

1996 Distinguished Professor Address

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MY DEPARTMENT AS MODEL FOR UNF AT AGE 50

I was asked to talk to you briefly about my own scholarship and about the work I'm doing on the UNF 25-year history, and will do that by placing both topics in the context of my own department, which I believe to be a model for other departments to emulate as we move toward age fifty.

As Adam Herbert told us at an earlier convocation, these are difficult times for higher education in Florida, with taxpayers and legislators taking pot shots, the BOR cutting budgets and endangering programs and telling stereotyped stories of faculty beyond their productive years--tenured professors who lose the zest for creative teaching and scholarship but keep on collecting paychecks until they retire. The most recent variant of this tale is the post tenure review Process.

I decided to investigate my own for aged professors with the entire department and went looking above-mentioned disabilities.

First target, Jim Crooks, that 62-year old fellow with white hair and svelte physique who's been at UNF since 1972 as chairperson, acting dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and UNF Distinguished Professor. A full professor for 24 years, he seemed a likely laggard about to be eliminated by post-tenure review.

But upon investigation, I found that Jim Crooks does not fit the BOR's stereotyped model of an aging and nonproductive professor. Jim is busily researching another book, and in the current academic year will introduce two imaginative courses which mix academic assignments and student interaction in community agencies. Instead of a dead-in-the-water teacher, I found a vital teacher/scholar taking significant new directions late in his career, and a man who makes extraordinary service contributions to the Jacksonville community.

So, I turned to Tom Leonard, who started at UNF in the fall of 1974 and has been a professor for 16 years, an obvious villain. But I found Leonard's teaching has also improved with age and that he has become a national figure in the study of U.S./Central American and Caribbean Relations, with a lengthy list of publications he adds to each year.

There had to be a turkey somewhere in the department, I reasoned, perhaps John Maraldo, or David Courtwright, or Theophilus Prousis could be served to the legislature. Maraldo, 9 years a professor and on the faculty since 1980, is looking a bit long in the tooth these days (and he's speaking at Princeton University today and won't hear me talk about him). But alas, I learned that Maraldo published an important study of a Japanese philosopher just last year. What about Courtwright, who is also away, speaking at Yale

University about his study of violence in American history published by Harvard University Press. You may have read his cover story in the current issue of American Heritage. I read the manuscript before it went to press. Its an extraordinary achievement. In the months ahead, look for David on the national talk show circuit and in policy debates on violence in America. I assure you, he's not worried about post tenure review.

I was fast running out of targets but there was still Theo Prousis, promoted last year and at UNF since 1984. Hoping to find a professional slacker, I learned instead that Prousis is a younger version of Crooks, Leonard, Maraldo and Courtwright, a teacher/scholar with a national reputation in Russian history, some of it gained with his excellent book on Greek merchants in the Crimea.

You should know that my department's associate and assistant professors are also model teacher/scholars. Even our newest historian, Eric Robinson, with only two years teaching experience, has a honk on Ancient Greece under contract with a respected press.

My own scholarship differs from the work of my colleagues. Mine is tied to place, to locale, to specific sites and people, but the research base is comparative and international. I try to focus on a locality--Northeast Florida, for example--and examine its history in depth while comparing it to events and people outside the region. I read the published works of other historians and test their conclusions through intense local scrutiny. Often, I find that the actual events of local history cast doubts on the best "national" interpretations. I dig for evidence at archives in Britain and West Africa, just like Bernard Bailyn, of Harvard University; but unlike Bailyn, I generally pay my own way. I don't mean to compare my achievements to Bailyn's; mine are modest, his are legendary. He turns monumental amounts of data into sweeping generalizations of daring proportions and presents it in elegant prose, most notably in *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eye of the Revolution*. But in that book, the chapter on East Florida ("Failure in Xanadu") does not fit it the test of local scrutiny. From afar, without knowing the ecology and people of this locale, he misinterpreted the most significant factors in the colony's history. To Bailyn British East Florida was an expensive and exotic two-decade failure because its leaders failed to recruit adequate numbers of white settlers. Under the microscope of local history, I found that up to the late 1770s, when the American Revolution brought widespread devastation to the region, East Florida's plantations, which were nonexistent when Britain took over in 1763, were profitable and thriving. Why? Mainly, because Governor James Grant and the absentee planters he advised invested heavily in black--rather than white--laborers. Gov. Grant's message was simple: "no produce will answer the expense of white labor," since white men from England will become "generally drunk and idle" in Florida; therefore, "work in this new world and indeed in every warm climate must be carried on by Negroes." Grant and the other investors first brought to Florida skilled "country born" slaves from South Carolina who understood English and were competent farmers, woodsmen, carpenters, coopers, cattle keepers--even Overseers and managers. Later, new Africans were distributed among the acculturated second generation African Americans who initiated the plantations in Florida's virgin forests and swamps.

Bailyn and I should get together. He could show me some new archives, and with the aid of his Harvard credit card, the best of show him the remains of London's restaurants. In return, I could show him the remains of British rice fields on the St. Marys and St. Johns and Halifax Rivers that Africans carved from mosquito ridden swamps. We could walk together through Guana State Park and view the remains of indigo plantations created by the Africans owned by James Grant. And together we could bring meaning to the lives of those skilled, hard working and hardy Africans who brought wealth to the white planters but whose contributions have been largely overlooked in the interpretation of American History.

My current research focuses on Zephaniah Kingsley and his family. Kingsley was a highly controversial Anglo American planter and slave owner, African slave trader, Caribbean merchant, miscengenist and polygamist, and late in life a qualified abolitionist who moved three of his

African wives and children, along with fifty slaves, to estates he purchased in Haiti as sanctuaries from race prejudice. My research on Kingsley began over two decades ago, after a drive north on A-I-A to Kingsley Plantation on Fort George Island, currently a National Park Service property. Now, when I make that drive, after searching in archives and courthouses in the U.S. and Canada, in England, Scotland, Denmark, Africa and the Caribbean, gaze through the trees and through time and see a 13-year old Wolof girl from Senegal named Anta Majigeen Ndiaye who was captured in a terrifying slave raid in her homeland and transported in a slave ship to Havana, Cuba where she was purchased by Kingsley and became Anna, the planter's wife.

Emancipate alongside her children, she became a plantation and slave owner in her own right and a significant figure in the region's history.

In the classes I teach at UNF. I place the Kingsleys into the fascinating mix of races and cultures that Florida's history encompasses. Anyone trying to understand the variants of Mexican and Spanish race relations and slavery would do well to study the Kingsley case. I am able to teach this with some authenticity and vitality because of the intensive knowledge that scholarship in support of teaching has provided.

This is the way all of my colleagues in history and philosophy blend teaching and scholarship, and why I believe my department is a model for others to emulate. Rated every semester as outstanding teachers, my colleagues have publication records that match the brag sheets of professors at the biggest and proudest universities in Florida. It is a department that believes in cooperative and collegial governance, where five persons have rotated the burdens of chairing. To this day, there has never been a grievance filed against one of our chairpersons. Four of the five have been named UNF Distinguished Professors, and we have Courtwright, Prousis, Buchwalter and company coming at you in the future. And before, we had the inspiration of another Distinguished Professor, Robert Loftin, who left us in body two years ago.

I am fully aware of the many accomplishments of outstanding teacher/scholars in other departments and colleges at UNF, and don't mean to belittle them in any way, yet I'd like to think that 25-years from now, all our departments will resemble my own. What I hope

will vanish before our 50th birthday is the old shibboleth that goes something like this: "We are a teaching institution; we don't believe in publish or perish." It has usually been uttered by administrators who said: "UNF is a teaching institution," when they really meant "we teach more at UNF than elsewhere but the faculty need not worry about publish or perish," which was really another way of saying "we don't support professional development." Those words have bothered me for 24-years, especially now when some faculty are years away from graduate school and in need of ongoing scholarly activity to retail their vitality in the classroom. In the past, my UNF colleagues had to look outside for support or they turned their own pockets inside out. We have finally turned an important corner on the professional development debate; our current administrators share my belief that scholarship in support of teaching is essential if education is to remain vital. There remains, however, the nagging thought that some faculty may have heard the old shibboleth for so long that they began to believe in it. It crept into our promotion decisions through substitution of campus service and "grant-getting" for scholarship. I'm not suggesting an end to service--it is a professional obligation that responsible faculty honor. But service does not equal scholarship because it does not renew and enliven teaching. As for "grant-getting" the more the better, but for promotion we should not confuse getting grants with using the grants to produce scholarship and thereby enliven teaching.

In closing, I want to assure you that my hopes for UNF at age fifty not be themes of the 25-year history I'm working on. That will be a book of memories from 1972 to the present, an oral history with numerous photographs but without heavy analysis. I'm being released from one class a semester to do this work, just enough time to do a memory book. So, I'll be coming to many of your offices with tape recorder in hand during the coming months. Our conversations will be transcribed and returned to you to ensure accuracy and with a request for permission signatures. If you do not want the conversations to go into the book or the UNF archives the tapes and transcripts will be given to you.

Our 25th birthday means a year of celebration ahead As we celebrate let us also put aside some time to reflect so that in some future forum we can gather out beat critiques and prepare for UNF in the year 2022. I want to be at the 50th anniversary party to say, "UNF believes in the concept of teacher/scholar and because of that it is still the best teaching institution in the state of Florida." That will be some party.

Daniel L. Schafer