

A Hint of Things to Come

When I retire from academia in a few years, I want to "go out" without any fanfare. No cake, no party, no presents, and (I am hoping) no attention will be focused towards me on "that day." I just want to be capable of walking out the door of Clark Hall the same way I have done for decades: quietly, briskly and without turning around. By that time, my office would be cleaned of anything I wished to keep (very little). Moreover, I foresee of nothing that would make me want to ask for anything....other than freedom.

Yes, I want to be free from mind-numbing meetings. You know the type. Meetings that could (in reality) be completed in twenty minutes, but that take two hours, or more. Also, I want to be free from always feeling like I am not doing my job. There is NEVER sufficient grant dollars for everyone, never enough publications, and never enough recognition for faculty members to suit administrators. Finally, I want to be free from indecision. It seems as though no one at the university level is quite capable of making decisions without convening a group (usually of their immediate friends) to provide consensus.

This leads to favoritism, leadership by a few, and low morale in academic units. The low morale is compounded by the stress of possessing huge amounts of grant funding, and lack of rewards for doing what we are supposed to do best: teach our students and make them competitive.

Over time, I will miss the students--both good students and average students. Even with being a few years away from retiring, I know that I have impacted 20-30 lives in such a manner as to make these (past) students into viable, contributing members of my discipline. Perhaps, I have made more of an impression on students I have taught for decades, but even if only one were made better by my teaching efforts my career is a success. With our world of academia changing due to political agendas, limitations of state and federal agencies, lack of competitive support, a changing population base, and world strife--to me, students will not change. Over the years, students have taught me things that have made an impact on my life, as well. The interaction will be missed. I only hope that the same might be said of my replacement, who will likely retire (someday) with a similar reality.

Submitted by:

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