**Report of the Horizon Committee**

The Horizon Committee was slow to begin its work because virtually all the former members did not wish to continue their participation. Former members cited their numerous other university commitments as the reason for resigning. Once constituted, the committee pursued an issue suggested by the President of the Faculty Senate: students remaining in non-communicating silos according to their social and political preference. One of the traditional goals of a University education has been to open minds to a diversity of ideas and opinions. Students are encouraged to examine issues with logic, reason, and an expanding base of knowledge. In short, universities have historically encouraged students to engage in open-minded inquiry in pursuit of greater truths (Veritas). The concern is that today’s students have little interest in experiencing anything that might conflict with their pre-existing social and political views. This issue became even more poignant when President Trump declared an intention to withhold federal funding from any university that impeded the exercise of free speech. He comes at this issue from the political right and expresses indignation that conservative speakers are unable to present their views at universities such as the University of California at Berkeley.

Interestingly, committee discussions went immediately from students to faculty. Several members contended that faculty were equally disinterested in hearing the viewpoints and positions of other faculty members whose stances differed from their own. The rhetorical question was asked: “how can we expect students to be open-minded and democratic when the faculty do not model this behavior.” Some cited the conflictual nature of private discussions they were involved in with other faculty in response to a recent email sent to the Secretary of the Senate as an example.

A proposal was developed by the committee that is perhaps a first step in the direction of encouraging open and respectful dialogue. The proposal was for a rhetorical competition between faculty members with differing positions and viewpoints on poignant current issues such as gun control and immigration. These competitions would be highly advertised and promoted, serve refreshments, and allow for orderly student commentary at the end. Faculty members would model respect for their opponents and their opponent’s point of view. Arguments would follow the rules of civil discourse, scholarship, and the proper exercise of reasoned argumentation. Goodwill should always be in evidence, and, where possible, a willingness to move toward some form of compromise should be in evidence. In ancient Greece, such rhetorical competitions generated as much excitement as athletic competitions. Perhaps we can capture some of this excitement with our competitions. I doubt, however that we will ever be able to raise money by selling club seats to alumni.

The fledgling Horizons Committee is still in the market for new members. Like the Marine Corps, we are always looking for a few good men and women. Committee membership comes with perks such as a free lunch and occasional College of Education swag.

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