

UNF's  
*Occasional  
Papers*

26<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
FALL CONVOCATION  
REMARKS

by

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*1997 Distinguished Professor*

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**N** UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTH  
FLORIDA  
JACKSONVILLE

Dear Colleagues,

In recent years, the Fall Faculty Convocation has been devoted in part to honoring the recipients of our Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Awards, Outstanding Advisor Award, and Distinguished Professor Award. It has become customary for the Distinguished Professor to address the Convocation. The positive response to the speeches presented by our distinguished professors at recent Fall Faculty Convocations strongly motivated us to create a mechanism to publish their ideas. Thus, Occasional Papers is the result of collaboration among Drs. David Kline, Chris Rasche, and Gary Harmon.

Our intention is for all future Fall Faculty Convocation Addresses to be published in this manner. The Office of Academic Affairs will be responsible for the custodial and editorial work. On the advice of faculty, additional pieces of broad interest may be published as well. Hence, the name Occasional Papers. We hope you will enjoy and value this series of publications.



Dr. A. David Kline  
*Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs*



Dr. Chris Rasche  
*President, The UNF Faculty Association*



Dr. Gary Harmon  
*President, United Faculty of Florida, UNF Chapter*

President Herbert, guests, fellow North Floridians, colleagues, friends:

I'd like you to think what this occasion means to me. As to what it means to you, I can go by past experience. For those of you who know me and wish me well, it means a pleasant occasion of congratulation and satisfaction. Whether you know me or not, we all hope that I will say something interesting, that I won't embarrass myself too uncomfortably, and that I won't go on too long. For me, though, this represents the only opportunity I will probably ever have to address directly the community in which I have spent my professional life.

Last year, Dan Schafer's speech on this occasion was a model of what could be made of such an opportunity—and it's a hard act to follow. He celebrated the accomplishments and talents of his departmental colleagues and asked that they be supported even more vigorously in their activities. He still reminds me that the standards we have set for ourselves are high indeed. I could do for my Department what he has done for his—celebrate Bill Slaughter's electronic poetry journal *Mudlark* which has flown into international prominence, or Dick Bizot's Irish Studies program which has so enriched our curriculum and has brought so many fine presentations to our campus. I could praise Marnie Jones' Honors Program, which has succeeded in getting a whole building named after it. If that is not administrative heaven I do not know where glory lies.

But the truth is that I am worried about too many of my colleagues. It pains me that too many fine teachers have had to leave our department this year because they could no longer manage on their UNF salaries. It worries me that many of my colleagues feel that UNF is not concerned about them—their welfare, their problems, their careers, their contributions to the institution. I am talking about those of my colleagues who are adjunct faculty.

Adjunct faculty used to be a fairly minor part of academe. In the fifties and sixties they made up about 12-15% of the faculty nationwide (Robinson, 1994, page 14). Since the time UNF was founded that has changed. Part-timers in 1993 (the most recent available figures) comprised 40% of faculty in US higher education (*Part-time Employment in Academe, page 3*).

In my department a little over one third of the teaching this semester is being done by people in positions such as mine, tenure track faculty, people who might be eligible for this award. Half the teaching is being done by adjuncts and the balance by non-tenure track instructors.

Academe is not alone in this trend. The largest non-governmental employer in the USA is Manpower Inc. I have heard that the old Independent Life Building in Jacksonville is due to become the AccuStaff building. This is a global phenomenon. Part-time employment is increasing everywhere in the industrialized world (*Part-time Faculty Issues, page 4*).

However, academics has a greater proportion of part-time employees than any other sector, unless UPS has edged us out. Our unplanned growth in this direction has become a matter of national concern. A *New York Times* editorial of Sunday, June 29, entitled "The End of Tenure? When Colleges Turn to Migrant Labor" indicates in its title the turn of media interest.

When our attention is directed to the growing number of under-supported part-timers among us one natural reaction is to see a decrease in part-time employment as the solution to the problem. But even if we were able to move back to 20% adjunct staff, which is a reasonable target, we would still have a fifth of our students being taught by part-time faculty. More fundamentally, the part-time faculty themselves are not the problem. They teach out of a love of teaching; if teaching; if they do not teach well, they are not reappointed. The real problem is that we are not supporting them as they deserve in their efforts for us and our students.

We have had some excellent adjuncts in my department. One went on to become the dean of fine arts at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville; another is chair of the English department at Middle Tennessee State; another continues to be among the best science fiction writers in the country. Judy Jacobson left us for a position as Vice President of Personnel for the late Barnett Bank. I understand that. What I don't understand is how we could let Laura Cook Smith leave us this year because she could make more money in almost any other job in Jacksonville and had to choose to support her family.

On my current teaching load I would make a salary of \$9,000 a year as an adjunct at UNF. Of course, so would anyone, now or for many years past—we have no way of recognizing seniority, credentials, an excellent record, or the rise in the cost of living.

Adjuncts get no benefits. One adjunct who has been with us twelve years said that she told her children, "If I get sick, I'll get well. If I don't, plant me in the back yard. I can't afford medical insurance and I can't afford doctors." The adjuncts who do stay with us under the current conditions earn our admiration and our gratitude.

Adjuncts will be a significant part of our faculty for the foreseeable future. Among them are some who are just passing through. But more are making a long-term commitment to UNF out of a love of teaching—or would make that commitment if we accepted their efforts and treated them as the professionals they are.

Adjuncts need to make a salary commensurate with their duties—that is, a reasonable salary pro-rated for their instructional load. But salary is just part of the problem. An adjunct coming to UNF for the first time is given no orientation to the university and may or may not be assisted by the department as they prepare to teach; we need to accept them into our community and to support them in their efforts for our students. We need to recognize that part-time and non-tenure track faculty are a continuing part of our instructional effort. We need to provide in such a way that every faculty member at UNF can have a satisfying and honorable career at our institution.

We do better by our adjuncts than do the other institutions of higher education in Jacksonville. But we are not trying to be just the best in town. Many other institutions in the country have fallen into the same pattern of neglecting adjuncts. But there are many others who have not, and we are trying to be among the leaders, among the best in the country in what we do. A program here which supported adjuncts and gave them an honorable professional role in our midst would attract national attention and the best talent available while still maintaining the flexibility and financial benefits which led us to employ so many part-timers in the first place.

I was fortunate to be hired here in 1973. I cannot imagine where else I would have had the freedom to teach and write as I have at UNF. I am deeply grateful to our community which abides even as the people who comprise it pass through and on. I join Dan Schafer in believing that we owe UNF the best—our best efforts, our highest standards of excellence. I urge us to include all our colleagues in that sense of pride, to foster excellence everywhere among us.

## Works Consulted

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**Dr. Allen Tilley** becomes the 20th faculty member, 13th from the College of Arts and Sciences, to receive the University of North Florida Distinguished Professor award.

Allen Tilley joined the UNF English faculty in 1973 following a year teaching at Arkansas State University. He received his B.A. degree from Vanderbilt University in

1963 and his Ph.D. in English from the University of Iowa in 1972; between the degrees he served as a naval officer.

He has published two books on narrative theory, *Plot Snakes and the Dynamics of Narrative Experience* (1992) and *Plots of Time: An Inquiry into History, Myth, and Meaning* (1995). Ideas for the books were developed in over thirty scholarly papers and in his courses in early literature, narrative theory, and mythology. He is presently working on a third book on narrative theory using medieval texts such as *Beowulf* and *The Canterbury Tales*.

Tilley served as Chair of the Department of Language and Literature from 1979 to 1984. He led development of UNF's Foreign Language/ Foreign Culture Program, the general education Core Course, the B.A. in Communications, the M.A. in English, and the current curriculum in the English major. He team-taught UNF's first Honors Seminar and won the Outstanding Teaching Award in 1986.