

SILS Symposium Banquet (5/13/91)

Ford Library

Format: Introduction and Welcome by Bob Warner, then JJD, then DVH and Don Riggs follow.

Talk Points

Delighted to be here.

Want to thank Bob Warner, Doug Van Houweling,

and all of those faculty, staff and students who have worked so hard to produce the landmark report Information and People.

A. Importance of Issues being discussed by Symposium Participants

1. Critical Turning Point.

What we do now, will determine shape of our information system for years to come.

When I became Provost, I recognized that information technology

would determine the future, not just of ITD or the libraries

--but of the University, of every aspect of our society.

Information technology is literally reshaping much of what we do and how we do it

It is changing knowledge itself, methods of scholarship, magnitude of intellectual reach

It is reducing the drudgery of scholarship

extending the intellectual reach of students and faculty

We have only begun to exploit value of information technology as a teaching tool

but not only do we already have evidence of the revolutionary impact of technology on learning at all levels,

we also can see that the best teaching technology can be shared

across the country and the world and across the generations

Information technology is extending our reach as institution

and as individual researchers, we are linked for collaboration,

cooperation, information sharing with any peer or colleague on the globe

Information is extending benefits of our service mission

through networks that reach professionals in continuing education networks

link information resources, making it available to anyone anywhere

put us right in any classroom or factory or laboratory anywhere

Information technology is a powerful democratizing force in our world

it is a political, economic and cultural force

In what has been called an "Age of Knowledge".

the knowledge developed and shared
has literally become the wealth of nations
I could go on but I know I am preaching to the choir
In any event, just five years or so ago,
working with Deans and other key leaders, our strategic planning
set the goal of making the UM a national leader in information technology
We decided to be the most wired campus in the country.
We committed the funds to achieve this goal
It involved a considerable investment of resources both human and material
We've achieved our initial goals and more
And I think we can all agree that the returns on our investment
have been extraordinary
They are stimulating and providing the means for an intellectual revolution
but when it comes to information technology,
there's no such thing as pausing to rest on your laurels.
Accelerating change means
that we must keep on running to stay in the lead.
But it isn't even that simple.
the truth is that we must make difficult choices
choices that will affect our future as a University.
The issues are complex, interrelated, and there are no easy answers
What is clear is that we cannot afford
to do everything we could do or might wish to do.

That is why your deliberations in this symposium
are of the utmost importance.
Each campus will have to find its own best way
according to historic strengths and priorities for the future.

B. Process of the Symposium

The Foundation of the process
is faculty participation.
Student participation and input is also important
But it is the faculty whose professional lives will be most extensively affected
by decisions we make now about directions and priorities in information
technology.
Clearly, we need to give a high priority to finding better mechanisms
for informing and involving faculty
in these critical strategic campus discussions

Public Forum

The Public Forum added an important dimension

allowing anyone who wanted to comment an opportunity to do so.

Both the committees and forum and now the work of this group

represent an unusual opportunity for interdisciplinary and interdepartmental dialog on topics of historic importance to our entire community.

It is critical that we work together to build an infrastructure that will serve us all.

As I said before, some of the choices ahead will be hard ones.

There will need to be compromises and no doubt there will be competing interests among which it will be nearly impossible to choose.

But choose we must

and the choices should not be made by bureaucrats or administrators they must be made by the faculty

since they have the most at stake and the best yardstick by which to judge.

The measure is what will best support and advance our teaching and our research.

C. Outcomes of May 14th Symposium

What you discuss tomorrow will be important

because it builds on the work of the committees rather than being developed in isolation from the faculty.

This is a very positive model for community consultation on critical issues for our future

one that I hope will be repeated in other key areas.

Your work will also have a significant impact on the work of the Budget Priorities Committee and PACE.

D. Conclusion

I wish you very well in your deliberations.

I look forward to learning about the outcome.

I thank you for this very important service to our University.

Thank you.