain elements - and in a certain order: people, programs, and plant - and in that order - with strong priorities accordingly. This has been continuous now for six years, with much thought and planning behind the scenes for many years before that. I am deeply committed to the formula for innovative planning and leadership in education: the right people to plan good programs which then demand appropriate facilities. And don't short-circuit the formula, lest you risk short-changing the product by short-sighted performance.

Distribute annual reports -

Two years ago I got fed up with the content and the format of my typical so-called annual report - and about 400 others that came across my desk from other colleges and universities. So I launched out with a new idea (and you well know how even such otherwise small and simple items are charged with tradition until they become sacred cows). This is the current version, and you're welcome

to a copy for later scanning if you are interested - I'm handing them out now only because I'll use a few illustrations that are mentioned in it.

Student-Faculty-Trustee Conference.

Alumni Talk-Back.

Seminar Day - Constructive Action Towards Survival.

Now, a few examples from administrative involvement:

Concept of Team Leadership -

-not just a group of people in related positions.

-there is a charisma of teamness - retreats.

Conclusion.

I often hear people say - Taylor is different. If it is, it is because we make it different. This is where the innovation is. Some principles we try to remember: The students are what the university exists for. We've had staff occasionally who acted as if it exists to provide jobs for them, or to make their work easy and comfortable, or to be kept exhibitable, or something else. Now, I'm for good housekeeping--but by a well-supervised house-keeping staff. This man acted as if he believed we were all there, faculty and students, to keep the buildings clean. Reminds me of my wife who, when our boys were still at home, used to say on a Friday morning, "Clean up your rooms, boys; the cleaning woman is coming today."

Another principle is to keep the goal of our business in mind - the best

possible educational experience for the students - and work back from that to make all personnel and programs contribute the most possible to that goal. This is the truest incentive to innovation in education. And let me remind you, when Taylor University was not like what I've now described, nobody was noticing it very much, nor were you inviting me over to share with you like this. Innovation makes the changes that make the difference.