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Speech Communication at Iowa State University: A History of Broken Promises and Shifting Leadership

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ment for two years before taking a faculty position at Iowa State University in 1981 where he was tenured and promoted to Associate Professor. In 1992, two years after Dr. Hale left ISU, he was appointed to a three year term as DEO (Department Executive Officer) of the Department. Dr. Redmond's research interests focus broadly within the area of interpersonal communication. He has published articles in *Communication Monographs*, *Human Relations*, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, and the *ACA Bulletin*. His work on social decentering will appear in an upcoming volume of the *Journal of Research on Personality*. Dr. Redmond's upper-level communication text, *Interpersonal Communication: Readings in Theory and Research*, has recently been published by Harcourt Brace.

THE IOWA STATE STORY

A story told in linear fashion certainly has the advantages of, usually, being easy to follow and, in a very real sense, organizing itself. However, there are subtle problems with respect to linear story telling, especially as that structure applies to the story we are attempting to tell here. To design a linear story, we need to be capable of establishing, at the very least, a beginning point. Additionally, we must be capable of selecting, describing and, thus, privileging, those few conditions and/or incidents which we believe serve to explain the pressures which have been applied to the Department of Speech Communication at Iowa State University and the circumstances which have resulted in the changes that have occurred.

We cannot guarantee perfection with respect to how we answer either challenge. Necessarily, our beginning point has been arbitrarily selected. Some colleagues might argue that our selection and depiction of explanatory factors are equally arbitrary. As a matter of fact, we won't even guarantee to agree with each other as to all aspects of our analysis. Nonetheless, our hope is that what colleagues will find compelling are our arguments concerning the lessons to be drawn for situations which share the characteristics that we do identify.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Speech Communication at Iowa State University has been in a state of instability and insecurity for more than 20 years. There has long been a sense of foreboding over the Department, probably since it began to expand its curriculum beyond simply offering basic public speaking. However, as our admittedly arbitrary starting point, we will take the first semester when one of us (Hale) assumed responsibilities as the Department Executive Officer (DEO) of the Department of Speech Communication at Iowa State University. This approach will allow us to focus primarily, albeit not exclusively, on events which occurred when one of us occupied the DEO's position and, thus, to minimize the extent to which we would be trying to recreate the pressures extant for and decision-making processes of previous DEOs.

At that point in time (the Fall of 1986), the Department of Speech Communication for Iowa State University was a multi-focus department, composed of four separate interest areas: speech communication, theatre, telecommunicative arts, and communication disorders. Offering bachelor's-level degrees only, we had approximately 350 majors (primarily in the areas of speech communication and telecommunicative arts) and 45 to 50 faculty members (with approximately 15 to 20 of those faculty members on temporary contracts).

The Department was (and still is) located within the College of Arts and Sciences (renamed the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 1990). While the Department was primarily identified as one of the humanities (along with English, Philosophy, and History), as DEO I¹ chose to attend the meetings of not only the humanities DEOs but also the social sciences DEOs (a group which included Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, and

Anthropology). These two groups shared many of the same concerns, largely born of stretched budgets and inadequate resources; however, there were differences in philosophy and in what they perceived as appropriate courses of action. These differences were in evidence during their meetings, as the humanities group tended toward a gentility of dialogue which afforded everyone an opportunity to express his or her² point of view, while the meetings of the social science DEOs were marked by assertive exchanges and struggles to either gain or control the floor.

The one constant, whether the focus is on one of the sub-groups of DEOs or on the College as a whole, was the fact that Speech Communication was at or near the bottom of the totem pole. For many years, the Department had prided itself on the fact that its faculty members maintained teaching loads (in terms of number of classes taught per semester, generally 3 and 3) which were either equal to or exceeded those typical of its colleagues throughout the College. The teaching loads were argued as justifying lower levels of productivity with respect to typically acknowledged forms of scholarship, i.e., refereed journal articles and successful grant applications. As might be expected to be true of any statement of this nature, there were, of course, exceptions, i.e., members of the faculty who maintained very active and visible programs of scholarship and/or creative effort. Unfortunately, those individuals were considered by the administration to be the exception. The administrative perception appeared to be that the Department had not kept in touch with the value system of the University, which prized active programs of scholarship/creative effort and considered many of the department's historic practices as constituting hidden "perks" (e.g., only selected faculty members were assigned advisees with a course release provided if the advising load exceeded a specified number).

Additionally, while the statistics clearly indicated that the Department's courses were in high demand, with close-out levels which argued for additional faculty, University-level officials took a different position. There were those who were convinced that the close-out problem was a creation of the Department, and we were thought to be inefficient in our use of resources. That opinion emerged as a product of comparisons between the ratio of student credit hours to full time faculty (SCH/FTE) generated by our department with the SCH/FTE ratio generated by speech communication departments at our comparison universities. Almost without exception, those comparison departments offered not only graduate degrees, but doctoral-level degrees. Among others, the comparison group included the universities of Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Purdue. While we would continually remind officials that such comparisons were "unfair"—and they would agree—these were, nonetheless, the statistics which were used. Among the other problems afflicting the department were the resource (i.e., equipment) demands of the telecommunicative arts area, combined with severe understaffing in that area, and the fact that the mission statement of the University specifically ruled against having a "major" program in communication disorders. (The meaning of the term "major" was not provided.)

HALE'S STORY

I assumed office in the Fall of 1986 as "interim" DEO. This was a very sudden ascension to office, born in large part of a conflict between the previous DEO and the Dean. This was not the first conflict between the Department and the Dean's office; however, two factors had motivated the Dean to ignore previous areas of concern. First, the Department was emerging from an era characterized by almost yearly turn-over with respect to who occupied the DEO position. During a Spring 1986 meeting with the Department's faculty, the Dean indicated a desire for stability within that position and, thus, continuing support for the person who, at that time, was serving as DEO. Second, members of the Dean's office privately indicated great skepticism concerning the administrative acumen of all of the members of the

Department but were equally reluctant to conduct a national search until a variety of questions about the Department's future had been answered.

With that as background, then, the "final straw" hit the camel's back and, in part because of my previous experience as a department chair and in part because I was an "unknown" to the Dean's office, the same week that classes began I was approached to assume the role of DEO. I was only supposed to occupy the office for two years, with a national search conducted during the second year, but therein lay part of the inability of the Department to pro-actively respond to many of the difficulties which it faced. A ready-made response on the part of decision-makers to any proposal we might put forward was that we needed to wait for that national search to be completed. Even when an idea was deemed to have merit, we were told that we needed to wait until the "new" DEO had been selected so that this unnamed individual could have his or her thumb-print on whatever actions were taken. This message was particularly strong when it came to hiring new faculty. During this period of time (1986 to 1990), we had our share—some might say more than our share—of retirements, resignations, deaths, and dismissals; however, the opportunity to hire new (tenure-track) faculty, and thus to meaningfully address at least some problems through the infusion of new energy and ideas, was effectively stalled.

In the Fall of 1987, the Department went through an external review. The impetus for this review was our own. Based on the positive experiences of colleagues in other programs which had undergone assessments of this nature, our hope was that the external review would lay the foundation for decision-making on the part of both the Department and the College. From the point of view of the Department, we hoped to remove most, if not all, of the College-level excuses/justifications underlying a visible lack of commitment to the Department's future. Those faculty members who believed that the Department was playing a valuable role within the College and University certainly hoped that the review would "prove" them correct, and those faculty members who believed changes needed to occur hoped that the review would help open the eyes of their colleagues.

My own view is that the review team did an exceptionally thorough and balanced job, both in its investigation of the Department and in the report which it submitted. Unfortunately, though, that opinion was apparently not fully shared by the Dean's office, as the Dean offered the members of the team additional compensation if they would reconsider aspects of their analysis and recommendations. While we took some measure of pride and vindication in the fact that all of the team members refused the Dean's "offer," the Dean's office never fully embraced the report or recommendations of the external review team. Instead, this proved to be only the first of a series of reviews (or "strategic planning" processes) in which we were to be involved. Admittedly, some of those reviews were University-wide, with one a State-wide assessment of programs which were thought to unnecessarily duplicate each other (journalism and telecommunicative arts were particular targets of this effort). Nonetheless, while each review was intended as providing answers, the reality was that each served primarily to raise new questions. The most frustrating aspect of these processes was the increasing feeling/perception that decisions had already been made. This perception was particularly strong in those cases where the investigating committees/agencies offered recommendations which had not been discussed with us and/or which were based on distorted, inaccurate data. In such situations, the conversations we were having and reports we were filing often seemed mere window dressing to a pre-determined course of action. That course of action was that the Department, or at least some components of the Department (specifically, telecommunicative arts and communication disorders), should be allowed to "wither and die."

Certainly, the Department cannot be portrayed as perfect or as simply the innocent victim of other's malicious actions. There were voices within the Department which continually argued in favor of the status quo with respect to a variety of operating policies and practices

(including, for example, the Department's standards for promotion and tenure) even when the College and University had made their dissatisfaction with those policies and practices very clear. Additionally, the heavy reliance on temporary faculty members combined with the practice of allowing/encouraging their involvement in decision making processes often resulted in a short-term as opposed to a long-term focus on problems.

At the program level, the telecommunicative arts area had long been resource poor. This area of the department was not only seriously understaffed, particularly with respect to tenured and tenure-track faculty, but equipment/facilities poor. We could point to the University's mission with its emphasis on sciences and engineering as supporting the presence of telecommunicative arts. We could also point to the fact that the University had its own network-affiliated television station, a true rarity for an educational institution. However, neither argument was considered particularly powerful, especially in light of the financial resources which we were forced to admit would be needed to support the type of program we wanted to have. Ultimately, the telecommunicative arts program became a symbolic pawn used as one of the arguments in moving the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication from the College of Agriculture to the College of Arts and Sciences. As part of that move, during the 1989-90 academic year telecommunicative arts was shifted from its home in Speech Communication to a new home in Journalism and Mass Communication and, ultimately, allowed to die.

Eleven months prior to leaving Iowa State University, I informed the Dean's office that I had accepted an appointment with Ohio University. One of my hopes was that this was certainly a sufficient grace period to finally have that long promised national search for a DEO. Unfortunately, the timing was once again deemed wrong. Rather than a national search, the Department found itself asked to accept the leadership of another interim DEO, this time a faculty member from a different academic discipline.

REDMOND'S STORY

During Dr. Hale's last year as DEO, a group of faculty began a proposal for an additional concentration in the Department to be called "Communication Studies." This concentration was approved by the Department the year after she left. This area emphasized a fairly contextual approach to the study of communication that included examinations of communication theory, interpersonal communication, small group communication, organizational communication and intercultural communication (see Redmond & Waggoner, 1992a, 1992b). Among other requirements, students choosing this area are required to take coursework in statistics and research methods. The development of Communication Studies was in response to a continued perception by members of the academic community that the Speech Communication major lacked rigor, and to frustrations felt by the Communication Studies faculty with the personal and philosophical antagonisms with other faculty that had resulted from previous attempts to bring about change.

After Dr. Hale's departure in the Spring of 1990, we had a one year interim DEO from another department (1990-91), a one year interim DEO from within the department from the theatre area (1991-92), and finally, the appointment of myself to a three year term as DEO (1992-95). During this period, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences also went through a number of administrative changes. Dean William Kelly, who had arrived in 1983, stepped down in 1989. The next Dean, David Bright, remained only two years. He was replaced by an interim Dean, David Glenn-Lewin, who had served as an Associate Dean during David Bright's tenure. The current Dean, Elizabeth Hoffman, began her appointment in July 1993. The succession of chairs and Deans was accompanied by three different University Presidents in the last eight years, one interim President, two Provosts, and one interim Provost. This extensive turnover in administration was extremely detrimental to the Department.

Why it did not have the same affect on other departments is unclear. No other department had the degree of instability in their chairship; so, perhaps they had a more focused vision among their faculty. With each change of administrator, there was an initial reaction of "I need to get the lay of the land," followed by some evaluation of the Department and development of either a formal or an informal plan, followed by the initiation of the plan, followed by "Since I'm leaving, I want to leave those decisions for my replacement." And then the whole cycle would begin again. In the meantime, the number of permanent faculty positions diminished by over 40%.³

At the department level, the lack of secure chairship only served to inflame existing faculty divisiveness. The progression of four different individuals as chair during a four year period prevented the development of credible and forceful influence with College and University administrators. My appointment to a three year term as DEO was the first such appointment in ten years⁴ and was not without problems. I was appointed by David Glenn-Lewin in his second year as interim Dean, and approved by an interim Provost, despite the fact that a majority of the faculty were in favor of another faculty member. Dean Glenn-Lewin had created a plan for the Department which he felt I would be most likely to support and work to implement. Immediately upon the arrival of the new Provost, John Kozak, in 1992 and a new Dean in 1993, the faculty members who were opposed to my appointment visited with those administrators to voice their discontent. As a result of these actions, my credibility was in question, and my subsequent attempts to gain support for badly needed additional tenure track faculty from these administrators were unsuccessful.

Each Dean was quick to pick up on the difficulties associated with the Department. One major concern expressed across the board was the cost associated with teaching the basic public speaking course. That course is not a University-wide requirement but is required by a number of colleges and departments throughout the University. Additionally, the public speaking course is one option to fulfill a group requirement in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the largest college within the University. We had been teaching the course in individual sections of 20-22 students. The demand for and the faculty's interest in teaching other courses meant that we relied primarily on temporary instructors to teach public speaking. For over 20 years, the Department has had to make special requests for temporary instructors to help cover public speaking classes. At one time, we had 12 temporary instructors coordinated by a tenured faculty member at a cost of over \$250,000, a cost considered burdensome to the College. It is likely that if all of the faculty agreed to reduce the breadth of our course offerings and each teach several sections of public speaking every semester, we would have endeared ourselves to the College and would not have been in the dilemma in which we found ourselves.

The College has consistently encouraged the Department to seek alternative teaching formats and has even, at various times, suggested the elimination of the course altogether. To say the least, offering basic public speaking education has not been a priority for the College. However, not only have some members of the Department resisted those suggestions, but there is a strong, entrenched demand from other colleges that wish and are often required by accrediting agencies to have their students take public speaking. Because of our inability to meet student demand, historically the course was filled primarily by seniors and juniors; consequently, over the years we alienated those customers to some degree.

More recently, we have established other courses as options to help reduce the demand and move enrollment in public speaking to the more appropriate freshman/sophomore level. Those other courses have included adding a 200 student introductory lecture course in communication theory and several large sections of interpersonal communication. The demand for public speaking has diminished somewhat, but the College is still forced to begrudgingly provide more support than it wishes. We finally began experimenting with the use of the lecture-lab format, relying on graduate students recruited from other departments.

In 1993, we converted entirely to this approach at considerable cost savings to the College. We had reached several agreements with Dean Glenn-Lewin about making changes in the Department and receiving some benefits, particularly additional faculty appointments. Those agreements were nullified with the appointment of a new dean.

Twice during the period after Dr. Hale left, we were led to believe that we would be able to hire an outside chair. A search was actually begun during the 1991-92 academic year but was terminated immediately prior to bringing in candidates for a campus visit because of financial difficulties experienced by the University as a result of a state farm crisis. In the second year of my appointment (1993-94), my requests for additional faculty were denied because Dean Hoffman and Provost Kozak indicated that a search would be made for an external chair, and they wanted to use the prospect of new hires as a recruitment tool. During the Spring of 1994, that promise was rescinded by Dean Hoffman, and the Department's administrative future was left up in the air. Dean Hoffman was instructed by the Provost to pare down the three departments handling communication (us, Journalism and Mass Communication, and English) into two departments. The Dean then approached the Department about partitioning off its various areas of study to a variety of units throughout the campus. Two years before, Theatre faculty had been administratively moved to the Department of Music. A similar plan was envisioned for the remaining Department though, in her discussion about this reorganization of our department with the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, the notion of developing a School of Communication was broached.

As of this time, there is no plan to appoint another chair for the Department after my term is completed (in June 1995). Dean Hoffman has been visiting with faculty in the Department and throughout the University looking for options for placing faculty into other departments. The major in speech communication would continue to be offered, but the faculty responsible for the major would be dispersed. For the near term, the major would be offered in the same way that interdisciplinary majors are offered within the University. The faculty in Journalism and Mass Communication are interested in having the Communication Studies program and faculty join their department only as long as the College continues the necessary financial support. The Dean has indicated a commitment to adding faculty to the Communication Studies program. That movement would be accompanied by a long range plan for developing a School of Communication which would have degree programs in Journalism, Advertising, Communication Studies, and perhaps additional areas, such as Corporate Communication and International Communication.

The Department of English has expressed a willingness to administer the basic public speaking class if there is a transfer of appropriate faculty and resources. There were earlier attempts to merge the basic writing course and public speaking. We developed a plan which called for the co-orientation of those two courses, as opposed to their merger. The plan has yet to be implemented, but moving the public speaking course to English would probably aid in developing such a cooperative effort. The faculty member in our department who had been responsible for the course has stepped down and responsibility for the course will shift to a temporary faculty member next year. The Dean has offered to add a tenure track position for a basic public speaking coordinator **provided** the course is moved to English. In addition, the Department of English has expressed interest in the rhetoric faculty of our department as additions to their applied program of Rhetoric and Professional Communication. That program has no oral component, and the English Department sees a value to adding that to their program.

There are two possibilities for the Communication Disorders program. One is to move it into the Department of Human Development and Family Studies which includes the program in child and family services (child development). The other option is to move it to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction which includes programs in early childhood,

elementary and secondary education. Both Colleges have expressed a strong interest in adding the communication disorders curriculum to their programs.

What the future holds for speech communication at ISU is uncertain. On the optimistic side, there are some exciting opportunities that might develop if the administration follows through on the promises being made. The strengthening of the Communication Studies program, the establishment of a new School of Communication, and the aligning of faculty into departments where they might find strong support are all possible benefits from the impending reorganization. However, the history of turnover in administrators raises skepticism about whether the current Dean will remain long enough to follow through with her vision for the teaching of communication at ISU. In addition, some of the current faculty oppose the reorganization and might be positioning themselves to challenge it in the University Senate and with the Board of Regents. Finally, a problem exists in the fact that not all faculty are highly valued by other departments and finding them an appropriate new home department could prove problematic. In response to these problems, the Dean has been working very systematically to develop sufficient support both inside and outside the Department for the reorganization. Ultimately, efforts at resistance, whatever their basis, will fail as long as the College and the University retain a financial strangle-hold over the Department and are able to refuse the replacement of faculty who leave or retire.

IMPLICATIONS OF OUR STORIES

More important than the story we tell are the implications or lessons we draw from that story. In an article written in 1989 for the *ACA Bulletin*, Hale identified quality, necessity, and distinctiveness as keys for departmental strategic planning. For our implications, we draw on two of those keys—quality and necessity—and add consistency and cohesiveness.

With respect to the issue of **quality**, part of the problem is best explained by noting that we lost touch with the culture of the University. At one point in its history, Iowa State had valued faculty on the basis of, among other things, their “citizenship,” both within the University as a whole and within the broader community (defined both locally and professionally). Over the years, however, the University had increasingly shifted its expectations to emphasize scholarship/creative effort and grantsmanship. One of the problems for us, then, was that, while we were trying to present ourselves as an excellent instructional unit with faculty who had a strong service commitment, the University defined excellence in teaching and service as taken-for-granted responsibilities of all academic departments and faculty. The additional expectation was that faculty would achieve visible levels of acclaim with respect to scholarship/creative effort. In that regard, although we could point to the records of selected faculty members and accomplishments within the theatre program, we also had to admit to mistakes/failures with respect to tenuring and/or promoting some individuals.

This observation should *not* be read as a license on the part of faculty members or departments to ignore *either* their teaching or their service obligations. To the extent that we had (have) supporters and a position of strength within the University, then it was (is) in large measure because of activities in these two areas. However, we also have to acknowledge problems in the ways in which particular faculty members fulfilled their obligations (especially their scholarship and service obligations) with those problems undercutting the good work of others.

Just as problematic to the assessment of quality was our inability to visibly demonstrate that we were doing everything possible to handle the backlog of student demand which existed. Ordinarily, one would think that the statistics we were capable of generating with respect to students closed out of classes would speak persuasively to hiring additional faculty and to a secure future. Certainly if our classes had been historically under-enrolled, we would

have been even more vulnerable than we were. However, at least in part because we were being compared with communication departments which have the services of graduate teaching assistants and a capacity for classes organized around mass lecture or lecture-laboratory arrangements, the statistics employed by the University in making decisions portrayed the Department as over-staffed. The University's interpretation of our close out statistics, then, was that we were unwilling/unable to find creative solutions for our own problems.

The second lesson/implication identified is that of program **necessity**. Those of us within the speech communication discipline often seem to assume that the study of our discipline is a *sine qua non* of university education. That is, our own excitement about and interest in the study of human communication, within all its forms and venues, blinds us into believing that our university colleagues define us as an essential element of the university community. Through some ruse, we manage to ignore other communication departments which, for any number of reasons, have been eliminated from their universities.

In the case of ISU, the economic crises experienced by the state as a whole prompted a number of critical examinations of university operations. Whether the questions being asked concerned possible program duplication or how resources were being used, the basic issue of concern was that of program necessity, with necessity defined in terms of the University's mission statement. To the extent that we lost touch with the specifics of that mission statement, shrouding ourselves, instead, with our own general beliefs in the importance of our discipline, we contributed to any questions which were raised concerning our necessity as an academic unit within the University. Interestingly, the importance of communication skills almost became a foe rather than a friend when, at one point, the University suggested that the types of skills emphasized within basic speech communication classes (and, even more specifically, within the public speaking class) were skills which students should have acquired prior to entering the University. Thus, the question which was asked was whether those classes should not be considered "remedial" in nature.

For the third implication drawn from the story just told, we suggest the concept of **consistency**. On several occasions, we have mentioned a pattern of short-term leadership. That pattern was not only true of the Department, but of the College and the University. This pattern of changing leadership meant that we were always working under a mantle of uncertainty. Such a situation, combined with an inability to obtain meaningful commitments of support from college and university administrators, will eventually erode even the strongest department. In the case of a weakened unit, the problems are only exacerbated. Granted, there is little that we could have done to change the reality of shifting leadership, especially at the level of the dean's office and higher. However, our response to the situation was frequently the opposite of what it should have been.

The short-term leadership at each level produced its own set of problems in that it contributed to consistency—in the sense of inaction—where consistency should not have existed and inconsistency—in the sense of commitment to plans for the future—where consistency was desperately needed. Both of us experienced interactions with colleagues who argued that we should "do nothing" in response to concerns voiced by College and University administrators because, if we would simply wait long enough, the administrators who were arguing we should change would be out of power and a new set of administrators in power. This advice assumed that (1) the Department was operating from a position of strength rather than weakness, (2) there were no changes which the Department needed to undertake in order to improve the quality of the program, and (3) the institutional evaluation of the Department would change with changes in institutional leadership. All three assumptions were flawed. At a point in time when the Department should have been proactive, if anything using the changes in leadership as openings which would allow it to assertively put forth its own plan for the future, all too often the answer was one of

retrenchment.

The final lesson that we will mention contributed significantly to that retrenchment. That lesson is seated in the lack of **cohesiveness** of the Department itself. We will not argue against the value of diverse points of view or assert that faculty members should not have expressed disagreements with each other. However, the Department as a whole rarely seemed to get past the debate mode to make collaborative decisions which would allow it to move forward. Too often, the effort which was expended was directed toward personal attacks rather than creative problem solving, and to undercutting proposals rather than helping to constructively examine and improve proposals. The development of the Communication Studies program was, in part, a reaction on the part of faculty members who wished to establish a safe environment for creative problem solving, putting forth proposals, and engaging in collegial discussions. Their belief, based on experience, was that to propose anything new in an open forum with all colleagues present was to invite ridicule and argumentum ad hominem.

Eventually, the issues of quality and necessity faded, making it even more unclear as to what the specific departmental sins were/are while, at the same time, underscoring the problems created by the issues of consistency and cohesiveness. Some of the description and analysis we have offered here is conjecture based upon a combination of what we were told directly, what we heard indirectly, and what we observed. However, one thing that has proved out over time was that there seemed to be a degree of intentional ambiguity on the part of several administrators.

The fact that the writers of this analysis are operating, in some cases, on the basis of **suppositions** rather than **knowledge** is a reflection of one of the central problems which existed—a lack of clear and honest information. No one wants to tell you bad news. No one (at least within our situation) wants to say “we doubt the validity of your discipline or program.” No one seemed to want to be straight with the Department about the administration’s impressions or intentions. In some cases, the words and actions were contradictory—“We value you as a department. No, you can’t replace the faculty member who has retired.” This lack of clear communication not only meant that any attempt by the Department to plan a strategic defense was futile; the lack of clear communication also fed the divisiveness which existed within the Department, providing a ground for faculty members to attack each other rather than the problems which existed. Clearly, a house which is divided is vulnerable; thus, we contributed significantly to our own vulnerability.

Our purpose here has been to try to offer a constructive analysis of this situation and, most importantly, to share insights based on our experiences which might help others navigate a more constructive course. The Iowa State story is not yet complete. As noted, there are proposals being pursued. Some faculty members are excited about the possibilities which exist in those proposals, but there are others who oppose the proposals. Will changes in the structure and “homes” for the components of the Department result in a new life for the faculty members and for the study of human communication at ISU, or will these changes make it easier for the program to “wither and die”? Only time will tell. Perhaps the only thing that is really different, at present, is that the College is no longer promising to conduct a national search for a chair.

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- 1 As a matter of convenience and stylistic preference, we will occasionally use the word "I" when one of us assumes the primary role as story teller. We will make every effort to be clear at those points as to whose story is being told and, thus, who "I" is. In this case, the "I" is Hale.
- 2 I should probably note that I was the only "her" not only within either group but among any of the college's DEOs. The only other woman executive within the college was Associate Dean Jean Adams.
- 3 The statistic cited is for a 12 year period, from 1982 to 1994.
- 4 While Claudia Hale served as DEO for a total of four years and would have served at least five years had she not left ISU, the initial appointment was for two years with 1-2 year extensions creating the total of four. This situation was, in part, at the choice of Dr. Hale who was offered longer extensions but kept insisting that the College needed to fulfill its promise of a national search, only to find a variety of circumstances continually cited as rationales for extending her appointment further.