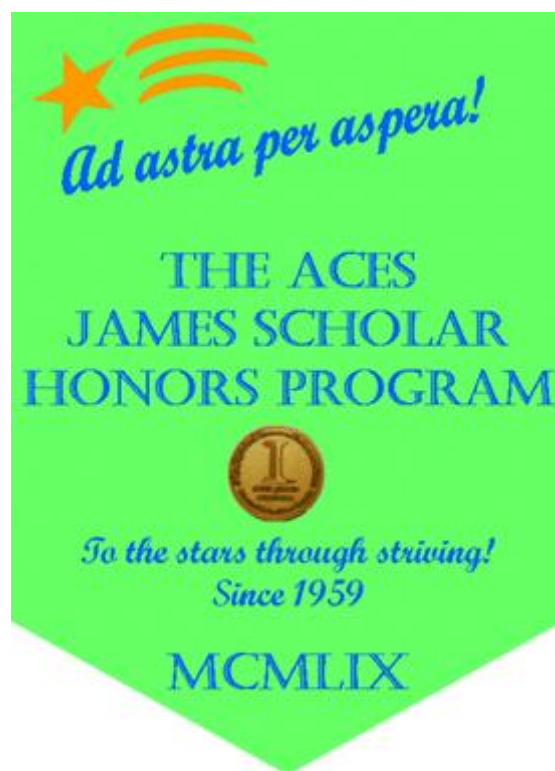


JACOBI PHILOLOGI DE HEGEMONTOLOGIA
(JAMES SCHOLARS ON LEADERSHIP STUDIES)

Compiled and Illustrated by Rob Chappell, M.S., ACES Honors Secretary (Summer 2007)
With Contributions by Anna Bishop, Karlie Elliott, Lerin Rives, Bethany Six, and Dorothy Spencer



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Making a Global Impact with Your Career: An Interview with Dr. Robert Thompson, Professor of Agricultural and Consumer Economics

By Anna Bishop (Class of 2006)

Reprinted from *CURSUS HONORUM V: 9* (April 2005)



← Anna Bishop displayed her ACES Undergraduate Research poster in Turner Hall during ExplorACES in March 2006. Her research project dealt with “Strengths and Weaknesses of a Genetic Locus Discovery Tool.” Anna is one of twelve charter members of the ACES James Scholar Media Team. (Photo Credit: Linda Jacobson, Class of 2008)

It’s hard to believe that a human being could be the World Bank’s Director of Rural Development, the USDA’s Assistant Secretary for Economics, and the Dean of Agriculture at Purdue, all in one lifetime. Dr. Robert Thompson has proved the impossible – possible. Dr. Thompson’s life has revolved around agriculture. He was raised on a small dairy farm on the southern bank of the St. Lawrence River in upstate New York. His upbringing was very bi-cultural as most of the available television programming was Canadian, and Ottawa was only a half-hour drive away. His family was very active in the local 4-H chapter, with both of his parents being leaders of a 4-H club. In fact, it was through 4-H that Dr. Thompson was able to develop leadership and public speaking skills.

Dr. Thompson’s debut on the international agriculture scene was as an undergrad at Cornell University, where he took a study abroad trip to Denmark. There he gained his first working knowledge of a foreign language. Best of all, he met his wife there! During the first two years of their marriage, they volunteered with the former International Voluntary Service, a program through the U.S. Agency for In-

ternational Development (USAID). This was quite an adventure for the couple. Subsisting on only \$80 a month, the couple worked to improve rice in Laos. They also had the privilege of obtaining one month of research experience at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines in order to learn about rice.

These were scary times for the couple because of the ongoing Vietnam War. Three members of Dr. Thompson's volunteer group were assassinated in a four-month period. During their stay in Laos, the couple stayed in houses raised on stilts in the countryside. Because of the ongoing war, it was common for people to be assassinated in their sleep as guerillas shot up through the floor. During times of small-arms fire, the only safe place in the house was in the toilet area because of the solid concrete under the floor. Dr. Thompson and his wife spent many nights in this area. All in all, they emerged from their volunteer adventure safely and with many good stories.

In the world's current situation, the need for professionals in agriculture is great. Dr. Thompson has advice for undergrads for success in their career and life.

1. College is preparation for lifetime learning. Knowledge eventually becomes outdated. Life isn't predictable, and ten years from now, a career may have very little to do with one's major. It is important to gain a broad background in college.
2. There is no substitute for good communication skills. These skills can be obtained through interpersonal interactions and leadership opportunities. In life, a "B" student who had allocated time to developing these skills is better off than an "A" student who had spent all of his/her time in the library studying. In conclusion, don't stay within the bounds of your comfort zone.
3. Do not pass up the opportunity to study abroad or learn a foreign language. One needs to look at the United States from the outside in, just as foreigners do.
4. Finally, take rigorous courses in college. Don't skim the surface with too many introductory courses. If you do this, all of your understanding will be just that -- on the surface.

Becoming a LeaderShaper
By Bethany Six (Class of 2007)
Reprinted from *ULTREIA I: 2* (Summer 2006)



← Bethany poses with her James Scholar research poster in Bevier Hall at ExplorACES (March 10 & 11, 2006). She conducted her research project, a "Subcutaneous Insulin Protocol Study," at Carle Clinic in Urbana. (Photo Credit: Bethany Six)

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend the LeaderShape Institute at Allerton Park for six days. I had done some reading about LeaderShape online (<http://www.leadershape.org/>) and talked to a few people who had gone, but little did I know what LeaderShape had in store for me! It was six days

full of making new friends, learning, soul-searching, little sleep, laughter and sometimes tears, and difficult good-byes.

Session one included 75 people (staff and participants) from many different colleges all over the United States as well as Canada and Haiti. I can honestly say that I have never been around such a diverse group of people. Everyone came from different backgrounds with their own unique interests and ideas to share with others. There was one common goal that tied us together – to become better leaders on our campus. Each day there was a theme – “Building Community,” “The Value of One, the Power of All,” “Challenging What Is, Looking to What Could Be,” “Bringing Vision to Reality,” “Living and Leading with Integrity,” and “Staying in Action” – and all discussions, activities, and simulations for the day were centered around that particular topic.

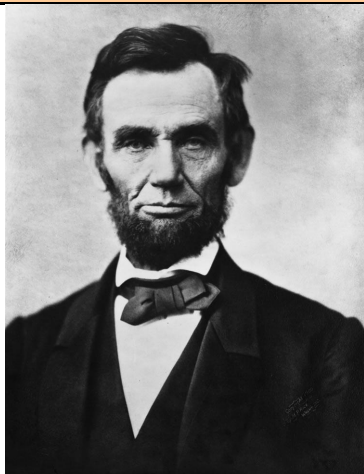
At one point or another, I had the chance to interact with everyone there, and long after the day’s sessions were over, we would all still be up wandering around the gardens or hanging out in the house, getting to know each other better. One of the days was all about identifying what you value in life, what you care about, and what motivates you every day. We then used this to develop our “vision,” which is the change that we plan to make at our school, community, or even the world. Perhaps my most valuable resource in all this soul-searching was my family cluster, a group of thirteen people with whom I had small group discussions and spent a large portion of time with. These people really pushed me to become a better leader and person and helped me to develop and define my vision. They were and continue to be a constant source of support, and I learned so much just by having personal conversations with them. In six days, all thirteen of us were truly a family, and many tears were shed when we had to say good-bye.

LeaderShape is one of those things you can’t really explain to others; you just have to experience it. It creates a safe environment for you to learn about yourself and others without criticism. In a short six days, LeaderShape can change your life, and it definitely changed mine. I think that I left LeaderShape with more confidence in my abilities, an open mind, a greater appreciation for the differences in others, and the knowledge to combine those differences to do great things. It was a very heartwarming experience for me to meet all these great people, and I know that every one of them will change the world, however great or small!

Let Your Vote Be Your Voice

By Karlie Elliott (ACES James Scholar Class of 2009)

Reprinted from *ULTREIA I: 3* (Autumn 2006)



← Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) is widely regarded as the greatest President in American history. Through his courage and conviction, he preserved the Union through the Civil War and liberated millions of slaves by means of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. *(Photo Credit: Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons)*

One of the many privileges of being an American citizen is the right to express our opinion in various forms. Whether protesting, writing letters to political leaders, storing your state representative’s

office number on your speed dial for easy access, or discussing current events, we are all entitled to our opinion, and we are free to express our views in an unlimited amount of ways! However, voicing concerns and opinions does little good in the political realm. Results are seen through the much-coveted vote. With the current state of our nation, states, and local municipalities, there seems to be a longing for change. How are these voices and longings heard, though? Taking advantage of one of the most coveted and prestigious rights in the world, the right to vote, is the most essential, prominent, and violence-free way to voice concerns and opinions to ultimately influence change.

According to statistics from the Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov/>), there are currently 61,180,772 people between the ages of 20 and 34 in the United States. If all of these individuals were to take advantage of their privilege to vote, just think of the changes that could occur! Leading up to the 2004 Presidential election, the push to influence younger generations to vote was so significant that as a result, election statistics show that these voters' participation was 9% higher than it was in the 2000 election. This statistic proves that every vote is important and can influence change!

With the upcoming elections on Tuesday, November 7, there are plenty of reasons for Illinois residents to vote, including the races for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Representatives of Congress, and State Senators. Each of these elections impacts students' daily lives, as these elected individuals are the ones who influence decisions regarding key issues including (but not limited to) the current war, health care, Social Security, educational costs, student loans, and student financial aid. Although it may seem that one vote is minor among millions of voters, that one vote could be the one needed to make a final significant decision.

Our generation, the current "college student" generation, will be the leaders of tomorrow, who with our votes can influence the changes of today. Therefore, I challenge each of you to register to vote, and on Tuesday, November 7, to voice your opinion loud and clear on the voting sheet. Regardless of your political beliefs, I strongly encourage you to become more aware of the hot current issues affecting society, and then gather facts relevant to these issues. Research issues in order to form an educated opinion based on accurate information, which will further influence your desire to exercise your voting rights. With so many pressing issues in our world today, the least that we as United States citizens can do is to take advantage of one of America's most fundamental rights, the right to vote. I challenge you to become aware of current issues and to jump on the bandwagon to "Rock the Vote!" For more information on voting, voter registration, and current issues, please visit the following websites:

- <http://www.elections.state.il.us/>
- <http://www.rockthevote.com/home.php>
- <http://www.votesmart.org/index.htm>

Adventures with Kids & Chemistry (www.scs.uiuc.edu/~kidsnchem/index.php)

By Lerin Rives (Class of 2009)

Reprinted from *CURSUS HONORUM VII: 6* (January 2007)



← Anonymous Renaissance portrait of Maria Prophetissa (fl. ca. 1st century AD); according to legend, she was the first woman to practice alchemy – a precursor to modern chemistry. (Photo Credit: Public Domain)

I found participating in the Kids & Chemistry Program to be a very rewarding experience. I first found out about it when registration times were announced in my **CHEM 102 (General Chemistry I)** class. I had an interest in signing up then, but I let the deadline slip by and figured that I would do it another time. So, when two students announced it again in my **CHEM 104 (General Chemistry II)** class, I told myself that I would do it. (My decision to participate in Kids & Chemistry came before my decision to apply to be a James Scholar.) My goal was primarily to boost my self-esteem in chemistry, since I had struggled through 102. Though I studied hard and learned a lot, my grades did not always reflect my effort. I figured that if I could be successful in teaching children how to do chemistry, then at least that would prove that I could do something right.

During my training session, I believe that I was the only person taking notes. Though handouts were given to us, I wanted to make sure that I understood everything correctly. The experiments that we would perform involved things that I had not done in lab before, which was great because I learned something new. I was excited to see the demonstrations during my training session because *I* felt like the little third-grader sitting there in awe thinking, “I didn’t know that! Cool!”

When it was my day to go with a group to the elementary school, I was nervous, but I couldn’t wait to see how things were going to work out. My group got along just fine and worked well together. We had met before and divvied up the explanations for the experiments, so we were pretty well prepared. As soon as we walked into the first classroom, the kids seemed really excited. We started right away, and they were all very responsive to our questions. When it came time to do the small group experiments, they had absolutely no shame in putting on the safety glasses, which isn’t exactly my favorite part of lab, so I’m glad that they got into it. We ran a little short of time in the first classroom, but we still got to do most of the demonstrations.

By the second classroom, we really had it down. The kids in my small group were a little rowdier, but the experiments went just as well as the first time. When we left the school, I felt really good about myself and what my group had done in both of the classrooms. It was so much fun to be able to teach chemistry, since sometimes I forget how much fun it can be. It’s scary, but I think that I’m coming to grips with the fact that I *do* like chemistry; it’s just not as easy as I would like it to be sometimes. However, with chemistry in mind, I have learned that part of the fun in things is the challenge. The Kids & Chemistry Program offered the perfect relief for a habitually strenuous chemistry schedule, and I most definitely plan to participate again in the spring semester.

Tips of the Trade

By Karlie Elliott (Class of 2009)

Reprinted from *CURSUS HONORUM VII: 7* (February 2007)



← The Greek hero Hercules takes responsibility for his future by choosing to follow Virtue (right) instead of Vice (left) in this painting by Emmanuel Benner (1836-1896). Read Xenophon's fable, "The Choice of Hercules," @ www.rickwalton.com/folktale/holid064.htm. (Image Credit: Public Domain)

- **"To decide, to be at the level of choice, is to take responsibility for your life and to be in control of your life." -- Abbie M. Dale**

Attending the prestigious University of Illinois is analogous to embarking on a great journey. As I discovered through the experiences that life brings, sometimes a map of this journey is provided for your convenience, while in other instances the route is obscure. To diminish a little of the obscurity, you can take responsibility for your journey by planning ahead, asking questions, and taking advantage of University services. From experience, I have learned that being prepared, asking questions, utilizing resources, taking responsibility, and getting to know others are essential components for success.

Utilizing resources such as course and department websites, academic advisors, faculty, UI-Integrate, the Library, and extracurricular activities is simple and often takes only a short amount of time. Awareness of crucial information not only assists the journey toward receiving a diploma, but it also institutes many privileges, experiences, and new knowledge. Moreover, these resources allow you to gather knowledge about courses, your GPA, research information, due dates, interests in other realms, networking, and new relationships! Responsibility is useful throughout all of life and is highly respected, but it is not always the easiest competency to acquire.

Fortunately for students, a multitude of resources is available to answer questions and accommodate needs. Technology allows many resources to be accessible in almost any location and at any time with just the click of a mouse. Many campus resources also offer appointments and walk-in sessions, along with pleasant staff members who are trained to serve students' specific needs.

While students are responsible for their own success at the University, there is never any shame in asking for assistance. It is essential for students to be self-supporting and take responsibility for knowing important deadlines, scholastic requirements, advisors, library information, etc. However, there are some questions that cannot be answered with online information, over the phone, or without asking. University service centers and faculty members are wonderful resources to utilize in such instances. Faculty members are available and willing to assist students, offer great advice, or provide different perspectives. More often than not, faculty members have encountered similar experiences or questions in the past, and they understand that help is a necessary part of life. To answer difficult questions, obtain advice, or gather reassurance, calling or visiting the University's Counseling Center (www.couns.uiuc.edu/), faculty members, academic advisors, or ACES deans is highly recommended.

The Counseling Center offers professionals who can provide confidential help with academic struggles, personal troubles, relationship difficulties, or health-related problems. Be sure to take advantage of special resources specifically for ACES students, such as the ACES deans. The College of ACES is known for its welcoming atmosphere, and ACES students are fortunate to have wonderful deans who are always willing to answer any questions or offer solutions to students' problems. Faculty members and deans realize that life is not always easy, that some questions can be difficult to answer, and that some-

times life does not work out as planned. ACES deans are down-to-earth, sincere individuals who are dedicated to the students whom they serve, and they take great pride in the fact that students regularly turn to them for help.

Asking for help is never shameful; actually, asking for advice is admirable because everyone encounters struggles throughout the journey of life. Life happens, and fortunately there are many resources available to make every experience a learning opportunity, no matter how terrible a situation may seem at the time. Never forget that we are all in this life together, that there is always someone available to help, and that asking for help is never shameful.

College is a great time for growth, discovery, recognizing personal limits, obtaining help, and learning responsibilities – all of which will greatly contribute to your journey toward success! Therefore, students are strongly encouraged to take responsibility for their lives and use the resources available to them, which will greatly enrich their experiences here at the University and allow for a multitude of opportunities.

Leadership over Lunch with President White
By Karlie Elliott (Class of 2009)
Reprinted from ULTREIA II: 1 (Spring 2007)



← As part of the Illinois Leadership Certificate Program (www.illinoisleadership.uiuc.edu/), Karlie has read President White's book on hegemony (leadership studies): *The Nature of Leadership*. The book is available for purchase at the Illini Union Bookstore (www.uofibookstore.uiuc.edu/) and through other booksellers nationwide. (Photo Credit: Jamie Evans, ACES Academic Programs)

How do you manage your ambition? Do you surround yourself with people better than you, or do you even believe that people exist who are better than you? These questions were posed by the President of the University of Illinois, Dr. B. Joseph White, to inspire leaders to think about their purpose.

On Thursday, January 26, the Illinois Leadership Center's Leadership Certificate participants attended lunch with President White to discuss his new book, *The Nature of Leadership: Reptiles, Mammals, and the Challenge of Becoming a Great Leader* (New York: Amacom Books, 2006; 200 pp., \$21.95).

As we were walking up to the President's mansion for the luncheon, Mrs. White waved as she pulled her car out of the drive, with the family's beloved dog Webster sitting beside her. We were greeted at the door by the President's official events coordinator. Upon entry, our coats were taken, and we were guided to the lunch line. While we were waiting in line, President White arrived home and

greeted us in the kitchen. He assisted with pouring beverages and made sure that everyone got through the line.

Seated in the President's dining room, we enjoyed lunch and stimulating conversation with President White, his assistant, and his daughter. He asked each attendee about their leadership involvement and to elaborate if he was unfamiliar with their organization. President White was very interested to learn more about the various aspects of the University represented at our table.

After lunch, we moved to the living room and formed a large circle to discuss the President's book. He began the conversation by telling us that earlier in the morning, he had received a call regarding a large donation to the University, but he responded that he had a prior commitment. At this point in time, it was not yet announced that the large donation that Dr. White spoke of was British Petroleum's \$500 million donation for biofuels research at the University of California (Berkeley) and the University of Illinois. Upon hearing this announcement after leaving the luncheon, I was impressed and even more respectful of our University's leader. The President's commitment to honor the luncheon with our group is truly reflective of his leadership.

Our discussion consisted of an in-depth question-and-answer session. Participants asked a wide array of questions, and the President answered without reservation. He shared with us that "great people are not necessarily leaders," and that "most leaders fail not because they are not good leaders, but because they do not follow well." This insight is valuable because as leaders, we often forget that a major component of excelling as a leader is the ability to follow well.

Another area discussed was the importance of leading by example. The President stressed the importance of thinking independently, appealing to people's dreams, and questioning egos. Dr. White mentioned a situation where he had supported his former Harvard classmate, Bill Clinton, to major company boards and executives. After the scandal surrounding Clinton, Dr. White expressed that he had felt betrayed and that he had let others down by supporting Clinton's leadership, since Clinton had lied under oath and neglected his leadership position.

Dr. White also told many inspiring stories relating to his time at Cummins Engine Co., Inc., and his many leadership positions at the University of Michigan. These experiences, he said, taught him to "surround himself with people better than him." This, he indicated, will enable development to recruit people "with an appetite for leadership and who are the best people for one's organization." This is important because these types of people will contribute and have a much higher integrity standard.

The final major leadership topic discussed was the sparkle factor. The sparkle factor is mentioned several times in Dr. White's book, as this is a component that many leaders have, and it is often regarded as very important in leadership. However, not everyone has the sparkle factor, and if not, this does not mean that they will not succeed in leadership. It became obvious through our interaction with the President that he has the sparkle factor. He said that he believes that the major difference in his leadership is that he strives to maintain empathy and energy. His goal as a leader is "to feel a lot with other people and always ask how things are going." President White said, "The sparkle factor is not something individuals at age 18, 20, or 25 have yet. The sparkle factor is developed after time and entails assertiveness, being an extrovert, innate decision making, respect, ability to listen, and taking the effort to care."

The time spent with President White was invaluable and spiritually renewing. The University of Illinois is privileged to have a premier leader and individual serving as its President. It is with utmost gratitude that I thank the Illinois Leadership Center and President White for offering such a unique opportunity that has greatly impacted my experience as a leader and as an individual, and it will forever enrich my life.

ACES Says Goodbye to an Honored Dean: An Interview with Dr. Wayne Banwart

By Dorothy Spencer (Class of 2010)

Reprinted from ULTREIA II: 2 (Summer 2007)



← Dean Banwart received the Honorary ACES James Scholar Award at the seventh annual Honors Symposium on April 7, 2006. From left to right: 2005-06 Honors Council members Michael Leick, Katie Baker, and Michelle Blaschek; Rob Chappell, Dean Banwart, and Dean Simmons. (Photo Credit: Linda Jacobson, Class of 2008)

After 32 years of dedicated service to the College of ACES, Dean Wayne Banwart will be retiring on the first of September, 2007. He will truly be missed.

Dean Banwart graduated from Iowa State University with a B.S. in Agronomy and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Soil Sciences. He joined the agronomy faculty at the University of Illinois in 1975 and started taking part in what he now recalls as some of the best experiences of his career. During an interview, Dean Banwart detailed the three experiences that he enjoyed the most. The first was teaching Introductory Soils and all soil classes in general. The second was doing research on acid rain with complex greenhouse systems, and last, but certainly not least, was working with the James Scholar Honors Program.

Dean Banwart became Assistant Dean for Academic Programs in 1995 and served in that position until 2005, when he was appointed Interim Associate Dean. According to Dean Banwart, when he started as a dean, the Honors Program was a small part of the job. However, the Honors Program was outdated and needed revising. Dean Banwart worked tirelessly to make the James Scholar experience into the Honors Program that we know today. He actually served on a campuswide committee to make the James Scholar Honors Programs in each college more uniform across campus.

When asked why the ACES James Scholar Honors Program was important, Dean Banwart said, "It is a formal recognition of outstanding academic performance and experience." The experiences – such as the annual symposium, honors activities, and undergraduate research – are the most important parts of the program according to Dean Banwart. "It's not just based on GPA," he observed. The most rewarding part of the ACES James Scholar Honors Program for Dean Banwart was the opportunity to see students wearing their medallions as they walked across the stage at graduation. "That is when I know that they have really crossed the finish line," said Dean Banwart.

According to Dean Banwart, his greatest accomplishment has been being an Assistant Dean and Interim Associate Dean. He has truly enjoyed the chance to meet and influence numerous students, parents, and professionals through his service as a dean.

The person who influenced Dean Banwart the most was his high school agriculture teacher, Mr. Cast. Mr. Cast introduced Dean Banwart to speaking and leadership and inspired him to attend college. Dean Banwart's original goal was simply to survive as a professor at the University of Illinois, but he has done much more! He has truly accomplished all of his career goals. He never dreamed of being a dean, and the decision to have a career in academics at the U of I is one of the most influential ones in his life.

After retiring, Dean Banwart will be anything but idle. He will start his term serving as President of the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) in June 2007. His retirement will be filled with work for NACTA and international volunteer work. Through opportunities in his church, Dean Banwart has been able to volunteer at an orphanage in Magdalena, Mexico and work in Haiti, Jamaica, across Europe, the Caribbean, and the United States with the National World Relief Committee.

Dean Banwart reminds everyone to remember how fortunate they are to have been born in the United States, with the intelligence and financial ability to attend the University of Illinois. Through his experience in international travel, Dean Banwart has been reminded that many others in the United States

and other countries are not as lucky. The advice that Dean Banwart has for James Scholars includes taking every opportunity and making connections with professors. "Get to know the faculty; they are tremendous people," he said. Students can learn from them, and the relationship can be mutually beneficial, according to Dean Banwart.

The enthusiasm and energy that Dean Banwart has dedicated to the College of ACES will truly be missed once he retires. Thank you, Dean Banwart, for all that you have done. You will be missed!



Dean Banwart (center) received the 2005 Boss of the Year Award from Carol Phillippe (right), Chairperson of the Secretariat's Boss of the Year Award Committee. He was nominated by Rob Chappell (left), who served as his amanuensis from 2000 to 2005. *(Photo Credit: Selena Douglass, the Secretariat's Historian)*

Changing the World Through Sharing What We Have Learned: My Philosophy of Education

By Rob Chappell

An Address Delivered to the Eighth Annual ACES James Scholar Honors Symposium

Friday, April 13, 2007 at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts

Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen, deans and faculty members, ACES James Scholars, and honored guests:

It is an honor and a privilege to be here with you today. This month marks the seventh anniversary of my arrival in ACES Academic Programs. It has been a pleasure to spend the last seven years as the Honors Secretary under the direction of Dean Banwart and Dean Simmons, and I have taken great delight in working with so many talented young scholars and helping them to achieve their academic goals. Based on my James-Scholarly observations, and on my own experiences as an honors student at the University of Illinois, I would like to share with you some brief reflections on what can make your academic achievements most meaningful.

As ACES James Scholars, you are well on your way toward completing the undergraduate portion of your academic journey. Some of you are no doubt making plans to attend graduate or professional school; while for others, the real world is beckoning through internships and the prospect of full-time employment. No matter what your plans may be following graduation, you will still be faced with some momentous questions that I would like to place before you today. What makes a James-Scholarly education meaningful, and why do you, as ACES James Scholars, strive to achieve academic excellence at the University of Illinois?

The answers may vary from person to person, and that is only to be expected, for there are many possible reasons why each of you has chosen to follow the path to scholastic excellence. Admission to graduate or professional school, lucrative job opportunities, and the satisfaction of becoming a well-rounded individual are all laudable in and of themselves. But I would submit to you that there is one reason to strive for academic achievement that surpasses all of these, without negating the others in any way.

The highest goal to which you can aspire as ACES James Scholars is to seize the opportunity to share what you have learned with others. Learning profound truths about the world and thinking great thoughts are wonderful exercises for the mind – but they can only become meaningful if you share them

with others. Your parents and teachers, the professors and administrators of the University, and the agencies that have funded your education here, are all expecting something from you once you leave the classroom and dormitory behind, and that something is that somehow, somewhere, at sometime in the future, you will use what you have learned here to help change the world for the better. This goal is put very eloquently by Captain John Sheridan in an episode from the second season of *Babylon 5*:

We have to make people lift their eyes back to the horizon, and see the line of ancestors behind us, saying, "Make my life have meaning." And to our inheritors before us, saying, "Create the world we will live in." I mean, we're not just holding jobs and having dinner. We are in the process of building the future.

– Episode #37: "And Now for a Word"

How can you, as ACES James Scholars, build the future by sharing what you have learned? This endeavor can take manifold forms. One person can become a volunteer mentor to schoolchildren at risk. Another person may write a blog about a recent study tour to Brazil. Still another will present a seminar about how to stamp out hatred in a nearby city. Do whatever you feel led to do – but be sure that you do something to make the world a better place because of what you have learned here, both inside and outside the classroom.

As an alumnus of the School of Humanities at UIUC, allow me to share with you two brief examples of how sharing what we have learned can make the world a better place. They are examples drawn from classic literature – from books that I hope you will read at some time in the future, if you haven't perused them already.

I. The *Gilgamesh Epic* (Anonymous, Circa 2000 BC)

In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, which was composed over 4000 years ago in Mesopotamia, the hero, King Gilgamesh, undertakes heroic deeds with his friend Enkidu to rescue people from dangerous monsters. When Enkidu falls ill and dies, Gilgamesh goes on a globetrotting quest to find the secret of immortality. Although the king fails to attain endless longevity, he does obtain lasting fame because, when he returns to his home city from all his adventures, he shares his experiences with his subjects and teaches them what he has learned from his far-flung adventures. As the epic poet wrote of King Gilgamesh:

He who has seen everything, I will make known to the lands. I will teach about him who experienced all things alike; Anu granted him the totality of knowledge of all. He saw the Secret, discovered the Hidden; he brought information of the time before the Flood. He went on a distant journey, pushing himself to exhaustion, but then was brought to peace. Take and read out from the lapis lazuli tablet how Gilgamesh went through every hardship. He walked through darkness and so glimpsed the light.

– *Gilgamesh Epic*: Tablets I & XII

Whatever historical truth may lie behind his legend, Gilgamesh is remembered still today because the life lessons that he exemplified are timeless truths that appear again and again throughout world literature. Mortality will come to us all, Gilgamesh would say, but while life lasts, let us spend it in service to others through heroic deeds and teaching wisdom by example.

II. *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus* by L. Frank Baum (1902)

In L. Frank Baum's classic holiday tale, *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*, we meet a young man named Claus, a human foundling raised by the immortal denizens of an enchanted forest. In his young manhood, he chose to dwell among mortal humans because he wanted to share the joys of his

own happy childhood with the children of humankind. At first he simply played, sang, and shared stories with the children who lived near his home in the Laughing Valley of Hohaho, but afterward, he “invented” the first toys and spread the joy of giving Yuletide gifts around the world. Unlike Gilgamesh, Claus obtained endless life within the circles of the world, when the immortals who had raised him endowed him with the Mantle of Immortality. They gave Claus such a momentous gift because Claus had seen that the lives of mortal children in that long-ago time were filled with drudgery and misery, and he had determined to correct this injustice by sharing with them the fruits of his experience – namely, that a happy childhood, filled with kindness and giving, could lay the foundation for a better world when the children grew up.

Baum summarizes so eloquently the lessons to be drawn from his mythical biography of Santa Claus that they require no further comment on my part. He writes:

Everything perishes except the world itself and its keepers. But while life lasts, everything on earth has its use. The wise seek ways to be helpful to the world, for the helpful ones are sure to live again. Yet every man has his mission, which is to leave the world better, in some way, than he found it.
– Book I, Chapters 6 & 7

It is true that great warriors and mighty kings and clever scholars of that day were often spoken of by the people; but no one of them was so greatly beloved as Santa Claus, because none other was so unselfish as to devote himself to making others happy. For a generous deed lives longer than a great battle or a king's decree or a scholar's essay, because it spreads and leaves its mark on all nature and endures through many generations.
– Book II, Chapter 11

“In all this world there is nothing so beautiful as a happy child,” says good old Santa Claus; and if he had his way, the children would all be beautiful, for all would be happy.
– Book III, Chapter 3

Conclusion

To me, these principles are not just words printed on a page; I have had the privilege to see them in action as I have pursued my own career as an administrative professional at the University of Illinois. After obtaining my master’s degree, I spent three years at the Graduate College managing its Information Office. There, I met and fell in love with student services – which led me to the College of ACES and its James Scholar Honors Program, where I have been working with hundreds of gifted students like you for the past seven years. Sharing educational experiences with all of you has had a profound impact on me. Through my time spent with you future leaders of government and industry, my own hope for the future has been rekindled, for I see in you a sincere desire to serve humanity through your chosen career paths, both now and after graduation – and that’s what sharing your education with others is all about. In the words of Novalis (1772-1801), my favorite German Romantic poet:

We are on a mission: we are called upon to educate the earth.
– *Blüthenstaub* (1798)

There is one final thought that I’d like to leave with you today – sharing your educational experiences is contagious, and it never has to end. It begins with you and then spreads out to the people around you until it becomes a chain reaction that has the potential to transform our society in ways that we can only dimly imagine now. You may never know if that fellow classmate, younger sibling, niece, nephew, or child of yours is going to turn out to be the next Albert Einstein or Marie Curie. That’s what makes

sharing your education with others so exciting – you will never fail to be surprised by the friends that you make and the goals that you can help them to achieve. As for me, I’m eagerly waiting to see what you ACES James Scholars are going to do next year, next decade, and so on and so on, into the bright human future among the stars that we all fervently wish for.

Today, we are gathered here to celebrate your achievements and help you to make plans for your future. I would like to challenge you to discover how you can use your James-Scholarly education to benefit the people and institutions that you will come into contact with throughout the rest of your life. The ACES James Scholar Honors Program will be most grateful – as will all the people who have supported your educational endeavors – if you will use your James-Scholarly experiences to unlock the door to a future of lifelong service to others, which will inevitably lead to a better world for us all. In closing, let us remember and take to heart the words of Captain Sheridan from *Babylon 5*:

I mean, we're not just holding jobs and having dinner. We are in the process of building the future.

Congratulations to you all, thank you, and TGIF the 13th! ☺