A dozen (or so) questions we all should be asking about higher education and the business of deaning

Presidential Address to CCAS
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I have worried about this speech ever since Holly Smith, I think it was, called me a couple of years ago to tell me that I had been nominated president. I have been attending CCAS meetings for nearly a decade and have always been impressed by the quality of the remarks and the insights of the presidents. So, like any over-achiever suffering from his due quota of imposter syndrome, I have worried. Then, it occurred to me that with my moving to the provost's office, in the tradition of CCAS's drumming its errant presidents out of office, I might escape. But, Roosevelt was far too vigilant to let a spot on the program slip so easily away.

Then, I relaxed. Those of you who were in San Francisco may recall that Lee Edwards, our esteemed president in 2002, could not attend at the last minute. Lacking Roosevelt's firm hand, I simply decided not to have a Presidential address. When I read the evaluations of the meeting last year, some 8% of the respondents rated her speech as good or very good. So I guess that means your standards may not be that high. But, on second thought, maybe I should worry because an alternative explanation is that you will find no remarks to be preferable to even the best.

My strategy, over the past few months, as I realized that this address would inevitably occur, has been to jot down lots of little notes to myself of possible subjects that might be of some interest to you. I ended up with a random list of queries – some of whose answers are self-evident, some not. Not knowing what to do with this assortment of stochastic thoughts, I decided to punt. I have woven then into this talk -- an academic miscellany of ideas, a menagerie of worries, a chrestomathy of questions.

So, I have fourteen questions to pose. I tried to come up with twenty questions in honor of the old quiz show that I listened to as a kid. But in the spirit of the times, we've had a 30% cut in our budget.

Question #1: When did higher education become a private good as opposed to a public one?

When my college was founded in 1693 and for at least 100 years thereafter, the role of our few dozen provincial colleges was primarily to train the spiritual leaders of the colonies' churches and to attend to the moral needs of those living in lands distant from Europe. With the Revolution, this view began a slow evolution toward a mission that might be seen as aligning with the sense of our founding fathers that we must create a well-educated citizenry to fulfill the leadership requirements of a young, democratic republic. We were to instill in our students the gift of civic virtue. By the beginning of the final third of the 19th century, American colleges had added the role of providing the

technological and practical skills required of a growing industrial and agricultural nation – mostly via that most marvelous legacy of the Civil War, the land grant college.

By the mid-1870's, we begin to blend a growing commitment to research and professional education in the Germanic model and, with all that filthy lucre from the Mellon, Stanford, Rockefeller, Duke, Vanderbilt, Carnegie, and other way-too-rich families, the American research university was born. The 20th century American university as we know it was really formed by WW II and came to focus on building the intellectual foundations for a modern, internationalist, market economy in a world at risk from tyranny and non-democratic forces. Normal schools became teacher colleges and morphed to regional universities – many now indistinguishable from their more venerable brethren. Whether it was the founding of the NSF and the NIH or the passage of the GI Bill, the NDEA, or the federal government's increasing involvement in student financial aid, the federal government increasingly stepped in where states and private entities had been in control. Higher education is now a strategic asset; the foundation of the post-industrial, knowledge-based economy; and a very expensive venture to operate.

The critical thing is that all these visions of the role of the college or university spoke to the social benefit of creating a well-educated class of college and professional school graduates – be they destined for careers in spiritual guidance, political leadership, engineering or to become teachers to educate the citizenry, scientists, lawyers, doctors or nurses, artists, captains of industry, diplomatic functionaries, or, God forbid, professors. In all cases, institutions of higher education were called upon to serve society by providing what society could not provide for itself – highly trained, well-educated, creative and curious, virtuous (in the classic sense of civic virtue) citizens. True, the individual recipients of this higher learning benefited – often by prestige, wealth, status, or comfort – but such is the nature of social organization. Those who provide the critical needs and wants of the whole often thrive and are generously rewarded for their contributions to the community.

I am not an economist, but my limited understanding of this view of higher education is that this would see our work as producing public goods as contrasted to private goods. Private goods have an owner. Private goods benefit the individual and, often, ownership is exclusive. If I own my house, it is mine and you can't live there. There are obvious buyers and sellers of private goods and the price mechanism works through open markets. Public goods, on the other hand, benefit us all. Clean, potable, public water supplies or municipal fire departments protect the health and well-being of everyone – whether he or she contributed to the provision of the good or not. My benefiting from this good is not necessarily decreased by your enjoyment of the same good.

Public goods generally can only be adequately provided by public actors. Consider a private goods, example. If I am a house-builder, it is to my benefit to modulate scarcity to a certain degree as it assures a high demand and a high price. If I am trying to provide public goods like clean water to prevent the outbreak of cholera or dysentery, it does the individual no good to limit water only to those who can afford to pay. If I want to

prevent catastrophic fires from burning my home to the ground, it does no good to restrict access to fire protection only to those who can afford to pay.

Obviously, higher education in its roles of preparing engineers, scientists, lawyers, accountants, teachers, poets, or physicians is serving the common benefit and thus is one of many public goods. Economists tell us that public goods will only be provided by collective action – by political will. But, if we say that the only beneficiary of higher education is the individual – through higher lifetime earnings as we all so commonly boast – then it becomes a private good and private actors can be relied upon to provide the service. Herein lies one of our problems. The state or federal government can readily shed itself of responsibility in competition with more politically powerful interests because we all "now agree" that the true beneficiary of higher education is the recipient, the individual and not the collective. Of course, I disagree entirely, but I vote in Virginia – a notorious low-tax state and higher education as a private good plays perfectly into the hands of the anti-tax purists.

Question #2: When did we (deans) turn over the authority for many matters that define the quality of academic life to non-academic professionals like our friends and colleagues in student affairs, admissions, rec sports, the registrar's office?

Fred Kluge spoke to this matter last year in his remarks to our meeting in San Francisco, later published in the *Chronicle*. Fred spoke humorously and well about Kamp Kenyon – a place where students are made to feel good first; a place where being not only physically but also mentally safe from confronting and dealing with hard facts or unpopular ideas is a positive; a place where we pledge to keep our students in their comfort zone, whatever that is. This degrades our institutions into Jacuzzi U. Places which spend more money on fitness centers, food service galleria, and climbing walls than we do on dance studios, classrooms, or libraries.

Another observer of life on campus, Mike Flusche of Syracuse University, speaks of the intentional campus – a campus where everything we do speaks to our mission as an institution of higher education and where every activity is a potential learning experience or teachable moment. Is there a controversy on campus about new sky-boxes for the football stadium, about the design of the new dorm (when did dorms become residence halls, anyway – why replace a good one-syllable word with four?), about hate speech, about on-line course evaluations – why can't each become an intentional learning experience?

What does it say about us as institutions dedicated to higher education when we allow athletics, the Greek life coordinator (I always have a picture in my mind of a young man in a toga?), or the PR office to trump academic priorities, to define our image, or to drive curricula? The tension between faculty and administrators is as old as universities – indeed as old as Socrates taking hemlock. What isn't as old are the pre-emptive actions of nervous spin-meisters on campus who have the ear of the president or of alumni in sweatsuits who oppose academic standards that might threaten their playgrounds.

Maybe things were better when senior faculty who had run out of research ideas were shunted off to become the registrar or the dean of students or the dean of admissions. At least, these offices had people in them who understood the values and practices of the academy. Professionalization of higher ed administration (and we give lots of PhD's in Higher Education Administration to people who have never been in front of a class in their lives) is a mixed blessing indeed. How do we regain control?

Question #3: When did every private Research I decide to be Harvard; every liberal arts college to be Williams; and every public university, Berkeley?

I won't pick on anyone, yet; but when Big State U. decides to be in the top ten I am always struck by the fact that they do not tell us which of the current top ten they intend to displace. Ambition itself is not all bad, but the inherent competitiveness of this exercise is, I believe, one of the contributors to mission creep – along with that most insidious of all factors: presidential ambition. And, the first constituency to suffer, in my experience, are the undergraduates. It is almost as if they become higher education's bleacher hogs who pay increasingly higher and higher prices for the same old, bad seats and hot dogs in order that the sky boxes can have air conditioning and champagne.

Let me give an example. The last three days, I was at the annual fall meeting of the SURA Board. Some of you know SURA; some are members. SURA is a consortium of some 60 or so southern research universities, stretching the definition of southern as it includes institutions from Delaware to Texas (and one in Massachusetts -- to the eternal consternation of Daniel Webster, I imagine). It manages DOE's Thomas Jefferson national accelerator lab in Newport News. Many of us in the southeast benefited from SURAnet that allowed us to connect with the internet early on. They manage the Abilene network which supports Internet 2. This is a serious operation. We were hosted at a major research university, indeed a state flagship university at which I think almost all of us would be grateful to work. I will call it XSU. XSU has an ambitious, dynamic, energetic, smart, creative, and young president. Did I mention that he was ambitious? He and his staff were gracious and warm hosts and did what we all do when we have such opportunities – he show-cased his university to the representatives of some thirty or so institutions that he had as captives on his campus. This is part of the job; we all do it. I expect that there are more than a few in this room who have been subjected to my own subdued PR blitz at W&M – the one that mentions George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, et al. See, I just did it again.

We were handed a very flashy ten-or-so page multicolor, glossy piece complete with a CD of sights and sounds of XSU and a "personal" welcome from the president. So far, so good. A little pricey, a bit over the top, but well within the bounds of normal taste for such self-promoting items. I would even have brought it and held it up, but I expect the rather garish color of the cover would have allowed some of the more savvy of you sitting near the front to guess who XSU is.

Now this handsome promotional piece defines the president's ambition -- did I say he was ambitious? – that his university become a "National Flagship" by 2010. He

highlights recent events and progress, describes their aspirational peers, sets a bold vision in research and economic development, targets selected graduate programs (especially ones where there will be a big payoff in prestige and external funds). The piece is not quite silent on undergraduate education (it comes third after R&D and graduate education and just before facilities and campus life -- this latter seeming to be mostly about cyber cafes, post-graduate opportunities in high-growth industries, and athletics). There is a commendable discussion of diversity, but when this agenda finally, in my mind, does turn to pre-baccalaureate students, it is in the context of those old performance measure bugaboos: selectivity, retention, graduation rate. There is no mention of the liberal arts and sciences, of art or theater, philosophy or rhetoric, languages or political science – it is as if 80% of the liberal arts core were fluff or uninteresting or, worse, even a tad embarrassing and old-fashioned for XSU's ambitious future.

I didn't read every word, I confess, but in several scans I failed to see such familiar words as: teaching, learning, undergraduate research, mentoring, first-year experience, study abroad. There was the following, quite puzzling item in the final section, the "Call to Action." Under "Efficiencies," right after describing XSU's success in privatizing many services, after commending the self-sufficiency of its athletic programs and the provision of new study spaces for its athletes, after describing its new power plant, the agenda has two odd items. It says (and I quote):

1. XSU is ranked among the top 30 four-year universities in enrollment, providing advantages in terms of economies of scale. Lack of resources limits course sections and laboratory renovations, but enrollment management and facilities planning permits the University to optimize existing space.
2. XSU balances the number of students per class versus the quality of instruction that can be offered to a class of a given size.

I think they are saying that they lack resources for high quality undergraduate education, but plan to manage that.

What price ambition? What would be wrong with being second (or third or fourth) tier if that is what the community or region needs. Are we entering a kind of zero-sum competition where we will move around the most talented generators of external funding from institution to institution using a star system that in the end adds little to the national sum of research, economic development, or intellectual capital formation. Is this the university equivalent of states bidding against one another for the newest Toyota assembly plant?

It is safe to say that any urban institution in a mid-sized city that is serving non-traditional and first-generation college-goers is not going to be top ten, or top thirty. So what? Whose problem is it if your school is not in the top ten? Embedded in this discourse are a multitude of racist, classist, elitist, and downright undemocratic assumptions that drive many well-meaning people to waste vast amounts of time and verbiage to little profit. We exist to serve our students. Our students come from a vast assortment of cultural milieus with a range of needs and personal goals. It is tragic when institutional

aspirations cloud our ability to serve them and undermine or devalue our faculty's sense of pride in the important work they do.

Question #4: Why is higher education increasingly being held to a consumerist model that says we are responsible for things we cannot control – like the inability of post-adolescents to act like responsible adults? Where did this come from, this idea that I am paying for this education and so you had better deliver it – pronto and painlessly?

To some extent, I suppose this is a consequence of the hierarchical nature of education which somehow gets corrupted into a pay-for-service relationship. It seems eerie to me that where once the conservatives lambasted the liberals for saying that criminals weren't responsible for their actions if the roots of their antisocial behaviors were in poverty or other social pathologies, now hold that students bear no responsibility when they don't learn. No Child Left Behind – or as one of my colleagues likes to say, "Or is this No Child's Right Behind" – would seem to feed or perhaps be the product of an idea that students are passive vessels (my word processor made that passive vassals, the first go around – an interesting slip), infinitely malleable and perfectible. Aside from the fact that getting our students to the state of perfection is a Christian heresy unlikely to please most social conservatives, do we really believe that if only the schools and their shiftless teachers would get to work, every student would read, write, decline Latin nouns, and solve second order non-liner differential equations?

I wonder why those of us in education are held to a different standard of expectations than others in the people business. If the student is our customer then is the parishioner the priest's customer; a PFC, the Army's; a corpse, the embalmers? Can a believer sue his minister if his prayers are not answered? Could a recruit take legal action against his drill sergeant because of lowered self-esteem that led him to excessive consumption of alcohol?

All kidding aside, the real tragedy of this corruption of the teacher/student relationship into a pseudo-mercantile one is that it violates a transformist view of education – the sense that we take immature and jejune young people and <u>challenge</u> them to become something better. We don't mold them like clay; we're not manufacturers. Nor are we hoteliers, social directors, or personal fitness trainers. We build and sustain environments for change and then guide, cajole, encourage, browbeat, drive young men and women to achieve their best. We certainly have deep obligations to our students, but we do not bear full responsibility for their performance. Alexander Astin has argued and I think convincingly demonstrated that the most important influence on student learning is peer culture. In other words, the student-consumers who fail to achieve their goals have only themselves to blame.

I would suggest that when the first successful suit is brought against a priest or rabbi by a congregant who fails admission to heaven, we will accept full responsibility for our students' failure to get into Law School.

Question #5: When did we begin to sell higher education as the key to personal financial success rather than the essential ingredient of a life well-lived?

This one goes back to my very first point about private vs. public goods. The charter of my college, written in 1693, proposed the creation of a college "[so] that the youth may be piously educated in good letters and manners…" It created "…a certain place of universal study, or perpetual college of Divinity, Philosophy, Languages, and other good Arts and Sciences…" Even in those not terribly enlightened times in the court of King William and Queen Mary, it was understood that the goal of a college education was to provide the tools for living the virtuous life, not, as it would appear today, the tools for building or at least buying Humvees.

If there is a reward, a set of private goods that devolve from higher education, and we would be fools to say there is not, then the private benefit comes from the preparation for an examined life. The more we sell the experience as a key to material wealth and well-being, the more we denigrate our core mission (and expose ourselves to criticism when our students, through little fault of our own, fail to achieve that status). I am reminded of the old saw that no one, on their death bed, ever says "I wished I had gone to work more." Many do say, however, that they wished that they had read more books, painted more sunsets, traveled to more unknown lands, had more fulfilling friendships, loved more, or understood better the world in which they lived. We need to remember that this is our mission. Material benefit is a dividend of a college degree, not the intent.

Question #6: How much time and money should we spend on assessment as contrasted with our core mission of teaching and learning?

If I buy a car, I want to drive it, not have it inspected. There is a saying in North Carolina, "If your hogs are skinny, don't weigh 'em, feed 'em." The increasingly knee-jerk reliance on assessment ignores a number of obvious pitfalls. The most obvious being: when do we spend so much time and money assessing that we stop doing enough of the things we are trying to assess. A second is the Maxwell's Demon problem. When do our efforts to measure this thing we call education begin to actually change the practice in non-productive or interfering ways. And, of course, there is the third issue. There is an obvious gaming strategy of setting your standards sufficiently low and recruiting students who are all alike and who already meet these standards as an assurance of success. I am reminded here of the apocryphal story (I hope) of the university Chancellor who realize that he could increase his institution's rank in the USNWR rankings if they were more selective. His solution: stop telling high school students below the top ten percent of their class that they had no chance of admission. A perfect gaming strategy – nothing changed except the measured outcome.

A colleague at the University of Arizona shared with me the following rules of assessment from their director of assessment research, Gwen Johnson. I wish I had had these years ago. Ask yourself six questions: 1) What's the major question I want answered? 2) Why is this worth asking/assessing? 3) Imagining I had already done the assessment, what would I predict the results (data) would be? And the three I really like:

4) If the results were as I've predicted, would anyone besides me be interested? 5) If the results were as I predicted, would I or anyone else be able to do anything about or with them? 6) If the results were as I predicted, would I or anyone else be likely to do anything about or with them? Boy, does this change my view of some of the assessment exercises I have been a party to!

Question #7: Why do we call it grade inflation and why does everyone assume it is bad? We have grade compression or grade crowding, but not inflation and students doing better in our classes as measured by an authentic grading scheme could be a good thing.

Do sales managers refer to those salespersons whose sales go up every year as contributing to sales or profit inflation? Is it not a plausible alternative to imagine that a combination of better students, better faculty, imposition of (expensive) learning technologies, authentic evaluation, objective-based teaching strategies, and other intentional educational reforms directed at student learning might also result in the average grade of our students going up over time? Does anyone in this room actually care what percentage of Harvard baccalaureate recipients receive honors? Retreating to the consumerist view: If I had paid $180,000 to send my kid to Harvard and the kid did even moderately well, that's the least I would expect for my investment.

The truth is that I have had as many parents complain that our grading is too tough (read: how is my kid going to get into law school if you turkeys don't give him A's) as complain that we have lowered our standards. It is everybody else's kid who doesn't deserve the A, not mine. I won't deny that there aren't faculty who have insufficiently high standards or that high-stakes student evaluation of teaching doesn't tempt faculty to curry favor with student by lenient grading. But my sense is that for every one who errs in this sense, there are five whose grades are going up because they are better, more engaged, more caring, more effective teachers and several whose grades do not increase simply because they are student-bashing SOB's. Increased grades can reflect a teacher's competence, not his or her lack of backbone.

Question #8: Why do so many faculty spend so many of their waking hours wishing they were somewhere else?

I once was interviewed for a job that I did not get at a very prestigious liberal arts college within a half hour's drive of a Midwestern city. This city has some of the nation's finest cultural resources and some of the worst social problems – but both create a multitude of teachable opportunities of a challenging and stimulating nature. When I talked to faculty about what a great resource this city was – what a learning lab it could be for community-based learning and research – all they wanted to talk about was their last trip to NYC or Paris. I came away with sense that everyone there had waited for a decade for the call from New Haven or Palo Alto and, not receiving it, had resigned themselves to living out their academic lives in a Sahara of the Bozarts.

If a faculty member is that unhappy, leave and do something else. Anyone smart enough to get a PhD is smart enough to find a well-paying job in New York or Seattle. The last I

looked, the tenure contract had no clause that indentures the faculty. The selfish and self-promoting behaviors that arise from a sense of resentment at one's pitiable plight of not being at the university that one clearly is, in one's own mind, supposed to be teaching at, is a cancer that undermines the institution which has granted the privilege of tenure and a daily insult to one's dedicated and professional colleagues. Get over it!

I should note, out of fairness to faculty, that the kind of over-weaning presidential ambitions that I described previously, do not free administrations from some culpability in this matter. The more our institutions talk about becoming something else, something better, something more prestigious, the more our faculty are perhaps justified in thinking they have made a professional error in staying where they are.

Question # 9: What the Hell are we going to do about USNWR and now the Atlantic rankings?

If I hear another president (or myself for that matter) say, "We all know that this ranking doesn't mean anything, but ," I am going to go to welding school and learn a trade where we can measure success in real time. The transference of sports thinking to academia – the top ten, national rankings – is an insult to the very purpose of higher education. We need humility, not hubris; collaboration, not competition. If just twenty college presidents at leading institutions said we are not going to participate, the whole thing would fall like a house of cards.

And why should they do so? First out of respect for the diversity and integrity of the American higher education system. Second, to save money on marketing, branding, and self-promotion. Third, so they can go to an NCAA convention with a clear conscience that they are not contributing in the academic realm to misdeeds comparable to those so prevalent in the athletic. Fourth, to demonstrate that they actually understand the difference between reputation (good) and prestige (bad)..

Question # 10: How many modifiers are too many in front of your school's self-description?

We sometimes laugh at William and Mary that we are, without a doubt, the best small public liberal arts university south of the York and north of the James Rivers? In one's search for status and uniqueness in the academic universe, what are the appropriate descriptors. I think we should voluntarily abandon words that are exclusionary like best or unique (or co-most unique) and replace them with words that speak to aspirations and achievement. Instead of the best small public liberal arts …., we should be a small, public, liberal arts university dedicated to teaching on a human scale – or some such. Let USNWR apply the discriminatory adjectives. I think I remember a quote from Elizabeth Kubler-Ross to the effect that to be well-educated is to be humble.

Question #11: Is it actually possible that sentient beings in the U.S. Congress (and I realize that it might be a stretch to assume that there are sentient beings in the U.S. Congress) – is it possible that they believe that the current budget crisis of the states is

not the cause of tuition increase and, as a corollary question, why would free market conservatives believe that price-fixing strategies for setting tuition will improve higher education?

Higher education is arguably the only sector of the education establishment that operates as a free market. If Harvard is charging too much for tuition, people can stop going there. Does Congress plan to cap the cost of caviar, Lincoln town-cars, or Broadway tickets? Ah, you say, but the taxpayer is not subsidizing these luxuries. But, if the U.S. Congress doesn't want to subsidize an expensive education at Harvard, just say so and cap the amount of federal financial aid a student may receive. I am not sure that is such a great idea, but at least that would be an honest response to their argument that tuition is too high and that the taxpayers shouldn't be paying for it.

I was recently told that to process a purchase order in the Smithsonian – a U.S. Government agency with full Congressional oversight, it costs $374. Now think: these are the people who are telling us how to become more efficient?

Question # 12: Is it possible to take a system seriously that says that diversity is a laudable goal in higher education, but that we cannot use our financial resources to achieve those ends?

The courts, wrapped in the same infallible Constitution that gave us the concept that a black man equals 3/5 of white one and that women cannot vote, the same institution that has given us such enlightened decision as Dred Scott and Plessy vs. Ferguson, now tells us that we can seek to achieve racial diversity – if the faculty decides that this is an end that will enhance education – but that we cannot dedicate programmatic funds to do this. Where is Lewis Carroll when we need him?

Then, in a statement that can only be described as somewhere between historically ignorant or sociologically naïve, the Court decides that in 25 years, we are going to resolve this problem that is 400 years in the making? It must be the scientist in me, but I would really like to see the evidence that makes this statement one that an informed and educated public servant can subscribe to with impartial confidence. In essence we are told that in 25 years, by not investing any resources directly in achieving racial and ethic balance on our campuses, this problem will go away. I think we have just found a policy track that could save us a quick $87 billion dollars in Iraq by the end of the year.

Question # 13: Can we stem the rush toward "channeling faculty time and energy toward pursuing marketable products" for corporations, government agencies, or, perhaps more worrisome, the current *cause de jour* -- be it the Cold War, terrorism, or homeland security?

I have watched faculty whipsawed by well-meaning V-P's for Research who one day decide that infectious agents like anthrax are where the money is and the next decide it is smart materials or terrorism prosecution or cognitive science. Proposals get written, visits are made to agencies or elected representatives and research agendas are turned

topsy-turvy just because the scent of money is in the air. And, all the time, the Director of Economic Development and his intellectual property minions are hovering like wolves around the dying embers of a campfire.

I have no greater wisdom to offer on this additional distraction from what we were hired to do than to refer you to an excellent article that begins to address this issue by David Montgomery of Dartmouth in the latest issue of *Academe* which focuses on research and national security. The academy is not improved when it becomes a tool of any ruling oligarchy, no matter how laudable its goals. It is independence, orneriness, and quirky freedom that makes colleges and universities the intellectual leaders of a nation – not the number of patents its faculty receive, the number of for-profit spin-offs it spawns, or the number of federal ear-marks it can corral.

Question # 14: How does a dean get time to think? Can we declare email-free, cell phone-free, PDA-free, laptop-free zones on campus?

I can only offer two observations with respect to this question. First, the best thing I did in my six years as a dean was to build a cabin in the Colorado Rockies, about 7 miles south of the Wyoming border, that has no phone, no electricity. My two weeks here were balm to my oft-battered soul. Get your equivalent and go there, regularly. Your institution needs it as much as you do. You may not come back any smarter, but you will restore your senses of perspective and humor – both essential to your job.

My second observation connects to the old joke about academic job descriptions. The president's job is to speak in public, the faculty's job is to think, and the dean's job is to keep the faculty from public speaking and the President from thinking I have a secret to let you in on – from my personal experience of the past five months. Provosts have more time to think than you do. In fact, your provost is probably out there somewhere thinking, right now. You have to be prepared for that eventuality. You need to be relaxed enough and have time enough to engage the intellectual side of your job. It isn't, it can't be all budgets and meetings and memos and nasty emails. Find the time to read and think about ideas, to contemplate the practice of deaning, to follow whatever engages your interests. In fact, your presence here, the fellowship of other deans, the network you will build of co-sufferers is part and parcel of this intellectual exercise of being a dean. This is the only way to stay one step ahead of your scheming provost.