

Thoughts about the state of our state university - Sept. 8, 1980

So here we are on the brink of another decade of academic years. If my calculations are correct, this will be NDSU's 90th, coming into the homestretch of our first century. Shall we all run, grab our noses and jump in with both feet? Or shall we test the water with a toe and enter it tentatively, fearful of what lies ahead? As always, good arguments can be made for both courses of action.

I think we have an exciting year in prospect. Our enrollment is at an all-time record high. The country is not in a war.

Worldwide energy consumption has dropped to the point where it's making the big energy companies nervous. *The economy of the state of North Dakota appears to be in relatively good shape.* There are some indications that the recession we've been experiencing is beginning to abate, though it's often hard to tell during an election campaign.

Here on the campus, some very good things have been happening of late. Things I think bode well for the immediate future at least. I don't have time to go into them in detail. I would bore you all stiff if I did. But let me take a moment to enumerate just a few of them in order to bring you up to date:

In what faculty folks like to refer to as central administration, we've had a transfusion of new blood, to augment some of the tired blood that has been circulating around Old Main of late. ?

Ray Hoops, our new academic vice president, arrived with his family in mid-August. He "lit," as the saying goes, running, and has already dazzled some of us with his decision-making ability. Ray, could you stand for a moment, so the faculty

can see what they're up against? You'll have a chance to meet the other half (I won't say the better half, because Ray's wife, Linda, is employed by our competition across the river) later this afternoon at our backyard soiree. They are very welcome additions to our academic community.

We have many more new folks among us this fall. I'm not going to run the risk of attempting to name them all. But to give them a little welcome, could I ask all the newcomers to our staff and faculty who are here this afternoon to stand for a round of applause? We'll have a chance to get more personally acquainted about an hour from now.

Of course we always lose some people during the course of a year. A certain amount of that is healthy. We wouldn't want NDSU to turn into the human equivalent of Great Salt Lake. Yet we often hate to see them go. Dean John Gruber of the College of Science and Mathematics is moving onward and upward to a vice presidency at Portland State University in Oregon. Jane Lillestol, who was an associate dean of the College of Home Economics, accepted a deanship at Syracuse University. Don Schwartz, who headed our department of communication during a period of significant growth, moved on to a departmental chairmanship at Cornell, and Loren Hill, who was once the acting dean of science and math, has taken a post in industry. I think it's a very healthy sign that our good people are in demand by such prestigious organizations, even though we hate to see them get away.

We also lost some people through retirement. Fred Taylor, my old boss in the Department of Agricultural Economics, retired after many effective years in that post. I understand Warren Whitman has retired again, though I still see him bobbing around the campus. I understand he's working for the Tri-College Environmental Center now.

On the physical side, we dedicated that fine, new addition to the library the day before Commencement last spring. If you haven't been over to admire it yet, I would certainly urge you to do so. It is a handsome and highly functional addition to our resources for teaching and learning.

And just last week, after many years of battling for it, we symbolically broke ground for the new Music Education Center by turning a few spadefuls of earth on the Minard parking lot. We still have to raise ^{a few hundred thousand dollars} ~~more than a million dollars~~ to complete that building in the way we believe it should be completed.

But at least we have a very large toe in the door by now.

Incidentally, for those faculty members housed in Minard, who have been concerned about access to their building, the architect has arranged for both vehicular and pedestrian access between the power plant and the Music Center, and, during inclement weather, it is going to be possible to tiptoe through the Music Center lobby, enroute to Minard, if you look both ways and don't let Ed Fissinger catch you.

One more little example of democracy in action that I want to mention in connection with the physical plant--remember the controversy that erupted when it was ^{recommended} ~~announced~~ that College

Street, in front of Morrill and Hultz Halls, was going to be permanently closed to vehicular traffic? ~~Your campus committee~~
~~took the~~ ^{we took that} controversy under advisement and ~~has~~ ² come up with a solution. In place of that vast expanse of concrete that used to be there, ~~they~~ ^{we} have recommended a boulevard, similar to the one which runs down the middle of ^{CAMPUS} University Avenue. ?
This one would have one-way, single-lane vehicular traffic on either side, with an emphasis on student and faculty pedestrian traffic and on the attractiveness of the campus landscape. It seems to me to be a good and acceptable compromise.

permission to offer a Master of Business Administration degree under the college of Humanities and Social Sciences

In terms of academic programs, we received approval for a set of new double majors, combining communication with home economics, agriculture or business. We have received a small grant to help pursue the enhancement of our classroom teaching, and we expect that to develop into a much more ambitious program in the future. Dr. Sullivan tells me we are the only school in North Dakota now offering a cooperative education program, which allows students to work and get paid for working in a field related to their vocational plans. I understand there are now 38 departments involved in that program and more than 400 students actively participating. As we move into a period of declining enrollments and greater competition for entering freshmen, I'm convinced this sort of thing represents a wave of the future for NDSU. Much of our success in attracting prospective students is going to hinge on our ability to assure them help in getting a good job, once they graduate.

Also in that connection, we have received a grant to continue the Student Opportunity Program, which will take 120 eligible students each year and give them one-on-one personal tutoring to help them overcome serious academic problems. That program is being administered under Phil Rognlie in Ceres Hall. It should help significantly in retaining students who might otherwise drop out or be dropped from our rolls. Retention of those who enroll is going to be another key factor in our success during the decade ahead.

In terms of research opportunities and facilities, our work in using sunflower oil as a possible fossil fuel substitute in agriculture has attracted widespread regional and national attention. We have some fine, new greenhouses going up at the western edge of the campus. And NDSU has entered into an agreement with the Control Data Corporation to participate in something called the Worldtech System. Under the agreement, we are to identify innovative technologies within the University, which might be applicable to worldwide problems. Control Data would incorporate them into a technology data bank which would make them widely available. That program is being administered under Dean Jim Sugihara and our office of research administration.

Well, I could go on and on about changes that have taken place and are taking place on our campus--the reorganization of the Institute for Teacher Education in order to qualify for full professional accreditation; a reorganization in the Office of Student Affairs to bring all of our student services from

from admissions to financial aid to housing, counseling and job placement under one umbrella--and many others are taking place within the colleges to make NDSU a more efficient, effective and attractive institution.

This coming weekend, for example, the faculty of our branch campus at Bottineau will be our guests at a faculty retreat. We have entered into a new relationship with the Bottineau Branch, one which I think will be mutually beneficial. Bob Johnson, who has been the resident dean there, has been moved to our campus to function in a liaison role, and we have hired a new man, Mike Smith as the resident dean in Bottineau. I hope many of you will have a chance to visit with the Bottineau folks when they are here next weekend and help make them feel a part of the NDSU family.

Which brings me to a topic which I know is dear to all of our hearts--staff and faculty salaries. A week from today, there will be a Legislative Budget Committee meeting on our campus. At that time we expect to apprise them of our most pressing needs during the next biennium.

You have probably heard that Commissioner Alm has gone on public record recommending an 18 per cent catch-up raise, beginning January 1. As all of us who have worked with legislators are well aware, there are many pitfalls that will have to be successfully negotiated before that could become a reality. Still, I think we should take heart in the knowledge that the State Board of Higher Education appears to be on our

side in this matter. The Board and many legislators are well aware of the discrepancy between the rate of inflation and the raises faculty have gotten over the past several years. I believe there is a willingness in Bismarck to deal with the problem. It is a question, of course, of the legislature's ability to raise the cash.

In that connection I should mention that Professor Fred Eisele from our campus has given invaluable assistance to the statewide salary committee in arriving at those recommendations. There are some other things that have taken place since our last visit that I think are deserving of brief mention.

One of our major efforts during the past year has been directed toward the development of a long-range plan for NDSU, which would help chart us a path to the 21st century. I am aware that it has been at times a frustrating task for those involved, because it is far from an easy job. Dean Jacobsen tells me more than 100 faculty persons have been involved in it so far, and one of the spinoff effects it has had has been to give such people a sense of participation in charting the University's destiny.

One of the most difficult aspects of developing a long-range plan is the problem of facing up to harsh realities. It is much more tempting to hide our heads in the sand. But we now have in our hands a demographic study commissioned by the Postsecondary Education Commission, which predicts a 35 per cent drop in college and university enrollment throughout North Dakota by 1985. That's a pretty shocking prediction,

but it is based on some very hard data. We believe the nature of our curricular offerings and the reputation this institution has will be helpful in weathering that storm. Yet we must face up to a realization that it is coming, regardless of what we do. As an institution our philosophy is to deal with it head-on. We intend to do everything we can conceive of to insure that we approach it from a position of strength, survive with a minimum of bloodshed among the faculty and staff, and without undue damage to the quality of our academic programs. To achieve that we'll need to convince our sources of support this is a time to catch up to the levels of excellence we have been pursuing so determinedly since World War II, but were never able to achieve because of burgeoning enrollments. We are going to need to market our offerings more effectively to a wider segment of the population. We're going to have to improve our level of retention, and we're going to have to help our students become integrated into the job market. If I don't seem to be striking a proper note of pessimism, it's because I believe very much in the viability of this University and in the people right here in this room. We have weathered storms before.

Of course this poses some immense challenges to us in the University administration, and to the faculty as well. I'm convinced we are equal to the task.

Roughly a month from today, just before Homecoming, we're going to have another group with us on campus. It's called the NDSU Development Foundation Board. It is a group that has

been highly instrumental in raising more than ten million dollars for such things as scholarships, the Music Building, Askanase Hall, the Field House, Family Life Center and other projects. Back in August, we met with members of that board to chart some future directions. It is not yet ready for public announcement because the details aren't worked out yet, but what the board is talking about is a very substantial endowment for NDSU, to be accumulated over the next ten years, and quite a bit of which would be earmarked for staff and faculty development. I think it is an exciting idea and we're going to be pursuing it with vigor.

So I hope you would agree with me, that NDSU has a very good year in prospect. Let's not tiptoe into the water. Let's throw caution to the winds and dive in and enjoy it.

To end these rather somber proceedings on a somewhat lighter note, another of the good things that has been happening on campus has been a renewed emphasis on the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. One such effort gained NDSU some national publicity back in August. A story about our newly required freshman themes found its way onto the national AP wire, and ultimately to the Mike Douglas Television Show. One of the students had written, "When you take a girl to the lake, it is an all-day affair."

The affair we have taking place in our backyard in a few minutes will only last for a couple of hours. But we're looking forward to having you join us. Thank you for your time and attention this afternoon. It's a pleasure to be back in your midst.