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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT'S LEGACY – A PARABLE

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Once upon a time, there was a college president so obsessed with creating a legacy for herself that she decided to spend great quantities of money to accomplish this goal — taxpayer money, since the president was the leader of a college that was part of a state university system. She asked her VP of Finance what needed to be done to improve her college and build her legacy. He was very happy to help, and so he told her about the awful conditions of the buildings and the desperate need to completely overhaul the classrooms. He told her about asbestos and mold in several of the buildings and that the air quality in many of the buildings was abysmal. He told her that the heating and air conditioning did not work properly in many of the buildings. He told her about the serious plumbing problems and the many sinks, fountains, and toilets that did not work. The VP also felt that the college could use more full-time faculty in order to improve the quality of education. The college president's response was to force that VP to retire; after all, he did not comprehend what legacy is all about. He did not understand that maintenance is something that should be deferred to the next president since maintenance would not enhance one's legacy. In charging her Provost with hiring the next VP of Finance, she made management philosophy very clear: "Reward loyalty, not competence." She underscored the point that the job of her cabinet was to add programs, not subtract.

In time, the college president asked her Provost and her new VP of Finance what could be done to improve the college and build her legacy. They said the easiest and fastest changes to make were the creation of new academic departments and new schools. She contacted the media and said it was outrageous that colleges did not provide a voice for numerous groups that deserved to be heard and she was going to fix the problem. She asserted that there was no reason for her college to only have Latino Studies and African-American Studies Departments when there were many other ethnic, advocacy, and religious and social justice groups that had no voice.

It took less than a year and suddenly her college had 16 new departments: Chinese Studies, Lesbian Studies, Irish Studies, Transgender Studies, Gay Studies, Bisexual Studies, Italian Studies, Filipino Studies, Judaic Studies, Russian Studies, Polish Studies, Women's Studies, Children Studies, Elderly Studies, Disability Studies, and Ukrainian Studies. She also created five new schools headed by five new deans. She proudly proclaimed to the media that she was providing a voice to underrepresented groups. She tore down Mozilo Hall because the clock tower at the top was a phallic symbol, in her eyes, and not appropriate for a college that supported women's rights. The sexist college logo featuring said phallic tower was redone as well – an outside firm was used and the cost was a reasonable \$3 million. The

logo was changed to – of all things – the name of the college. Rumors were that the firm used a 10-year old child to create the new logo.

The cost of running the college skyrocketed, but her loyal executive administrators came up with a three-pronged solution: larger classes, fewer full-time faculty, and deferred maintenance. A year later, she asked the Provost and the VP of Finance to come up with more new ideas to further boost her legacy. They advised her to create new departments for the business school which at the time had only a paltry three departments – accounting, business management, and economics. A good business school, they said, needs departments in marketing, finance, real estate, quantitative methods, information technology, supply chain management, and operations management. Additionally, there were still groups that had no voice so new departments were created in Islamic Studies, Buddhist Studies, Protestant Studies, Catholic Studies, Agnostic Studies, Atheist Studies, SBNR (Spiritual but not Religious) Studies, Wiccan Studies, New Age Religion Studies, Libertine Studies, Luciferian Studies, and Hindu Studies. One group fought for their own department insisting that they also needed a voice. They succeeded, and the first Moron Studies Department in the world was established. Short people and overweight people were ultimately also successful in having departments created to advocate for them.

The college president not only fought for more academic departments but was also very concerned about the low salaries for administrators. She insisted that the college's Foundation find ways to add to the salaries of top administrators. While the purpose of the Foundation was to raise funding in order to improve the quality of education, the college president made it clear that the only way to accomplish this was by paying administrators a decent salary. The Director of the Foundation was instructed to come up with innovative ways to add to administrators' salaries – or resign. Needless to say, salaries for top administrators were substantially increased. She also created five new special Deanships: there was a Dean of Transportation, a Dean of Academics and Innovations, a Dean of Environmental Health, Dean of Learning Assessment, and a Dean of Ethics. The Dean of Transportation was given the important job of arranging new cars and drivers for all key administrators. The college president felt it would be disrespectful to the college for her to be seen in a Chevrolet, so the Dean of Transportation got Bentleys for her and the Provost. The Dean of Environmental Health was assigned the important job of arranging for the president's house to be cleaned every day by a maid service. He also made sure that the president had a personal trainer and masseuse.

Once administrator salaries were raised, the college president then became very concerned about the amount of work that administrators had to do. She immediately appointed three new Associate Provosts. The offices of each Associate Provost – newly renovated, of course – included two newly created Assistant Provost positions. And each of the Assistant Provosts was assigned two junior provosts and a secretary. The college president's cabinet was concerned about the amount of work the president was doing and insisted that she hire three Special Assistants. One of the three Special Assistants to the President was given the important task of shopping for her boss, paying bills, and taking care of her dry cleaning.

The Dean of Academics and Innovations was told to solve an important problem. The college president was annoyed that she had to spend a fortune on vacations. She loved beaches, and her favorite resort was in Cancún. However, the hotels in Cancún were very costly. Her Dean came up with a solution: An off-campus graduate program in Travel and Tourism was established in Cancún. This Dean also established an Institute for Nudist Studies; nudists also needed a voice. A Director was hired for the Institute, and he was going to study the feasibility of establishing nude beaches in different countries. The college

president would also serve as a consultant for this Institute (and paid for this important job) and be sent on fact-finding missions throughout the year.

The Dean of Academics and Innovations determined the importance of establishing a \$2 million STEM laboratory. The purpose of the laboratory was to convince students to major in STEM areas. An outside firm was brought in to establish the lab which lab consisted of 10 desktop computers. The Director of IT was shocked at how much money was wasted in constructing this lab and the fact that an outside firm was used. He claimed that this could have been done in-house at a cost of \$200,000. Moreover, he felt that it was wrong to use an outside firm without soliciting bids. The Dean of Ethics did not agree and the Director of IT was fired for incompetence.

The Dean of Learning Assessment was told that she had to find ways to improve the college rankings and also demonstrate using assessments that students were learning something. Of course, it was obvious to all the administrators that students were not learning very much. Many of the courses taught by the newly created departments were “indoctrination” courses and provided no real skills. The critical thinking abilities of most students declined during the years spent in college. (Reading, writing and mathematics skills also declined but no one, except professors in the classroom, realized this since these skills were not assessed.) In any case, this Dean was an expert on how to juke the statistics. She knew that an easy way to boost admission statistics was by spending money to encourage students, even weak ones, to apply, and then rejecting them. This way, without accepting any additional students, the selectivity of the school increased.

This Dean increased rankings by boosting average SAT scores and high school GPAs of incoming freshmen; she did this by placing low scorers into “special admission” categories which did not have to be reported. Only high-scoring students were admitted as traditional freshmen: the weak students were admitted as “transfer students” after taking a few credits at a different college. To maintain the specialized accreditation of the business and education schools, the Dean needed to improve the ratio of courses taught by full-timers. That was accomplished by hiring a huge number of visiting and substitute professors during the semester before the accreditation teams came for a site visit (they came every five years). Some of the professors that were hired for six months were virtually senile, but that was ok as long as the ratios were good enough for the accreditors. The visiting professors taught classes with 150 students to improve the ratios of students taught by full-time faculty.

One of the ratios the college needed to improve was the percentage of students receiving job offers after graduating with an MBA degree. The Dean came up with an innovative solution to that problem. The college hired any graduate who could not find a job. No one noticed that many of the custodians cleaning the toilets and mopping the floors were graduates with MBAs. This also ensured that many of the drivers working for administrators had an advanced degree. The employment ratio of graduates skyrocketed from 40% to 95%. The Dean awarded honorary MBA degrees to several billionaires, and the average salary of its MBA students shot up to \$180k.

The Dean of Ethics was given the important task of finding an ethical way of creating a golden parachute for the College President so that she could receive a \$500,000 annual salary for ten years after retiring. According to this Dean, it was unethical not to show appreciation for the good work done by the College President during her tenure. The most ethical way to show appreciation was to provide the College President with what was a nominal stipend after she retired.

After eight years, the college president was proud of her legacy. Her college had 100 academic departments, 10 schools, and 15 Deans. True, there were only 250 full-time faculty members (down from 500) and class sizes now averaged 110, but her legacy was established. There were a few incidents involving collapsed ceilings and crumbling buildings, but no one

was killed. The Director of Public Relations found people to blame and they were immediately fired. The rodent and bedbug problem was kept under control (they were limited to living in the library). The chair of the Moron Studies Department published a paper -- "How Moronic Academic Governing Boards Provide no Oversight on Spending by College Presidents" – that infuriated the president but never made it into the mainstream media. The Dean of Ethics fired him for writing unethical papers.

Eventually, the college president was ready to retire and live happily ever after. She applied for and was granted the 10-year president emeritus stipend and threw herself a farewell party, a simple one which only cost the college a few hundred thousand dollars. Rumors are that she is being considered for the position of United States Secretary of Education. Oh, and the Pentagon has also been making inquiries. After all, they are still looking for someone who can find a way to justify spending more than \$14,000 on toilet seats.