



Occasional Papers

TWENTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL FALL CONVOCATION REMARKS

by

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1998 Distinguished Professor

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N UNIVERSITY OF
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“Big”

President Fretwell, President Rasche, President Shapiro, Provost Kline, faculty and members of the UNF community: I am deeply grateful to my colleagues for the honor they have conferred on me. I am deeply grateful for the love and support of my wife, Shelby, without which I wouldn't be a distinguished anything. And I am deeply grateful for the monetary award, though I take note of the fact that, as immediate past chair of the presidential search committee, I may be one of the few recipients who had to actually earn the money by working overtime in Summer A.

I am going to mark the occasion by taking a moral holiday. Lest you think I'm about to say something recklessly candid—although I may do that—I propose chiefly to take a moral holiday from my profession. History deals with the past. What I am about to say deals with the future.

My premise is that within 15 years UNF will be nearly double its present size, somewhere around 20,000 headcount students, plus or minus a thousand. With the chancellor's new classification scheme, which caps undergraduate enrollment at Florida's three “national research universities,” we could hit 20,000 sooner rather than later. In fact, our campus may be overflowing with would-be Gators and 'Noles. (A sobering thought.)

Now, with 20,000 students we're talking about a mature institution, not a “young, growing” campus. My question is this: What should UNF have as a mature university that it does not presently have? I'm not referring to the obvious—more offices, more classrooms,

more parking spaces, though heaven knows we need these things. Rather, I'm referring to the more subtle amenities that are currently lacking, but which we might secure as we expand further.

Not long ago a distinguished critic of film and literature, Michael Wood, came to campus. After he had lectured to a full house, visited two of our classes, and presided over a faculty seminar, he decided he wanted to go to the opening of the "Polaroid Project" show across town. I drove. On the way over I asked him if he'd like to listen to an audio cassette I happened to have in the car. It was Garry Wills reading from his book, *John Wayne's America*. Wood said sure, so I popped in the tape. Wills' confident, resonant voice filled the car. Somewhere between Alltel Stadium and the Times Union-Center for Performing Arts, Michael Wood could stand it no more. He began talking about—or perhaps talking back to—Garry Wills, explaining why his conception of American myth was hopelessly monistic and out-of-date. There I was, driving down Bay Street, listening to one great critic provide a voice-over narrative on the work of another. The live stereo criticism gave rise to an epiphany: life in this town had its possibilities.

We need more of those possibilities. We need more events like David Kline's colloquies, or Dick Bizot's Irish Studies offerings, or the presidential lecture series inaugurated by Adam Herbert. The life-of-the-mind-after-dark at UNF is sporadic, uncoordinated, and generally under-advertised. It also suffers, of course, from the fact that so many students are commuters. For them a return trip in the evening is on the same level as a visit to the periodontist. But as the number of residential students grows, and as the honors program expands, we will develop more of a critical mass for campus events—dramatic, musical, artistic, and athletic as well as academic.

Our chief institutional aspiration is to provide quality undergraduate education. But quality collegiate education is not something that happens only in the classroom. What goes on outside the classroom is just as important. Real campuses have real student newspapers, real radio stations, real film series, study-abroad programs, Phi Beta Kappa chapters, bicycles, cheering crowds at big games, and interesting

places to eat. We have signs forbidding skateboards, a plan for a three-hole golf course, and Chick-fil-á. Surely we can do better as additional resources are made available to us.

Have you ever noticed that there are no architecturally distinguished buildings on this campus? Most of our buildings are—if you will pardon a triple oxymoron—polygonal utilitarian clinkers, the scale of their facades ruined by the useful but ugly concrete walkways. When visiting candidates tell me how lovely the university is, I mentally register one strike against them. (I told you this was a moral holiday.) The campus, in the Latin sense of the word, *is* lovely; the buildings and their interiors are not. Surely a campus of 20,000 committed to a modernist aesthetic should have *one* great modern structure.

We need institutions to foster faculty interaction. This is my tenth year on campus and I confess I still don't know the names of about a quarter of the regulars. I have much less interaction with colleagues in education, business, and engineering than I would like. There has to be a better way to get to know people than craning your neck at a Faculty Association meeting. The faculty development center, which will include a faculty commons, is a good start. Perhaps one day it will evolve into a full-blown faculty club, a social and intellectual gathering place for all colleagues, full-and part-time.

So who has time to sit around the faculty commons drinking coffee? We've all spent many a day schlepping off to our classes, attending meetings, holding office hours, and feeling lucky to sneak 15 minutes for lunch at our desks. The workload problem—and here I fear I am about to tread on some toes—is compounded by the amount of teaching done in the summer. Yes, nine-month salaries are low and, yes, we all need summer income. But as we add FTEs, build the endowment, and realize economies of scale, we can set aside more seed grants and summer research funds. We need to encourage more faculty, particularly people in early and mid-career, to take a break from teaching.

We've made a promising start in that direction. Academic Affairs provided a record number of summer grants in 1998. Nevertheless,

as we recruit more junior colleagues—first-rate people trained at fine institutions, come to us courtesy of one of the world's tightest job markets—we must make it possible for them to have the time—and, in the sciences, the facilities—to pursue their research. Not only is research valuable in itself, it makes us better and more interesting teachers. Or at least it made me one.

I know this is beginning to sound like a wish list. I'm sure you'll agree UNF could use more special events, cultural and intellectual amenities for students, snazzy buildings, and opportunities for faculty interaction and development. I'm really trying to make a larger point. Justice Holmes once remarked that we live by symbols. All these things are symbols to me, and I hope to you, of quality in higher education, of an active life of the mind and spirit.

If we do not achieve these things in the coming years, if we do not build on the progress we've already made, if we grow in such a way that we simply double the number of students, offices, and parking spaces, then we will have failed. There is an important sense in which UNF has not yet become a real university, much less a "national class" one or a "public ivy." It will, however, become one *if* we use our unique growth opportunity to effect qualitative as well as quantitative change.

You have by your collective vote made me a distinguished professor and I am honored. Can we—faculty, administration, staff, and students—by our collective efforts make this a distinguished institution? Or will it simply become a big one?



David T. Courtwright

1998 Distinguished Professor

Dr. David Courtwright becomes the 21st faculty member, 14th from the College of Arts and Sciences and 6th from the Department of History, Philosophy and Religious Studies, to receive the University of North Florida Distinguished Professor Award.

Courtwright received his B.A. in English, *summa cum laude*, from the University of

Kansas, his doctorate in History from Rice University and has done postdoctoral study at Yale University as a Mellon Visiting Faculty Fellow. After stints as an assistant and associate professor of history at the University of Hartford, he came to UNF in 1988 as a professor of history. He served as Department Chair from 1988-1995.

He is writing a global drug history for Harvard University Press tentatively entitled *Drug World: Pleasure, Commerce, and the Transformation of Consciousness*. This project is made possible by a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. He is also revising and expanding his 1982 book, *Dark Paradise: Opiate Addiction in America before 1940*. That book helped establish Courtwright as a national expert in the field of drug history, a reputation which was solidified with a 1989 book, *Addicts Who Survived: An Oral History of Narcotic Use in America, 1923-1965*.

In 1996 Courtwright wrote *Violent Land: Single Men and Social Disorder from the Frontier to the Inner City*. This book, an exploration of youthful male violence throughout American history, has made Courtwright one of the nation's foremost experts in the area of violence, as well. He has also written 32 articles or book chapters and 60 reviews or review essays, mostly on social, medical, and legal history, drug policy, and film. He is actively involved in the community and serves on a number of University committees. Most recently, he was the Chair of the Campus Advisory Committee for the UNF Presidential Search.

Besides writing, Courtwright has been able to devote most of his time in recent years to teaching. He was named a College Finalist, 1993 UNF Outstanding Teaching Award, and University Finalist, 1998 Outstanding Teaching Award.

Courtwright and his wife, Shelby, are the parents of two boys, Andrew and Paul.