Prelude to a Trustees Meeting

We, who are assembled here, are engaged in one of the oldest rituals of mankind. We are the council of the tribal fathers, assembled to take a look at the way the young are coming along in this generation, and the conditions of the world in which the young are likely to be living out their time; we are attempting to judge the emerging need of man and to shape a college accordingly.

For this ceremony, we need a broad and penetrating view of the generations up to date, and what it means to be a member of the human species; also an acute perception of what is now present.

1 Reprinted by permission from Improving College and University Teaching. Winter 1966. (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press.)
in the world,
projecting into the future
the realities
in which the young
are likely to be maturing,
and taking their responsibilities
for shaping the affairs
and fate of men.
We are conscious
there will come a time
when these young
will be called upon
to sit in judgment
of the human species,
assembling wisdom
and projecting
into thought and act
what man progressively becomes.

A college may, indeed,
be thought of
as an instrument
provided by a people
to afford its tribal fathers
a chance
to reproduce their kind.
It is not
that we regard ourselves
so highly,
but rather
that a people
needs some of its number
to exercise their predilection
in this regard,
and take the time
to bring themselves to focus
on the state of man
and recommended means
for extending life
within the human being.
A people knows its need
in this respect,
and, in counting on a college,
is counting
on a provision it has made
to see
that its young,
in their time,
may have a worthy tribal council
and a chance
to form a ground
for a still better future.

The occupation of a college
is, therefore,
that of producing
better human creatures,
all other acts
and judgments
being instrumental.
The product of a college
is its people,
and their value
rests on their emanation
as evolving persons,
able, then,
to inseminate their generation
with what it takes
to grow
still better human beings.

The occupation of a council
such as this
is, then,
to do the thinking
that makes
such provision worthy.
This brings to us
a need to plunge
into the heart
of what we know
and are,
to name for others,
yet to come,
the means
by which to cultivate
a better human.
We need to name
the present state of man
and what it takes
to make
a better future.

—Ross L. Mooney,
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