

Reflections of an Administrative Technifob

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Jason put out an alert when he lost his luncheon speaker for this year's conference. David Strickland volunteered my services as a cheap substitute. I will try to ensure that Jason and each of you get your monies' worth—will not have to try hard as that fine meal really was worth the price of admission. Initially, I wish to commend Jason and the others on the Planning Committee for putting together a very fine conference. I do not know when, and that is an indictment of Foster, that I have focused so much upon teaching and learning and the developing technological implication for that those vital processes as I have in these past two days. My time has been well spent in Barnesville. I also comment President Weil for his special support of this initiative.

In passing I should give credit to Dr. Sue Gillis Leslie for Macon State College for the title I assigned to my prepared comments which were used partially for my luncheon comments. She coined the phrase: "Instructional Technifob" in telling her story of her evolutionary growth in using the emerging technologies in her instructional efforts. I adapted it as noted above in an effort to humanize my travels through the process from an administrative perspective.

Please allow me to share my definition of the responsibilities of the president as a way of putting my comments in some type of perspective:

Chief Planner/Visionary/ Responsible for creating an organizational environment that is driven by a collaborative, information-based decision-making process with an emphasis upon utilizing the personnel strengths within the institution.

Representational/Advocacy Responsibility in building a relationship between the institution and the Atlanta Crowd—the chancellor, his staff and indirectly the BOR and increasingly, the Legislature.

External Responsibilities in relating the institution to its several publics with an emphasis upon public relations, marketing, recruitment and fund raising.

If I have an Administrative Long Suit—it is getting the right people in the right places and allowing them to provide needed leadership in positioning the institution to remain viable over time and to work continuously against the "Organizational Dry Rot" malady as discussed by John Gardner some years ago. I see this as the primary way I meet the challenge of my first priority as a president as noted previously. The way I get things started is by "Bringing the right people to the table and Stirring the Pot" as I will describe to you later this afternoon relative to an on-campus follow up meeting that grew out of my attendance at a recent CASE Conference in Atlanta.

I had planned to focus my breakout session primarily on the impact of the last several years in the way I see the potential of IT developments and the way I try to play to that court as president. I will cover those original intentions as we move through my subsequent comments.

With some emphases added and a few suggested word changes, I would like to quote from a recent article/advertisement written by Dr. Diana G. Oblinger for Microsoft in a recent edition of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*:

As IT has pervaded (perhaps invaded is a better word) our lives and the lives of our students, it has become infused into our learning (and administrative) processes.Goes on to say that we should take the emphasis off the "e" and place it on the "learning" part of e-learning.

Scarcely a day passes that I do not receive something through my workstation about a technological development that we must be alert to and that can assist us in doing our jobs better. A lot of paper comes the old fashion way via "snail mail" doing the same thing and every professional publication you see carries articles relative to the link between technology and academic and administrative effectiveness. Please allow me to reference:

the EDUTECH Report with a focus upon how many systems could or should the IT staff be expected to support on a campus?

a recent edition of CHANGE with a lead article on the campus of the future that carries heavy technological implications.

our own University System of Georgia's Kris Biesinger and her recent e-mail to campus administrators with it warning to be very careful about the use of the "Shared Designer Access" capabilities in WebCT in the interest of limiting access to confidential course info.

the coverage in a recent edition of the Community College Journal to a consortium of 26 community colleges in California that has been formed to close the "Digital Literacy Gap" in its students and in the larger society with an emphasis upon workforce issues. (Do we not see a future where computer literacy will be just as important as literacy in the basic skill areas of reading, writing and computing—particularly, if we see dimensions of computer literacy as including the ability to search for, process and apply useful information in our everyday lives.

an EDUCAUSE REVIEW article that came across just last Sunday Entitled "Virtual Universities: Real Possibilities" that cited the ongoing work in Georgia in noting: that in Georgia, the USG is investing in a multi-institutional enrollment model whereby online courses may be cross-listed in college catalogues throughout the system. Once the model is implemented, students will enroll in any online course as though it is being offered by their home campus. The back-end infrastructure will handle tuition differentials and administrative data exchanges between campuses. It concluded that

although Georgia no longer maintains a VCU with a public presence, this more integrated approach may well represent the next generation of VCUs.

I attended the recent CASE Conference in Atlanta—Low Budget Approach to a Staff Development opportunity as I actually live in Atlanta and travel to Swainsboro during the week in serving as interim president---over half of the breakout sessions had something to do with the emerging technologies. I will use that meeting experience to illustrate how I “stir the pot” or “push the envelop” in meeting the responsibilities as a visionary/strategic and operational planner as president as referenced earlier.

Picked up a number of operational ideas/handouts/etc...Brought them back to campus and.....

Met with our IT staff (Pulled them together in one reporting format as part of our fine tuning of the administrative organization of EGC and in keeping with the budget constraints that we face as a relatively small institution) and others from the college staff with assigned responsibilities in Business Affairs, Enrollment Management, Marketing and Public Relations, Alumni Affairs, Foundation and Continuing Education/Lifelong Learning efforts to address the question:

Are we making the most effective use of the developing technological capabilities as we operate the college on a daily basis? Improvement in this area has been identified in my recent evaluation conference with Chancellor Meredith as an Operational Goal for 2004-05.

I participated actively in the discussion to a point and then left the group with a charge to keep that operational goal on the table as we move forward with Mike Rountree who had emerged as the Coordinator of the Office Information and Instructional Technology responsible for utilizing the assembled group as an ongoing advisory and planning committee for the institution in those increasingly crucial areas.

Let me share some of my personal reflections on the results of the meeting as they have emerged to this point:

Greater attention to the marketing niche that: Great Beginnings start at EGC!

Changes are apparent in the use of the college web-page.

Greater use of Banner capabilities in tracking students in the admissions process and in working with our alumni in fundraising initiatives.

An updated Work Order process has been implemented by Plant Operations.

An up-dated Campus Calendar has been implemented with the coordination of use of campus facilities moved to Lifelong Learning/Continuing Education as a part of our public service mission.

Earlier decisions had been made to circulate our weekly news bulletin, the MMNews, via the web and to discontinue the publishing of the college catalogue and to discontinue our GSAMS classrooms as budget-cutting strategies. The group will be charged under the leadership of Mike Rountree to keep a 3-5 year rolling plan that will attempt to keep EGC on the cutting edge of the emerging technologies as they have been discussed at this conference.

Please allow me to back up now and focus upon what I had planned to say in my originally planned breakout session. When I retired from Gainesville College in 1997 after some 14 years as president, Rick Coker, our Mike Rountree of GC, had never assigned me a workstation. He had been moved into a position as Registrar and Coordinator of Computer Services from a math classroom over 20 years ago when it started being apparent to even Foster, that things were going to get interesting in the academic and administrative computing arenas of higher education. He has served admirably in that role and continues to this day to be what I consider the Chief Information Officer of the college in a parallel way that we have Chief Academic Officers and Chief Business Officers.

Rick began to work with a small advisory group, not unlike the one that has been pulled together at EGC recently, and assumed leadership responsibilities for a rolling 3-5 year plan that would keep GC on the cutting edge of technological developments. Those efforts were aided in earlier years by the availability of matching lottery funds through ETAC that were available for matching funds raised locally. Locally, we benefited to the tune of over \$100,000 for parking 50,000+ cars, at one dollar a car, when the Olympics came to Lake Lanier in the late 1990s. Sadly, those types of funds are not now available and I fear for the ability of the USG and individual institutions to stay close to the edge in the developing technological movements without them.

Earlier, I made reference to my perceived Administrative Long Suit: getting people in the right places and empowering to move ahead with their leadership responsibilities. I would classify the move to Rick Coker as one of the best personnel moves I have ever made along these 44+ years. I have similar expectations for the referenced move of Mike Rountree in a similar way at EGC and for David Strickland in his new role as Director of Institutional Research with us. David has participated in this conference both years and encouraged me to be a participant this year.

In a rather circuitous manner after retiring as president of GC with an abbreviated tenure as president of UAB Walker College, I settled in as a professor of educational leadership and higher education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. I found myself with a workstation, no secretary and in an institution that was beginning to utilize the emerging technologies in developing and delivering instructions. It has been said that there must be a felt need to know and do before one becomes a truly motivated learner. I found myself in such a need-based situation.

I attended two staff development efforts—tendency of presenters to play to ones who probably did not need to be there and run off and leave those in need—such as Foster! I left those sessions with a high degree of frustration.

Turned to my developing professorial friends—cul du sac of offices—who responded individually to my needs to know and over time I became quite (that is an overstatement, somewhat may be a more appropriate modifier) proficient in using the BlackBoard (BB) system in developing and delivering my on-campus and cohort (that were delivered in Jasper and Cullman) courses primarily from a hybrid perspective. I challenge each of us to be literacy development friendly as we move around in our own organizations.

I have kept my cohort contacts alive from Swainsboro over these past two years. If I do not do anything else when I re-retire in July from the USG, I will work with the UA and UAB on a part-time basis as an Alabama retiree and continue my work with the graduate cohort that operates primarily from St. Bernard in Cullman, AL.

BB capabilities that I learned to use over time:

Post Syllabi

Post Course Documents

Post Assignments/Plan Course Sessions/Use of Discussion Board

Link Students to Resource Document

Receive messages and allow students to post “products” of their efforts

Respond to student entries on the Discussion Board

Allow students to respond to the posting of each other

Group students for small group activities/chat room capabilities

Use the Assignment function and the Discussion Board to plan the course as it emerged overtime giving me an ability to modify the course as needed along the way. This is perhaps the most significant capability of the emerging technologies from the course development perspective as far as this presenter is concerned!

Utilized the ability to stay continuously in communications with the whole class and with any individual student as needed overtime Perhaps an even more important capability!

Evidences of Student Learning and Growth over time:

Improved “words on paper” skills

Growth in assumption of individual responsibilities as a learner

Increased awareness of and responses according to posted timelines

Increased use of information gleaned from External Links as a basis for positions taken by individual students

Increased ability to seek out new sources of information and to use them in developing positions on issues under study

Increased degree of socialization in the learning process particularly through small group activities

Increased “pride in ownership” in products produced individually and through group activities

Growth in the ability to give and receive developmental feedback from the instructor and from their student peers

I utilized a Hybrid Approach—still saw students on a weekly basis with the technology being used as way to enhance the planning, delivery and monitoring of the instructional process. **IT capabilities are tools that should be used in the development and delivery of instructions regardless of locations---seen primarily as communications and planning capabilities that must be used whether we are working with a student in the next room or half way across the state.**

The EGC Diversion and a Move to more of a Distance-learning Approach!

Continued to utilize BB capabilities in developing and delivering courses

Increased reliance upon Discussion Board items and group activities with chat room capabilities

Increased reliance on small-group, geographic area meetings of students in project efforts

Moved to a Weekend College approach that was compatible with my return trips to Alabama for personal reasons (Met at least once a month)

Obviously, I returned to EGC as interim president with somewhat of a different perspective relative to the emerging technologies than I had when I retired from the presidency of GC. That perspective, particularly as it had emerged over time at UAB relative to the role of technology in the development and delivery of instruction, has had a powerful impact on my view of things from the role of president this time around.

My arrival at EGC coincided with the need for the USG to find a small location to work with in implementation of the WebCT Vista program. We encouraged the acceptance of that opportunity to move forward as a total faculty group. With the strong leadership of Tim Goodman as Vice President for AA and his role in modeling the use of technology in his own courses, we jumped into the fray with the system IT staff. Attention has been given in this conference to some of ours and the system's successes, challenges and a few failures along this path. Let me say that we must find a way to finish the task and to bring the latest in technological support to the faculty in every institution in the USG.

I am convinced that the professorship as we move further in the 21st Century will increasingly be influenced by our ability to integrate the emerging technologies into our on-campus and distance-learning efforts on behalf of the full range of students served by our respective institutions. Technological Literacy increasingly will become a fundamental skill area expected of our graduates. I maintain that we will not be able to meet that challenge unless we fully integrate the technological resources as they continue to emerge into our instructional efforts. We have a small number (perhaps 4 or 5) at EGC who seem to be "waiting for this movement to pass" as did the AV emphasis and teaching by television. I am afraid that they are going to have a long wait.

I am further of the opinion that a dimension of the presidency increasingly will be the expectation that we demonstrate real technological/computer literacy in performing the demands of our positions. We must be seen as valuing such by our regular use of it as one way of encouraging others to come along. However, we must work to ensure that we do not become captured by the processes and forget that we must personalize our presence as presidents. Often, I have found myself at my workstation on many Monday mornings through lunch in trying to respond to messages and to use the system to move items along for the coming week. I find myself having to remind Foster of how much I believe in leading by wandering around and getting out of that chair and dealing with people in their spaces.

One last Shot! If I have a regret over the years as I look back, it is that I have been a bit too timid in pushing harder for the development, recognition, evaluating and rewarding outstanding instruction inside and outside the classroom. As one who comes from a professional education background, I fundamentally believe that those who "can teach well" and that one must work at it and utilize the increasing body of knowledge about the teaching/learning process. I am of the opinion that the emerging instructional technologies will allow us to visit that area more effectively as we move ahead.

