

# Faculty Forum

By and for the Faculty of the University of Denver



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## The Faculty Senate has a Website

We are proud to announce that the Faculty Senate has a new look and feel to its website.

<http://www.du.edu/facsen/>

The website is arranged into several sections, and they are:

- Agenda
- Calendar
- Committees
- Constitution
- Faculty Forum
- Appointment, Promotion and Tenure Guidelines
- Membership Roster
- Minutes

Comments, Suggestions & Corrections for the Web page may be sent to the Faculty Senate Executive Secretary, Deborah Grealy at [dgrealy@du.edu](mailto:dgrealy@du.edu).

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## University of Denver Fall Convocation Address delivered by Chancellor Daniel L. Ritchie October 7, 1998

This morning I would like to talk about the opportunities and challenges for the University of Denver in the new developing technologies. Although our current migration to a new integrated administrative system is a major move, my topic is not the University's administrative systems. We have plenty of challenges there, and we are meeting

them. Among other things, we don't expect to fall prey to the Year 2000 problem.

What I would like to talk about today is not administrative, but pedagogical. Until recently, the computer and computer networks have had generally only a marginal impact on teaching and learning. The emergence of the World Wide Web and, particularly, the browser has changed that. These and related developments are changing our world as fundamentally and much more rapidly than the introduction of writing in ancient times or printed books 400 years ago.

When our erudite Dean Emeritus, Roscoe Hill, learned I was to speak on technological change in the academy, he reminded me that there is a long history of academics dragging their feet at crucial times of cultural change. He gave me a quote from Plato where Socrates reports on a legend out of Egypt where King Thamus denounces the invention of writing: "If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks." Roscoe went on to report that apparently many professors in European universities were very upset when the printing press came along. Students have been coming (and paying) to hear our lectures, they reportedly lamented, but now if those lectures are printed up into books there will no longer be any reason for students to come to the university.

Roscoe and I agree, however, that we don't have that attitude around

here, and in fact, our faculty are eagerly and aggressively incorporating technology into their courses.

More rapid development is, of course, ahead of us. As the capacity and speed of the Internet increases, and video and new forms of high speed, high density interactivity become possible, more radical change will occur. As Yogi Berra once observed, "the future ain't what it used to be."

How exactly should the University of Denver fit into this future? Giant conglomerates such as Disney, Microsoft and America Online are of course looking at the new opportunities in higher education. Established franchises in higher education such as Harvard or Stanford could use their reputation and the new technologies to compete much more directly with us.

While the world of higher education is certainly going to get more competitive and the dangers to us are very real, I prefer to look at our opportunities. One of these is the opportunity to combine our existing strengths with the focused use of the new technologies to further improve the learning experience of our students.

Our greatest strength is that, pound for pound, from a student perspective, our faculty is about as good as it gets. The combination we have here of excellent research and scholarship together with a strong commitment to student learning, I do not believe is exceeded anywhere. We are small enough to move with agility, and smart enough to do it well. And we have the resources to provide the technological tools to do the job.

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That job is to greatly improve the learning experience of our students through the use of the new technologies. I would like to suggest a few core concepts.

First, we should continue our focus on making learning more active. We have already begun that process in such projects as Partners in Scholarship, in service learning and in a number of other areas. Active learning is more fun and more effective, and the new technology offers endless possibilities for students to be really engaged in their learning.

Second, we should continue to focus on collaborative learning. Collaboration in partnerships and teams is the way the world works today and it makes for very effective learning. The Daniels College of Business and the Pioneer Leadership Program provide wonderful examples of the power of collaborative learning. Tools abound on the Internet and in network based technologies to assist individuals in collaborating with other individuals, to assist teams in managing group work and to assist leaders in motivating their teams. The development of the University as a laboratory where students and faculty can explore the expanses of a collaborative environment is an important core concept. Society as a whole is just beginning to appreciate the new dimensions technology is bringing to collaboration.

Third, we should focus on customized learning. Each of us in this room is a unique individual, with different interests, different abilities and different ways of learning. "One size fits

all" is no longer acceptable in any other area of our society. It will not be for long in higher education. The new technologies offer us the means to individualize learning more effectively and efficiently.

And, finally, we need to focus on continuous assessment. Rigorous assessment is required by our accrediting bodies for a reason. How can we get better if we don't know how we are doing? The new technologies provide many new tools for continuous assessment of learning. There will be new opportunities to assess and improve teaching and learning outcomes in real time.

I also would like to mention two concepts we all will be hearing more about. One is distributed learning as distinguished from distance learning. Distributed learning at the student level is about moving from the lecture to facilitated education with the process of individualized learning distributed in time and space. The new technologies and the internet can be used to enhance all types of educational experiences, including the traditional classroom.

We will also be hearing more about Instructional Management Systems. These will provide open specifications and a framework for such activities as locating and using educational content, assessing learner progress, reporting learner performance and exchanging student records between administrative systems.

It is clear that we are facing a new world which is, in many ways, strange and daunting but one which is also full of excitement and promise. It

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holds particular promise for us here at the University of Denver. We have already demonstrated that we are capable of making revolutionary changes to our curriculum to leapfrog the competition. For example, the faculty at the Daniels College of Business has really transformed its curriculum to put it at the leading edge in the world. Similarly, in some of our new majors – Digital Media Studies and the Cognitive Neuroscience Program, for instance – we have demonstrated some remarkable advances.

We have also demonstrated an exceptional ability to form collaborations internally and externally toward a common purpose. That capability of working together will be an extremely valuable asset as we face revolutionary change.

Together, building on our extraordinary faculty and our demonstrated strengths, we can create a distinctive learning environment. An ethical, moral, international, student centered environment which emphasizes active learning, collaborative learning, individualized learning, continuously assessed.



## **Take a look at the Faculty Senate Website**

**<http://www.du.edu/facsen/>**

In the membership section, you can find the representatives for your division or college. You can also read the minutes from recent Faculty Senate Meetings.

## **Fall Convocation Speech delivered by Faculty Senate President Arthur Best October 7, 1998**

On behalf of the faculty, I would like to thank the chancellor and trustees for developing this tradition of an annual academic convocation. It's a privilege to be a member of an academic community, and occasions like this one help us remember that. The convocation also helps us remember the contributions that so many diverse people make to reinforcing the strengths of the university: students, faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, and alumni.

What are the faculty's goals, what are our aspirations for this academic year? We want to keep on making discoveries. We want to keep on improving the methods we use to make those new discoveries. We want to do better at helping students learn all the new discoveries, and the old discoveries that are the foundations of a liberal arts or professional education. And we want to do better at helping students learn our new techniques for learning.

Above all, we want to do all our work with honesty and integrity. Those are values we should all serve all the time. We should certainly serve them in the sanctuary of a university. One reason a university exists is to serve the quest for truth.

What are some ways we can work towards those goals? One way is to be open-minded. This is a time to be daring

in expanding our ways of scholarship and teaching. We are on the brink of using powerful technology for teaching. The faculty has to embrace that possibility or we will be complicit in the loss of a truly epochal opportunity.

We should also remember that high tech approaches may not work for every student or for every teaching and learning circumstance. For some teaching and learning, the best approach may be low tech or no tech.

Socrates earned excellent teaching evaluations without technology. The declaration of independence was written with a quill. And referring just for a moment to my own field, law, we can think of some lawyers whose ideas were so powerful they changed human history, even though they had no word-processing software: Abraham Lincoln, Mohandas Gandhi, Thurgood Marshall, and Nelson Mandela.

I hope that when our Chancellor and Trustees think about how to allocate the university's resources, they will continue to recognize the value of investing in people. We need to continue to attract great teachers. When other universities try to steal our academic stars, we need to make sure that they have a very hard time doing it. We need to enhance the programs that enable faculty to carry out important research and to improve the ways in which we do our teaching.

We need wonderful buildings and equipment because they enhance the intellectual and social processes of teaching and learning. It only makes sense, for example, to have a modern communications system if the people

who use it have something worth saying.

That's why I hope we will all be courageous in exploring new ways to teach and learn. That courage will make us distinctive.

Another special aspect of D.U. is our leadership in recognizing the human and personal nature of teaching and learning. Really discovering something with a student is intensely personal. When you teach something so a student comprehends it thoroughly and wisely, that is also a supreme act of connection between two people. So one goal for faculty is to make sure we continue to spend lots of time with our students.

This means really paying attention to students during classes, and being in touch outside of class in office hours, in the labs and the library, being with them in clubs and lectures, sports and recreation.

We sometimes describe ourselves as a model of a modern private university, a center for innovative teaching and learning, a university that assembles talented faculty and enables them to do great work. We have to work hard to live up to those descriptions.

We can be ethical and have integrity only if the descriptions are true. Making sure that the reality corresponds with the way we describe ourselves requires self-assessment, and sometimes may require us to temper our pride with modesty.

One other goal is worth discussing for just a moment. We ought to stay fresh in our scholarship and teaching. None of

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us wants to be like the teacher in an English class one time at some university - this professor shook his head sadly and said to a class of first-year students: "I can't stand it. I've been explaining these poems to you for twenty-five years, and you still don't understand them."

We have to remember why we entered teaching - to figure things out, to change the way people see some part of the world, to experience the thrill of creativity. Any one of us who might feel out of touch with those motivations needs to realize that, needs to be attentive to it, needs to re-establish a connection with that fundamental motivation.

We don't have to have everybody working on every thing every day to make progress. But everyone does have to think about progress, and everyone has to be reflective and self-aware. This will be a fulfilling and productive academic year if each of us promises to work a little harder and a little better on any of our important goals.

Let's remember that we are all here of our own free will. We're all here because we love the academic enterprise of learning, of learning to learn, and of working together in a society that has a chance to be a model of tolerance, cooperation, and achievement. If we can all keep these basic ideas in mind, we're bound to have an extraordinarily successful year.

