

PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON HUMBOLDT STATE - 1980

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During the first week of the 1980 fall quarter, I had the pleasure of organizing and coordinating a faculty development workshop for the new faculty. (Surprisingly, there are about thirty new faculty this year.) The workshop was an informal introduction to curriculum, general education, advising, teaching, and the personnel process at Humboldt State. The perspective given on these topics was from a *faculty* viewpoint.

Since the day of the workshop, many of the participants have approached me to say how helpful the session was; in addition, many have told me how extremely friendly, relaxed, and informal Humboldt State seems to be. Most of the new faculty have taught elsewhere, and have been impressed by Humboldt, especially during the first few weeks; a time of disorder, confusion, and stress for a person in a new job situation.

I must agree with these comments from the new faculty. The intellectual and social environment at Humboldt State really is hospitable, and the people most responsible for creating this atmosphere are you, the university community. I would like to share a few thoughts with you on how we can retain this atmosphere here or even make it more pleasant. Many of my observations may seem obvious and redundant; however, I believe they are probably worth repeating.

Have you ever visited one of the "mega-universities" in our CSUC system to the south? Whenever I have visited one of those places, I have really felt happy to return home. We manifest characteristics at HSU (not necessarily under our control) which will never obtain at most of those campuses. We are extremely isolated and relatively insulated from the rest of the state. Our students and faculty are largely residential (we are not a "commuter campus"), and, because of our isolation from urban amenities, our life centers around the activities on campus. Our university community is small, which makes it possible to be

acquainted with a higher percentage of campus faculty, staff and students; at least it is possible to see familiar faces as you walk to and from your classes.

There is no doubt in my mind that we have one of the most approachable and reasonable university administrations of any campus in the system. This has been corroborated for me recently by visiting representatives of the faculty organizations who are well acquainted with all of the universities and colleges in the CSUC system.

We also are fortunate to have a 500-member competent, friendly, and helpful support staff. What they contribute helps to make the faculty's life a lot easier. For example, in my role as Faculty Development Coordinator, I have to seek secretarial help in Academic Affairs and elsewhere, and people are most willing to accomplish my work despite their regular full-time workloads.

I also believe that the faculty here seem to get along remarkably well. Although we rarely meet together at the same time, I think that we do have some sort of consensus on how we should run this university with a minimum of conflict.

What are some of the things that faculty members can do to retain this relatively pleasant environment?

First, I think that it is very important to get to know people outside of one's own department. One of the easiest ways to do this is to volunteer to serve on a school or university committee. We have trillions (!) of these committees; and they always need new blood. How often have you seen the same people listed as members of these committees? Perhaps the best type of committee to serve on is one whose members include faculty, administration, staff and students. Not only does one find out how this place operates, but one meets people from across the campus; soon one realizes that there is much more to this university than one's own department. A university perspective can help much in the running of a local department.

If you are not actually a member of such a committee, you can always attend some of the meetings. Most meetings are open to anyone who is interested; normally very few nonmembers attend. The committees I have personally found valuable and interesting include the University Resource Planning and Budget Committee, the Academic Resource Allocation Committee, the University Curriculum Committee, and the Academic Senate.

Attend social functions. The General Faculty and the various faculty organizations hold parties several times a year. What better way to meet people? Come to the recently established faculty and staff barbecue at the beginning of the year. What a marvelous time was had by all this year, even under foggy skies. Try to come to the Salmon Bake at the end of the year. These functions can be valuable and rewarding, a chance to meet and confer with those you do not normally see.

Work in interdisciplinary programs and visit lecture classes of your colleagues. This is an excellent way to meet and work with people from other areas. You may be surprised at the talent which abounds at this university. The interdisciplinary programs can be stimulating and satisfying. Several examples of new efforts that I am aware of include the Science and Humanities Liaison group, the experiential learning group, and the Mathematical Modeling group. There are members of these organizations from all over campus, working together to pool their talents and expertise from their several disciplines.

Participate in some of the faculty development workshops. One of the things we have in common

is teaching, and we're all interested in doing a good job. Last spring, I coordinated an informal workshop during which we simply sat in a room and talked about teaching. It was enormously interesting to meet new people and find out how they do the job. Methods of teaching in one discipline often transfer to another with surprising results. At these workshops, one can find out that problems previously thought to be restricted to one's own discipline often are common in many others. Another suggestion would be to invite fellow faculty members to attend one's lectures, and request the same of them.

Be proud that you are a member of the HSU community. We really do have a wide reputation for teaching excellence. We have scholars on our staff who are internationally known and respected. There are many, many professionals who would genuinely like to be able to work and teach here.

Try to get to know your students even better than you now do. I realize that our classes are larger than they used to be, and it's harder to see each student outside of class, but there is nothing more rewarding than a genuine personal knowledge of what our students are like.

Try to get away from this place once in a while. Apply for sabbatical (or an exchange of positions), and actually travel away from here for at least a few months. I managed to do this several years ago. It was expensive, but well worth it. You do realize how pleasant this place is when you are away, and it isn't so hard to come back as you might think.