

Do Well—Do Good

Since arriving here at Southwestern, I've been grazing around the edges. When a new horse is introduced into an existing herd, it will graze outside the herd to gain its bearings, recognize boundaries, and test limits. Eventually, both it and the herd begin to be more comfortable and accepting of each other, and it enters the herd to graze with them. During these months of grazing, I've been able to observe on multiple levels the dedication and professionalism of Southwestern employees and the workings and structure of the college. And I'm so very grateful for your kind assistance and acceptance during this growing time of adjustment.

I still have so much to learn and experience here at Southwestern. One day I met with Bonnie and Mary at University Center in Tioga to hear about the more than 300 students who have received bachelor's or master's degrees through their leadership. That same day I next visited Transitional Education at Newmark to learn how Pat, Anthony, Jane and others serve and give hope to students who previously have had little hope of gaining an education and needed skills. These two centers represent the extreme levels of our students' abilities and experiences at Southwestern while most of us work and influence students somewhere in between.

My grazing experience has provided me with unique opportunities to observe the college and to reflect on how I may contribute to and assist others in its success. I've learned over the years that six essential ingredients contribute to a successful education system, and each applies directly to Southwestern:

- Strong Curriculum
- Experienced Teachers
- Effective Instruction
- Willing Students
- Adequate Resources
- Education-valued Community

I've embedded these six essentials into my overall vision for Southwestern with the phrase "Do Well—Do Good." The inspiration for the phrase "Do Well—Do Good" came recently to me when I stumbled on an unpublished chapter manuscript authored by Sanford Shugart, current president of Valencia College in Florida. The title of his essay is "On Doing Good" taken from John Wesley's quotation: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

But doing good is not the same as doing well. We need to do both well and do good. Therefore, two basic fundamentals at Southwestern are to "Do Well"—do the best we can in all that we do while we "Do Good—bless others' lives by genuinely caring for and nurturing them. This phrase is anything but trite and simple; rather it magnifies our responsibilities while promising significant, meaningful consequences for our students, for us, and for the College.

This challenge to be both an academic gatekeeper and nurturer has motivated me for nearly thirty years. We can and must do both.

Four principal areas where we can “Do Well—Do Good” are “Curriculum Matters” when we focus on rigorous, relevant, relationship-based professional, academic standards, “One Student—On Teacher” when individual teachers assist individual students, a “Band of Teachers” when each employee on campus is a teacher, and “A Steady Upward Course” when we chart the direction of Southwestern towards the future while keeping grounded in its past. These fundamental principles will need insightful Southwestern employee discussions, modifications, and approvals before implementation; now they’re examples of possibilities.

Curriculum Matters

When so many outside forces such as weak funding, high-stakes testing, and public accountability demand our immediate and primary attention, we may push aside the significance of curriculum. And since initiatives focus on reading, writing, and mathematics, we may mistakenly assume that other courses have lost their roles and significance in higher education. Curriculum matters, and it matters more than it ever has before because curriculum is the core of education. In fact, the most durable way to strengthen education is to improve curriculum and instruction. We need to return our focus to subject-content curriculum based on rigor, relevance, and relationships. We start with the basics.

The first day of spring training, the great football coach Vince Lombardi would hold up a football and say, “Gentlemen, this is a football.” He would talk about its size and shape and how it was to be held, carried, or passed. He would take them to the empty field, and he would say, “Gentlemen, this is a football field.” He walked them around it, describing its dimensions, the shape, the rules, and how the game was played. All of his professional athletes had known this information for years, but Lombardi believed that his players would only be great if they understood and practiced the basic fundamentals.

Each of us in each of our disciplines needs to regularly revisit and reevaluate our professional disciplines. Teachers are the content experts and the subject gate keepers. We can’t rely on legislators and administrators to determine what needs to be taught and how it is to be taught. Each teacher must be a discipline and content specialist. We need to remain professionally active and aware, and to adapt traditional and current scholarship for our individual classes and students.

We need to determine the basic concepts for each of our disciplines and apply them to our courses. Southwestern has already made significant headway in determining specific, concrete outcomes for each course, and these outcomes are probably based on professional standards. For me personally while I was teaching English education methods courses, I first began regularly to review national and state standards such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA) *Standards for the English Language Arts* and the Idaho State Department of Education *Language Arts Standards* which are similar to *Oregon Common Core State Standards*. I continue to visit these standards to guide me as I determine specific course outcomes and daily teaching objectives. We need to know our subjects, the “what” we teach.

In addition to “what” we teach, we need to zero in on “why” we teach. In the past, our purpose has been to carry on an academic tradition and to advance our own disciplines or agendas. However, the “why” we teach is shifting significantly to preparing students for jobs that don’t yet exist, using technology that has not yet been invented to solve problems that we don’t even know are problems. We’re preparing students to contribute effectively and meaningfully to an ever-changing world as families and communities. Students, therefore, need strong academics, career skills, and character virtues.

We can best prepare students through a solid curriculum that shifts from the mere acquisition of knowledge to the application of knowledge for analyzing and solving real problems with predictable solutions. Today’s curriculum must help students not only identify “what” they are learning, but determine “why” they are learning, and explore “how” they will use their learning. Learning will move from what a student knows to what a student understands and applies. For instance, teachers give students a real-world question to answer or problem to solve. Students seek information to answer the question or solve the problem. Students then test the relevancy of the information as it relates to the question or problem. And finally students reflect on the potential use of the new information as a solution. This becomes a rigorous, relevant, relationship-based curriculum.

It may seem a formidable task to be curriculum experts, yet with resources so accessible, deliberate, meaningful, and modest efforts will result in significant individual professional development and contributions.

One Student—One Teacher

Studies continue to affirm what we already know—teachers can be the single most influential contribution to student success. Yet with more restrictions and outside pressures for measurable success, teachers naturally feel overwhelmed and even ineffective. We don’t see how we can do one more thing that is required of us. We are already giving all that we have. How can we do more? Yet teaching regains its prominence and influence when we focus on one student and on one teacher.

I’ve recently been revisiting my pioneer heritage, and I’ve seen an additional role of being a teacher—that of a rescuer. I have a rich pioneer ancestry. I am a descendent of the *Mayflower* and of the American Revolution. And I am a descendent of Scottish, English, Swedish, Danish, and German ancestors who immigrated to the West under unimaginable hardships for their religious beliefs. In 1856, there were eight handcart companies of 1,500 immigrants leaving Iowa City heading towards the Salt Lake Valley. Six of the companies arrived safely, but two companies, the Willie Company and the Martin Company, got a late start and got stranded in Wyoming in September by early severe winter storms. Because these immigrants were pulling handcarts, they had already run out of food, and they had no shelter on the open plains. They were facing certain death.

On October 4, Brigham Young received word of those stranded. The next morning during their Sunday meetings, Young stood with urgency and said, “Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plans with hand-carts... and they must be brought here... Go and bring in those people now

on the plains, and attend strictly to those things which we call temporal . . . otherwise your faith will be in vain.”

My grandmother’s grandfather Azra Hinckley, was in that meeting. He and his wife immediately left the meeting with others and outfitted wagons and supplies. The next morning they were ready, and Azra began the rescue mission. There are many, many stories associated with this rescue. One that means a lot to me is when the rescuers and the immigrants arrived at the Sweetwater River which was full of floating ice. The weakened immigrants could not face crossing the river. Several young, strong young men among the rescuers carried one-by-one the women, children and feeble across the freezing river. They did not think of their own safety—instead they thought only of helping the one.

Although this happened to pioneers generations ago, we each have students who are stranded academically. We know who they are. They feel they have little hope and little abilities to move on. They’re facing the seemingly impossible academic river and journey and have no idea how to cross and move on. We’re the ones who can assist their rescue—they still must do all the work, they still must meet standards, but we can be there at the crossroad for them. Yet we find them where they are and help them get to where they need to be.

I know we can’t save all of our students and some will fail and not continue on, but if we could continue to assist the one, one teacher at a time, we will find that we’re also helping the rest of our students as well. In fact, Achieving the Dream is in reality a rescue mission for many of our struggling students who are wavering in hope and feeling little or no academic success.

Think of those teachers who have reached out to our own children and have in some way rescued them. Think of those students who have deeply touched our lives, and I would bet that those students have touched our lives because we have reached out to them to rescue them in some way. One student—one teacher.

A Band of Teachers

A couple years ago, I read Stephen Ambrose’s book *Band of Brothers* describing the experience of Easy Company during World War II. The HBO miniseries brought to life individuals from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and experiences to work together as a cohesive unit to achieve extraordinary results. I’ve also been influenced by Shakespeare’s *Henry V, Part I*, especially Henry’s St. Crispin’s Day speech as he rallies his discouraged footmen on the day of battle. He helps them envision what they can do together:

This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne’er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered—
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that shed his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne’er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition;
And gentlemen in England now-a-bed

Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

A college campus consists of individuals working together within offices and departments. Yet because of those different responsibilities, we tend to be more separate than united. We often see ourselves as classified, faculty, MASCC, full-time or part-time. We see our differences. We forget what brings us together. We don't see the culmination of our individual work.

David A. Bednar, the president of Ricks College and BYU-Idaho, offers this metaphor that guides me:

In my office is a beautiful painting of a wheat field. The painting is a vast collection of individual brushstrokes—none of which in isolation is very interesting or impressive. In fact, if you stand close to the canvas, all you can see is a mass of seemingly unrelated and unattractive streaks of yellow and gold and brown paint. However, as you gradually move away from the canvas, all of the individual brushstrokes combine together and produce a magnificent landscape of a wheat field. Many ordinary, individual brushstrokes work together to create a captivating and beautiful painting.

A fundamental principle at Southwestern is that each and every employee is a teacher. I know not everyone is a faculty member, but each individual is a teacher who significantly influences individual students' lives. That means that Andy in first stop is a teacher, Anny in psychology is a teacher, Dana in the telephone office is a teacher, Daniel in biology is a teacher, Tracy in the bookstore is a teacher, Linda in accounting is a teacher, Michael in the library is a teacher, Kyriakos in math is a teacher, and Jennie in the post office is a teacher. And as teachers, we do each influence one student at a time.

We each provide individual brushstrokes that become a part of the Southwestern canvas. We must always be vigilant in guarding against seeing what we do as more or less important than what other Southwestern employees do. We must be united in assisting individual students be successful at Southwestern. We must be a band of teachers who when we and students look back will recognize our individual and collective contributions during this momentous time of their and our lives.

A Steady Upward Course

This fall, I will begin 32 years of teaching. I view myself first and foremost as a teacher. During these thirty-plus years, I've seen significant change from mimeographed copies leaving purple fingers and almost copy fluid alcohol huffing to today's electronic course delivery that reaches our students anywhere in the world and brings the world to our students. I've felt the influence of programs and studies such as *A Nation at Risk* in the 80s when I started teaching, the *America 2000 Education Strategy* during the 90s under Presidents George H. Bush and Clinton, and the *No Child Left Behind* under Presidents Bush and Obama. Now we're seeing education influenced and dictated by billionaires and their foundations. Although well-intentioned, these programs have had relatively little positive enduring impact on quality and meaningful teaching and learning.

However, what continues to help me through the challenges and changes of ever-evolving education is a focus on a steady upward course. I first heard the concept of “a steady upward course” coined by Henry B. Eyring on September 18, 2001, just one week after 9/11. Three short months earlier, the Board of Trustees announced that Ricks College would become Brigham Young University-Idaho. Eyring represented the Board on the first official address to students, faculty, and administration. With the horrors and uncertainty of 9/11 as our immediate framework, Eyring reassured us that change is a part of life, that change increases challenges, and that change also increases opportunities. Yet in midst of change, we must determine who are and where we are in relation to where we currently are, where we’ve been, and where we want to be.

I’ve tried to maintain a clear course in my professional career by following the counsel in a 1938 discourse by prominent educator J. Reuben entitled “The Charted Course.” As a boy Clark was enthralled by a great 1830 debate between Senators Daniel Webster and Robert Hayne. The debate began to drift from its original purpose. Webster then gave the following to return the debate to its initial direction:

Mr. President: When the mariner has been tossed for many days in thick weather, and on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun, to take his latitude, and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course. Let us imitate this prudence, and before we float farther on the waves of this debate, refer to the point from which we departed, that we may at least be able to conjecture where we now are. I ask for the reading of the resolution.

I recognize that Southwestern has been in treacherous, even life-threatening storms over the last number of years. Nearly all energy and resources have been focused on survival and endurance. At times we may feel beaten and exhausted. We may feel our challenges exceed our strengths and our abilities. But because of the collaborative strengths, talents, passions, and experiences of all employees, Southwestern is now at a hopeful, renewing turning point where we can become leaders in transforming our weakness into strengths.

Reflecting on my career, I now recognize that I have been privileged to be at significant educational crossroads and in a position to contribute meaningfully to a lasting, positive influence to institutions and thousands of students. For example, I was the English Department chair when Ricks College became BYU-Idaho. As a chair, I guided the creation of four-year English major to become one of the first eight implemented majors. The new English major merged academics with career preparation. As Dean of the College of Language and Letters, I helped guide the creation of the Foundations general education program which integrated subjects and content to examine and solve real life problems. Also as Dean, I helped articulate the BYU-Idaho Learning Model, creating a culture of student preparation for effective leaning/teaching and assessment. And now, at Southwestern, we’re at this crossroad together to guide the college, ourselves, and students into a new, changing future.

The storms are still about, but Southwestern has recently ascertained and articulated its mission, core themes, and objectives. Southwestern is back on course, and it has far to go before reaching

harbor, but it is on a well-charted course. There is now a rare, valuable, unique opportunity at Southwestern to continue moving forward, onward, and upward to accomplish significant academic goals well beyond our students' and our own dreams. We can continue to reach for our destination by being a band of teachers who assist one student at a time while adhering to high professional standards and by staying on course. We are on course—let's continue with each other and with our students to navigate and reach those goals and outcomes. We can do well and do good.