

Academic Affairs Picnic

Welcome to the AA Kickoff Picnic

First of what we intend to become a tradition
An opportunity to get together informally
before the students, faculty, and problems of the
University swamp us

I might add that this is also an occasion to get to
know one another a bit better...
to better bond us into a team that can address the
challenges before the University

While we are excited and enthusiastic about the year

ahead, I know that most of us are also saddened
this weekend by the tragic loss of one of the most
critical member of the Academic Affairs team,
Ralph Nichols -- a friend and a colleague.
He demonstrated a courage and strength these past few
months that will always serve as an example to us.
We will miss him deeply...

But I also suspect that Ralph, probably more than anyone,
would have encouraged us to look beyond the sadness of
the moment to the challenges that lie ahead in the future.

As a faculty member and then a dean, it was readily

apparent to me that all of the needs, concerns, frustrations,
and pressures stirred up by this incredibly complex and
diverse University tend to focus on the Office of Academic
Affairs.

In the short period of four months I have been over here,
the immense responsibilities that you face have become
even more apparent to me -- as has the dedication,
talent, and professionalism that are directed to serving
the University.

In the face of such intense pressures and responsibilities,
I suspect that we should all simply dedicate ourselves to
continuing to perform our present tasks with skill and
efficiency...

Unfortunately, as those of you who know me are aware,

I am not particularly good at merely steering the ship of
Academic Affairs through the stormy seas of the University.
Rather, I tend to be more comfortable moving at hyperdrive
speed...Warp Factor 7...

And, while our responsibilities are already extraordinary,

to be sure, it is also the case that Academic Affairs has a
major impact on the pace of the University....we set both its
course and its speed!

I am absolutely convinced, that the University must

pick up the pace a bit...it must intensify its commitment to
excellence...and our Office will be a key in stimulating this.
I prefer the "go-for-it" style, in which conservatism is
thrown out the window in favor of encouraging talented
people to do exciting things!

So, perhaps it is good to catch our breath for a moment

at the start of the Academic Year.
Because we are about to start a marathon...but wearing
the spikes of a sprinter!!!