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LIVING IN THE BUBBLE: LAWRENCE AND THE REST OF THE REAL WORLD

MATRICULATION CONVOCATION ADDRESS, SEPTEMBER 21, 1989

RICHARD WARCH, PRESIDENT

I STAND BEFORE YOU THIS MORNING TO DELIVER MY ELEVENTH MATRICULATION CONVOCATION ADDRESS, A MILESTONE THAT MIGHT WELL PROVOKE SILENT (OR MAYBE NOT-SO-SILENT) GROANS AMONG SOME OF THE MORE LONG-SUFFERING AUDITORS AMONG US. IN 1983, THE LAWRENTIAN LISTED "UNAMUNO BEGS TO DIFFER," "SAILING TOWARD OCEANIA," "BLAND AMBITION," AND "A TERRIBLE BUSINESS" AS THE FOUR TITLES OF MY ONE MATRICULATION SPEECH.

SINCE 1983 I'VE HAD THE CHANCE TO ADD SIX MORE TITLES TO THE LIST, AND I SUPPOSE THAT TODAY'S VERSION INCREASES THE COUNT BY ONE. THESE TALKS HAVE BEEN, IN THE MAIN, EXHORATORY AND IN THEM I HAVE SOUGHT TO REFLECT ON ASPECTS OF OUR CENTRAL BUSINESS HERE, TO SHARPEN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF CERTAIN ISSUES AND CONCERNS THAT FACE US, AND TO SUGGEST WAYS FOR US TO ENHANCE THE COLLEGE OR ADVANCE ITS PURPOSES IN SOME PARTICULAR OR ANOTHER. THERE HAS BEEN NOTHING TERRIBLY RADICAL ABOUT THESE EXHORTATIONS. IN THE MAIN, I'VE TRIED TO ARTICULATE WHAT I TAKE TO BE THE CENTRAL CHARACTERISTICS AND SHARED VALUES OF THE ENTERPRISE AND TO GIVE THEM LIFE AND FORCE.

THIS MORNING I WILL RETURN TO CERTAIN THEMES THAT HAVE BEEN IMPLICIT OR EXPLICIT IN PREVIOUS TALKS, AND WILL REFLECT ON HOW ONE FEATURE OF THE COLLEGE, OFTEN CRITICIZED, IS IN FACT ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT TRAITS AND HOW THAT FEATURE CHALLENGES OUR THINKING AND ACTING BOTH ON AND BEYOND THE CAMPUS.

THE TITLE I'VE CHOSEN COMES FROM A CONVERSATION I HAD WITH MEMBERS OF LIGHTHOUSE LAST YEAR IN WHICH SEVERAL OF THE WOMEN REFERRED TO LIFE AT THE COLLEGE AS LIVING IN WHAT THEY STYLED "THE BUBBLE." SINCE THE PHRASE IS NOT MINE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, I DO NOT PRETEND TO

UNDERSTAND THE IMPORT OF THE TERM IN ITS EVERY PARTICULAR OR NUANCE; NOR DO I KNOW IF THE TERM IS WIDESPREAD, OR WAS JUST COINED ON THE SPOT LAST WINTER AND PICKED UP BY OTHERS IN THE COURSE OF OUR CONVERSATION.

WHAT I TAKE THE PHRASE TO MEAN, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE COLLEGE OFFERS SOMETHING OF A PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT FOR THOSE OF US WHO AFFILIATE WITH IT. I SUSPECT THAT THE TERM DERIVES FROM THE EARLY 1970S AND THE FAMOUS CASE OF BABY DAVID, BORN WITH A RARE GENETIC AFFLICTION KNOWN AS COMBINED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY, WHO WAS PLACED IN A GERM-FREE PLASTIC ISOLATOR. HE WAS, IF YOU WILL, THE BOY IN THE BUBBLE--EVENTUALLY THE SUBJECT OF A MOVIE--WHOSE SURVIVAL WAS ENABLED BY THE SHELTERED, CONTROLLED, AND MONITORED ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH HE LIVED. INCAPABLE OF EXISTING IN THE WORLD AS WE KNOW AND EXPERIENCE IT, HE WAS SEALED OFF FROM THE HAZARDS OF LIFE SO THAT HE COULD LIVE.

THE METAPHOR PROBABLY CAN BE EXTENDED TOO FAR IN TRANSFERRING THAT CASE TO THE COLLEGE CULTURE, BUT I SUPPOSE WE CAN RECOGNIZE THE ELEMENTS THAT PROMPTED THE TERM: HERE, IN THE MAIN, ONE LIVES IN AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH HOUSING IS PROVIDED, PERSONS EMPLOYED TO CARE FOR, CLEAN, AND REPAIR ONE'S LIVING SPACES, WHERE SOMEONE PREPARES, SERVES, AND CLEANS UP AFTER ONE'S MEALS, WHERE ORGANIZATIONS WORK TO PROVIDE ENTERTAINMENT FOR ONE'S ENJOYMENT, WHERE ACCESS TO CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES OF ALMOST EVERY STRIPE IS THE NORM, WHERE MEMBERSHIP IN A WELL-EQUIPPED RECREATIONAL FACILITY IS PROVIDED. IN SHORT, THE BUBBLE IS A PLACE WHERE FACING THE DAILY ROUTINES OF EXISTENCE ARE MADE SIMPLE AND WHERE SECURING SOME OF THE AMENITIES OF LIFE IS NOT SOMETHING ONE SEEKS BUT SOMETHING THAT ONE ACCEPTS.

THE BUBBLE HAS OTHER FEATURES AS WELL: HERE MEN AND WOMEN ENCOURAGE YOUR INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT, OFFER YOU ADVICE AND COUNSEL ABOUT YOUR WORK, GIVE YOU OPPORTUNITIES TO REWRITE PAPERS YOU PRODUCE, AFFORD YOU CAREER AND PERSONAL COUNSELING SERVICES, PROVIDE TUTORS TO ENABLE YOUR SUCCESS. HERE, YOU HAVE THE LEISURE TO READ GREAT BOOKS, DEBATE IMPORTANT IDEAS, ATTEND ART EXHIBITS, BE ENGAGED BY INTERESTING PEOPLE, EXPERIENCE MASTER PERFORMANCES BY SIGNIFICANT ARTISTS. AND THE LIST COULD GO ON.

FRANKLY, IT SOUNDS LIKE A PRETTY GOOD LIFE. CURIOSLY, HOWEVER, THAT SEEMS TO BE PRECISELY THE PROBLEM. SOMEHOW, THESE FEATURES SEEM TOO GOOD. SOMEHOW, THE DEAL HERE APPEARS TOO PRIVILEGED. AFTER ALL, AS MY MOTHER REMINDS ME FREQUENTLY, LIFE IS REAL AND LIFE IS EARNEST AND SOMEHOW LIFE IN THE BUBBLE DOES NOT COME OFF AS REAL AND EARNEST ENOUGH.

HENCE, THE STANDARD LINE GOES, AND AS PROFESSOR CHANEY REMARKED TO THE INCOMING STUDENTS LAST FRIDAY, WE CONTRAST THE COLLEGE WITH THE REAL WORLD. IN THE REAL WORLD, YOU BUY YOUR OWN FOOD, FIND YOUR OWN HOUSING, CLEAN UP YOUR OWN LIVING SPACES. IN THE REAL WORLD, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, WITHOUT A FACULTY AND STAFF WHOSE BUSINESS IT IS TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU. IN THE REAL WORLD, YOU MAY NOT HAVE THE LEISURE TO READ GREAT BOOKS AND THE LIKE, ECONOMIC REWARDS FOR WORK OFTEN SUBSTITUTE FOR INTELLECTUAL REWARDS, AND TASKS ARE OFTEN TRIVIAL RATHER THAN TANTALIZING. IN THE REAL WORLD, IT IS ROUGH AND TUMBLE, SINK OR SWIM, DOG EAT DOG, THREE STRIKES AND YOU'RE OUT, LIKE IT OR LUMP IT, WITH ONLY ONE CHANCE TO MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION, NO SECOND ACTS.

CLEARLY, I'VE DRAWN TOO-SIMPLISTIC CHARACTERIZATIONS TO MAKE THE POINT. LET ME SUGGEST, FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT, THAT WHAT I HAVE HERE DESCRIBED AS FEATURES OF THE BUBBLE AND OF THE SO-CALLED REAL WORLD ARE, AT ROOT, TRIVIAL OR AT BEST INCIDENTAL. FAR MORE IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING, IT SEEMS TO ME, IS THE FACT THAT THIS BUBBLE OF OURS IS, TO EMPLOY A SOMEWHAT JARGONISH TERM, AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY. THE MOST SALIENT AND SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF THE BUBBLE ARE NOT THESE ANCILLARY ASPECTS--RESIDENCE HALLS, COMMONS, REC CENTER, CAMPUS EVENTS, SUPPORT SERVICES, OR EVEN FACULTY ATTENTION TO STUDENT DEVELOPMENT--BUT THE SHARED VALUES AND PURPOSES THAT DRAW US TO THE COLLEGE, THE VALUES THAT DEFINE AND DETERMINE OUR SHARED ENTERPRISE, OUR COMMON LIFE. THE BUBBLE IS A PLACE WITH AN AGENDA; LAWRENCE IS A COMMUNITY WITH A STATED MISSION.

THOSE ATTRIBUTES DO NOT ISOLATE THE COLLEGE FROM THE LARGER ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IT EXISTS AND CERTAINLY DO NOT PROTECT IT FROM INFLUENCES FROM BEYOND THE CAMPUS. THIS SUMMER, MY DAUGHTER ENTERED THE

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY OF A FRENCH SUMMER PROGRAM IN WHICH SHE WENT THROUGH "CUSTOMS" WHERE ANYTHING WRITTEN OR RECORDED IN ENGLISH, OR RADIOS WHICH COULD PICK UP ENGLISH, WERE CONFISCATED. FOR ONE MONTH, SHE WAS TO BE IN A FRENCH BUBBLE, AS IT WERE, WITH NO DISTRACTIONS FROM THE OUTSIDE.

LAWRENCE IS NOT QUITE SO EFFICIENT. WE DO NOT ASK ENTERING STUDENTS TO CHECK THEIR CULTURAL BAGGAGE AT THE DOOR; WHAT MAY BE STYLED THE YOUTH CULTURE OF THE LATE 20TH CENTURY IS HAULED ON TO CAMPUS EACH FALL IN THE GUISE OF POSTERS, TAPES, RECORDS, AND MAGAZINES. WHAT MAKES EACH INDIVIDUAL WHO HE OR SHE IS, THOSE ATTITUDES, ATTRIBUTES, AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIES THAT SHAPE OUR IDIOSYNCRATIC BEINGS, MAKE THEIR WAY ACROSS THE TRANSOM AS WELL.

WE ALL IMPORT OUR SELF-DEFINITIONS AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES TO THE COLLEGE, FIND OURSELVES IN THE BUBBLE--AND THEN THINGS GET INTERESTING. FOR WE DISCOVER OR ARE REMINDED OF THE FACT THAT THIS PLACE IS NOT JUST ANY AGGREGATION OF MEN AND WOMEN, NOT JUST SOME THROWN-TOGETHER FREE-FOR-ALL COMMUNITY, BUT A PLACE WITH A MISSION, ONE THAT EVEN HAS, FOR GOODNESS SAKE, A MISSION STATEMENT. WHICH GOES LIKE THIS:

"LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, THROUGH ITS UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE AND CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC, EDUCATES MEN AND WOMEN IN THE LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES. COMMITTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTELLECT AND TALENT, THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING, AND THE CULTIVATION OF JUDGMENT AND VALUES, LAWRENCE PREPARES STUDENTS FOR LIVES OF SERVICE, ACHIEVEMENT, LEADERSHIP, AND PERSONAL FULFILLMENT."

NOT ONLY THAT, BUT THE COLLEGE ALSO GOES ON TO LIST AN ARRAY OF PURPOSES THAT FOLLOW FROM AND FULFILL THAT MISSION--TWO PAGES WORTH, TO BE EXACT. THIS BUBBLE, IT TURNS OUT, IS LESS A PLACE OF PROTECTION AND PRIVILEGE THAN A PLACE OF PRIORITIES AND PURPOSE.

WELL, ALL RIGHT, YOU MAY SAY, BUT DON'T THAT MISSION AND THOSE PURPOSES ONLY DIFFERENTIATE US FROM THE REAL WORLD EVEN MORE? ISN'T WHAT

WE'VE GOT HERE ONLY AN IDEALISTIC, EVEN UTOPIAN BUBBLE? TO WHICH I REPLY, AHA!! PRECISELY SO. AND THAT FACT OF OUR COMMUNITY IS INDEED WHAT GIVES IT ITS POWER AND PROMISE. FOR INSOFAR AS THE COLLEGE AND YOUR EDUCATION ARE TO BE SIGNIFICANT BEYOND THE COLLEGE AND AFTER YOUR YEARS HERE, THEY WILL BE SO TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY POINT US TOWARD LARGER ASPIRATIONS AND BETTER CONDITIONS THAN THOSE WE FIND ELSEWHERE.

IN RECENT WEEKS I'VE BEEN READING A BOOK ENTITLED COMING OF AGE IN NEW JERSEY: COLLEGE AND AMERICAN CULTURE, BY MICHAEL MOFFATT. MOFFATT IS AN ANTHROPOLOGIST WHO SPENT TIME IN THE RESIDENCE HALLS OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY IN ORDER TO ASSAY AND ASSESS THE STUDENT CULTURE OF THE PRESENT DAY. HE LIVED AMONG THE NATIVES, AS IT WERE, VERY MUCH AS OTHER ANTHROPOLOGISTS LIVE AMONG THE FIJI ISLANDERS. HIS FINDINGS ARE FASCINATING, IF NOT ALWAYS UPLIFTING, BUT AMONG OTHER THINGS HE REPORTS THAT RUTGERS STUDENTS SAW RUTGERS AS A GOOD PREPARATION FOR THE REAL WORLD TO THE EXTENT THAT IT REPLICATED THAT WORLD AND NOT TO THE EXTENT THAT IT STOOD APART FROM THAT WORLD.

MOFFATT AND THE STUDENTS PUT IT THIS WAY: "THE REAL WORLD, ESPECIALLY AT THE PROFESSIONAL AND MIDDLE-MANAGEMENT LEVELS TOWARD WHICH MOST RUTGERS GRADUATES WERE HEADED, WAS ... HIGHLY ORGANIZED....IT WAS AN IMPERSONAL AND BUREAUCRATIC PLACE. AND NOW, CONVENIENTLY, THANKS TO RUTGERS' IMPERSONALITY AND BUREAUCRATIC COMPLEXITY, COLLEGE PREPARED YOU FOR THIS ASPECT OF LIFE AFTER COLLEGE." RUTGERS TAUGHT ONE TO DEAL WITH THE REAL WORLD, ONE STUDENT OPINED, THROUGH THE "RUTGERS SCREW," "THROUGH THAT TORTUOUS, ROUNDABOUT WAY OF MAKING EVERYTHING THREE TIMES MORE DIFFICULT TO ACCOMPLISH." IT ALSO PREPARED A PERSON FOR THE REAL WORLD, ANOTHER STUDENT STATED, BECAUSE NO ONE AT RUTGERS CARES HOW THE INDIVIDUAL DOES.

AND THAT, IT SEEMS TO ME, IS JUST THE POINT. FOR TO THE DEGREE THAT A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY MIRRORS THE REAL WORLD IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH IT IS INCAPACITATED FROM--AND ITS STUDENTS DENIED THE MOTIVATIONS AND IDEALS FOR--SEEKING TO CHANGE OR BETTER THAT WORLD. SUCH A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY MIGHT BE BETTER STYLED AS A HIGH-PRICED ATTITUDINAL AND VOCATIONAL ADJUSTMENT CENTER. IT INDUCES US TO THINK THAT THE WAY THINGS

ARE ARE THE WAY THEY OUGHT TO BE. IT PRODUCES PEOPLE WHO WILL FIT IN, NOT PERSONS WHO WILL SPEAK OUT.

BUT LAWRENCE TAKES A DIFFERENT TACK. AS AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY, A COLLEGE WITH A MISSION, LAWRENCE STRIVES TO BE DIFFERENT FROM, INDEED BETTER THAN, OTHER PARTS OF THE REAL WORLD. AND WE SO STRIVE NOT IN ORDER TO BE PRECIOUS OR PRETENTIOUS, BUT TO POINT THE WAY TOWARD A WORLD THAT TRANSCENDS ITS LIMITATIONS, A WORLD THAT CARES FOR AND EMBODIES THE IDEALS OF TRUTH, BEAUTY, AND GODNESS, A WORLD THAT VALUES FREEDOM, EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL, JUSTICE, AND INDIVIDUAL WORTH.

THE REST OF THE REAL WORLD, AS I'VE SUGGESTED, INTRUDES ON THE COLLEGE AND ON OUR COLLECTIVE LIFE HERE. INTRUDES IS PERHAPS THE WRONG WORD, FOR IN MANY WAYS WE ACTIVELY SEEK OUT AND EMBRACE ASPECTS OF THAT WORLD. LAST YEAR I SPOKE ON THIS OCCASION ABOUT THE WORLDLY MATTERS OF SEX AND GENDER, OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND OF FEMINISM, FOR OUR ACADEMIC PROGRAM AND OUR COMMITMENTS TO COEDUCATION. SURELY HERE THE WORLD INTRUDES, AND WE CAN, BY OUR EFFORTS AT UNDERSTANDING AND ENLIGHTENMENT, WORK TO BETTER THAT ASPECT OF OUR WORLD.

TODAY I CITE ANOTHER WORLDLY MATTER, ONE THAT IS MUCH IN THE NEWS AND ON OUR MINDS, BOTH WITHIN THE UNITED STATES AND GLOBALLY AS WELL. SOME OF THE MOST DIFFICULT AND FRIGHTENING ASPECTS OF LIFE IN MANY PARTS OF THE REST OF THE REAL WORLD ARE THOSE POSED BY THE TENSIONS AND TURMOILS OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC CONFLICT. THE MURDER OF YUSEF HAWKINS, A BLACK YOUTH WHO WAS KILLED BY WHITE TEENAGERS IN BENSONHURST, BROOKLYN IS ONE GRAPHIC EXAMPLE; THE RIOTS IN VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA OFFER ANOTHER. THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN'S RECENTLY-ENACTED REGULATION MAKING RACIST REMARKS PUNISHABLE OFFENSES IS A SIGNAL OF THE SAME PROBLEM.

A REPUBLICAN SPOKESMAN IN NEW YORK CITY, COMMENTING ON THE UPCOMING MAYORAL CONTEST BETWEEN DAVID DINKINS AND RUDLOPH GIULIANI SAID THAT "RACE IS THE DIRTY LITTLE SECRET OF AMERICAN POLITICS"--AN ASSESSMENT THAT CERTAINLY SEEMS TO HAVE PLAYED A ROLE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SPECIAL ELECTION IN MIAMI A FEW WEEKS AGO AND THAT MIGHT WELL HAVE A BEARING IN NEW YORK. ACCORDING TO ROBERT LIPSYTE IN MONDAY'S

NEW YORK TIMES, "RACISM RUNS THROUGH [NEW YORK CITY] LIKE A SEWER PIPE." AND WHAT IS TRUE OF OUR NATION'S LARGEST CITY IS TRUE NATIONALLY AS WELL. NEWSWEEK, IN LAST WEEK'S "CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WATCH" POLL ON THE NATIONAL AGENDA, NAMED RACE AS "STILL THE BIGGEST DOMESTIC ISSUE OF ALL." AND THIS WEEK'S ISSUE DEVOTES A SPECIAL SECTION TO RACISM ON CAMPUS ENTITLED "LESSONS FROM BIGOTRY 101."

THE REAL WORLD OF OUR NATION IS ONE WHERE RACE AND ISSUES RELATING TO RACE HAVE PLAYED A CRUCIAL AND PERVASIVE ROLE IN OUR HISTORY AND WHERE THE LEGACIES OF THAT HISTORY ARE EVIDENT TODAY. FURTHERMORE, AND WITH THAT HISTORY AND OUR PRESENT PROBLEMS AS OMINOUS FORESHADOWINGS, THE RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE COUNTRY WILL ALTER DRAMATICALLY IN THE COMING DECADE. HENRY CISNEROS SPOKE TO THIS ISSUE FROM THIS PLATFORM LAST SPRING, BUT A REFRESHER MAY BE IN ORDER. BY THE YEAR 2000, THE POPULATION OF CALIFORNIA WILL BE 46 PERCENT AFRICAN-AMERICAN, HISPANIC, AND ASIAN. NATIONALLY, BY THE YEAR 2000, ONE OF EVERY THREE AMERICAN SCHOOL CHILDREN WILL BE NON-WHITE. THAT IN ITSELF IS NOT BAD NEWS, BUT IT MAY BECOME SO. THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND COLLEGE MATRICULATION RATES FOR SUCH MINORITIES HAVE CONSISTENTLY LAGGED BEHIND THOSE OF THE SO-CALLED MAJORITY. WE KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT 29 PERCENT MORE BLACKS GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN 1982 THAN IN 1975, YET BLACK ENROLLMENT IN COLLEGE DROPPED 11 PERCENT IN THAT PERIOD. HISPANIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES INCREASED 38 PERCENT IN THAT TIME FRAME, YET HISPANIC ENROLLMENT IN COLLEGE DECLINED 16 PERCENT. WE ARE NOT WITNESSING MUCH DIFFERENCE IN THESE STATISTICS IN 1989; THERE HAS BEEN SOME STABILIZATION, BUT NOT MUCH IMPROVEMENT.

IN LIGHT OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, PEOPLE IN THE REST OF THE REAL WORLD LOOK TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SOLUTIONS--EVEN AS HIGHER EDUCATION ITSELF HAS BECOME, AS THE NEWSWEEK ARTICLE MAKES CLEAR, A SETTING FOR THE PROBLEM ITSELF. SEVERAL NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS HAVE ESTABLISHED TASK FORCES AND STUDY GROUPS TO EXAMINE THE ISSUE AND PROPOSE REMEDIES, HAVE PUBLISHED REPORTS AND HAVE CALLED FOR ACTION. THE TEXT OF ONE OF THESE REPORTS REVEALS HOW WE ARE EXPECTED TO RELATE TO THE REST OF THE REAL WORLD ON THIS MATTER. IN ONE-THIRD OF A NATION, THE AUTHORS ASSERT THAT THEY FOCUS ON HIGHER EDUCATION, FIRST, BECAUSE COLLEGES AND

UNIVERSITIES "ARE THE PRINCIPAL INSTITUTIONS IN WHICH AMERICA'S FUTURE PROFESSIONALS, LEADERS, AND ROLE MODELS WILL BE EDUCATED AND SHAPED. SECOND, THE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMUNITY HISTORICALLY HAS ACTED AS AN IMPORTANT GOAD TO THE NATION'S CONSCIENCE, CALLING THE CITIZENRY TO HIGHER STANDARDS OF INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. FINALLY, THESE INSTITUTIONS HAVE FUNCTIONED AS A VITAL SOCIAL LABORATORY IN WHICH SOLUTIONS TO KNOTTY NATIONAL PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN TESTED AND PERFECTED." HERE, IT SEEMS TO ME, IS A CLASSIC STATEMENT OF WHY OUR "BUBBLE" DOES NOT REMOVE US FROM THE REAL WORLD, BUT AFFORDS US THE OPPORTUNITY AND OBLIGATION TO RELATE TO IT. AND BY RELATING I MEAN, OBVIOUSLY, NOT MIRRORING THAT WORLD SO MUCH AS STANDING AS A MODEL OF WHAT IT MIGHT AND MUST BECOME.

OUR OWN CONSORTIUM HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN SEEKING TO ADDRESS WAYS IN WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE COLLEGES OF THE ASSOCIATED COLLEGES OF THE MIDWEST CAN BE MORE WHOLESOME AND HOSPITABLE COMMUNITIES FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR, HOW WE CAN MAKE A GREATER DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATING SO-CALLED MINORITY STUDENTS. AND LAWRENCE HAS DEVELOPED SEVERAL PROGRAMS TO ENHANCE MINORITY PARTICIPATION AND SUCCESS ON ITS OWN.

WHAT CAN BE SAID ABOUT THIS COUNTRY CAN BE STATED AS WELL ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. RACIAL AND ETHNIC RIVALRIES AND CONFLICTS ARE WIDESPREAD, FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO THE SOVIET UNION, FROM THE MIDDLE EAST TO GREAT BRITAIN. AND EVEN ABSENT THESE CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCERNS, WE CLEARLY KNOW THAT AN EXPANDED GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE HAS REPLACED INSULATED NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AS THE MODUS OPERANDI OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. AND HERE AGAIN, THE LAWRENCE BUBBLE, SO-CALLED, RECOGNIZES THE ISSUE, THROUGH A HOST OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS SPONSORED BY THE COLLEGE DIRECTLY AND THROUGH THE ASSOCIATED COLLEGES OF THE MIDWEST COOPERATIVELY, AND MOST IMMEDIATELY THROUGH COURSES AND PROGRAMS OFFERED ON CAMPUS, ESPECIALLY THIS YEAR THROUGH OUR NEW DEPARTMENT OF EAST ASIAN STUDIES AND A COLLEGE-WIDE PROGRAM ON FACING THE CHALLENGES OF THE PACIFIC RIM.

WHILE WE MAY USE CATCHWORDS TO CAPTURE OUR COMMITMENTS HERE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT AMONG THE PURPOSES THAT DELINEATE OUR MISSION

ARE THE FOLLOWING:

"TO SEEK DIVERSITY WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY AS A MEANS TO ENRICH TEACHING AND LEARNING AND TO PROMOTE TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING."

"TO NURTURE A SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES MATURE AND RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR AND GOOD CITIZENSHIP."

THESE ARE NOT, OR OUGHT NOT BE, IDLE OBJECTIVES BUT IMPORTANT OBLIGATIONS. AND IN TAKING THEM SERIOUSLY, IN ACCEPTING THEM AS PART OF THE CULTURE OF THE INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY OF THE COLLEGE, WE CAN AND SHOULD FIND WAYS TO EXPRESS AND ENACT THEM IN FAITHFULNESS TO OUR OWN VALUES AND AS INFLUENCES THAT WILL EMANATE BEYOND THE CAMPUS. AND IF RIGHT THINKING WILL NOT PREVAIL HERE, COMMON SENSE OUGHT TO. FOR UNLESS THE REST OF THE REAL WORLD BECOMES A PLACE OF TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING, UNLESS OUR CIVIC LIVES ARE CONDUCTED MATURELY AND RESPONSIBLY, THE CRISES THAT AFFLICT OUR NATION AND WORLD WILL EXACERBATE, NOT ABATE. WE ARE ALL GOING TO LIVE IN THAT PART OF THE REAL WORLD AT SOME POINT AND FOR SOME TIME AND WE SHOULD SPEND OUR TIME HERE AND NOW TO DEVELOP THE ATTITUDES AND ATTRIBUTES THAT WILL ENABLE US TO DO SO AS POSITIVE AND POWERFUL AGENTS OF CHANGE.

WE HAVE IN OUR NUMBER THIS YEAR ALMOST 120 STUDENTS--10 PERCENT OF OUR ENROLLMENT--WHO ARE MEMBERS OF AMERICAN MINORITY GROUPS OR HAIL FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES. THEY BRING WITH THEM HISTORICAL AND LIFE EXPERIENCES QUITE OTHER FROM THOSE THAT MOST OF US CLAIM. THEY ARE NOT HERE, I SHOULD POINT OUT, FOR THE EDIFICATION OF THE SO-CALLED MAJORITY. EACH OF THESE INDIVIDUALS, LIKE EACH STUDENT AT THE COLLEGE THIS TERM AND THIS YEAR, COMES WITH HIS OR HER OWN EXPECTATIONS AND ASPIRATIONS, EVEN WITH HIS OR HER OWN ANXIETIES AND UNCERTAINTIES. EACH OF THESE INDIVIDUALS WILL TACKLE THE COURSE OF STUDY AND THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY AS WILL EACH AND EVERY OTHER STUDENT. WE ARE ALL, BLACK AND WHITE, HISPANIC AND ASIAN, NATIVE AMERICAN AND THIRD GENERATION AMERICAN, U.S. CITIZENS AND FOREIGN NATIONALS, IN THIS THING AND AT THIS PLACE TOGETHER. IT IS OUR COLLEGE, OUR COMMUNITY.

ONE OF THE DANGERS WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE AND THEN TO AVOID IS

THAT OF PERMITTING EVIDENT IDENTITIES AND DIFFERENCES--WHETHER OF RACE OR OF ETHNICITY OR OF NATIONALITY--TO BE SUBSTITUTED FOR PERSONAL IDENTITIES AND DIFFERENCES. THAT DANGER, QUITE FRANKLY, IS ONE THAT MOST OF OUR MINORITY AND MANY OF OUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WILL FACE. EACH OF THEM, I AM SURE, IS PROUD OF RACE, ETHNICITY, NATIONALITY; BUT EACH OF THEM ALSO, AS EACH OF ALL OF US, TRANSCENDS THAT IDENTITY, IS MORE THAN ONLY THAT.

WE TALK MUCH, PERHAPS TOO CASUALLY, ABOUT DIVERSITY, THOUGH WE OFTEN TRIVIALIZE IT BEYOND ALL MEANING AND IMPORT. DIVERSITY MAY MEAN, IN THIS SENSE, THAT ONE PERSON LIKES THE GRATEFUL DEAD AND ANOTHER PREFERS THE POLICE, THAT ONE IS INTO SPORTS AND ANOTHER INTO MUSIC. AND WE ALSO HAVE VITIATED THE MEANING OF COMMUNITY, SO THAT IT COMES TO MEAN SIMPLY A COLLECTION OF LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS WHO CHOOSE TO LIVE TOGETHER AND SHARE COMMON INTERESTS--IN WHICH THE COMMUNITY IS MERELY THE SELF MULTIPLIED. IN SUCH A CASE, THE COMMUNITY ITSELF HAS NO PRIOR AND INDEPENDENT STANDING; IT DOES NOT IMPOSE ITS VALUES AND MORES ON INDIVIDUALS, DOES NOT PREEXIST OR TRANSCEND THEM. AND THESE TWO VIEWS OFTEN COME TOGETHER SO THAT THE SO-CALLED DIVERSITY OF THE SO-CALLED COMMUNITY IS FRAGMENTED; THE COMMUNITY DOES NOT COHERE AROUND SOME COMMON BOND, BUT IS ONLY COMPOSED OF CLUSTERS OF CATEGORIZED GROUPS OF CLIQUES.

A COMMUNITY OF INDEPENDENT LIFE AND FORCE IS ONE IN WHICH SERIOUS AND SUBSTANTIVE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES ARE ACKNOWLEDGED, ACCEPTED, AND APPRECIATED BUT IN WHICH COMMUNITY VALUES AND PRECEPTS OBTAIN. AS AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY WITH A MISSION AND A SET OF PURPOSES, LAWRENCE HAS VALUES AND PRECEPTS. CHIEF AMONG THEM IS RESPECT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL, A TOLERANCE FOR AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF THAT INDIVIDUAL'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY, AND A REFUSAL TO TYPE THE INDIVIDUAL'S DISTINCTIVENESS SO AS TO MAKE HIM OR HER NOTHING MORE THAN THE PERSONIFICATION OF A ILL-FOUNDED, PERHAPS EVEN ILL-INTENTIONED, GENERALIZATION. THAT LAST IS A RATHER COMPLEX WAY OF DEFINING PREJUDICE, AND PREJUDICE, AS VOLTAIRE SAID, IS "THE REASONING OF THE STUPID." LAWRENTIANS ARE NOT STUPID.

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US--AND IT SEEMS TO ME BETTER TO ADMIT

THIS THAN TO PRETEND THERE ISN'T AN ISSUE HERE--IS TO REMEMBER THAT IN THIS COLLEGE, IN THIS INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY, WITH OUR MISSION, THERE ARE NO INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS. IN THAT REGARD, IT IS OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TO ALL OF US THAT WE NOT ALLOW THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE TO BECOME THE MODE OF DISCOURSE ON CAMPUS.

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENCES AMONG US, AND INDEED--AS FAR AS THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS IS CONCERNED--THE QUEST FOR THE DIFFERENCES THAT WILL ENRICH THE WHOLE IS CENTRAL TO THE EFFORT, THOUGH THOSE DIFFERENCES ARE SOUGHT IN INDIVIDUALS, NOT IN GROUPS. AND WHILE IN MANY INSTANCES THOSE DIFFERENCES MAY FIND ORGANIZATIONAL EXPRESSION--WHILE THERE MAY BE A BLACK ORGANIZATION OF STUDENTS, OR AN ASIAN STUDENT CLUB, OR LAWRENCE INTERNATIONAL--THERE IS BEFORE THEM THE INDIVIDUALS WHO CONSTITUTE THEIR MEMBERSHIP, AND THERE IS BEYOND THEM THE COLLEGE ITSELF, THE COMMUNITY WE CELEBRATE AND SUSTAIN TOGETHER. AND I TRUST THAT GIVEN THE PLACE WE ARE, AND THE VALUES AND PURPOSES WE HOLD, WE WILL MOVE BEYOND EVEN CONSIDERING THE NEED FOR PROHIBITING RACIST REMARKS OR ETHNIC SLURS--OR, TO HARKEN BACK TO LAST YEAR'S ADDRESS, SEXIST COMMENTS. THAT PROHIBITION STRIKES ME AS SELF-EVIDENT. IT IS HOW WE ACT TOGETHER TO AFFIRM ONE ANOTHER AND TO LEARN FROM AND WITH ONE ANOTHER THAT SHOULD BE THE FOCUS OF OUR ATTENTION AND EFFORTS.

SO I HOPE WE WILL MAKE THIS A GREAT AND CARING COMMUNITY--WILL MAKE THIS COMMUNITY OF MISSION AND PURPOSE A COMMUNITY OF LIFE AND FORCE. AND I HOPE TOO THAT WE WILL UNDERSTAND IT, UNDERSTAND THE BUBBLE, IF YOU WILL, IN THIS PARTICULAR ILLUSTRATION AS WELL AS MORE BROADLY, AS EDMUND BURKE DID. COMMUNITY, HE WROTE, IS "THE FIRST LINK IN THE SERIES BY WHICH WE PROCEED TOWARDS A LOVE FOR OUR COUNTRY AND HUMANKIND." THE LAWRENCE COMMUNITY, THEN, STANDS NOT IN SPLENDID SOLITUDE, UNCONNECTED TO THE WHOLE. IT IS THE FIRST LINK IN A SERIES, IT IS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT LINK ANY OF US NOW HAS IN A SERIES, THAT LEADS US BEYOND THE COLLEGE TO THE REST OF THE REAL WORLD AND THAT EMPOWERS US, ENABLES US, ENTRUSTS US TO MAKE THAT OTHER REALITY COMPORT MORE FULLY WITH THIS ONE. THAT IS A PURPOSE WORTHY OF THE MISSION OF LAWRENCE, WORTHY TOO OF ALL OF US--IF I MAY ANTICIPATE THE ALMA MATER--WHO CALL OURSELVES HER LOYAL CHILDREN.