

# From the President

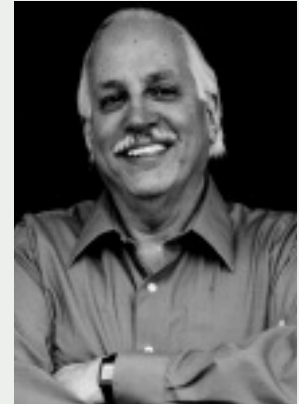
MARK SCHULMAN

On prior occasions, I have discussed with you in this brief communication the reinvention of Goddard in which your college has been engaged over my five-year tenure. (Has it really been that long? Has it really been that short?) One important aspect of that reinvention is to see ourselves as others see us.

As you'll recall from what I wrote last time, this has come up in reference to the future of progressive higher education (about which I'll write more in future columns), especially in reference to the roller coaster ride of Antioch College over the last six months. In this *Clockworks*, I want to discuss how others see us through a somewhat different filter.

I'm reading a very interesting book, *Academic Turnarounds: Restoring Vitality to Challenged American Colleges and Universities*, edited by Terrence MacTaggart. Dr. MacTaggart, who has had a long and distinguished career in higher education administration, served for nine years on the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, chairing the commission for three

MacTaggart argues that restoring financial health (Stage I) is a necessary but not sufficient step in a turnaround, and we can surely acknowledge that closing the Residential Undergraduate Program was a bold, if painful and controversial, plan to move toward fiscal stability and long-term sustainability. But there are at least two more stages in an institution's turnaround transformation, according to MacTaggart:



- Stage II: "branding and marketing" to re-establish or reconfigure (or both) the college's reputation; and
- Stage III: "academic revitalization," which is characterized by substantive, even radical, change, aimed at a complex and deep revision and re-visioning of the institutional identity.

WHILE WE WILL MAINTAIN OUR VIGILANCE OF OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION, WE WILL AT THE SAME TIME GO BEYOND BEING A "GOING CONCERN" TO BECOME A GROWING CONCERN, SUSTAINABLE, SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE, ACADEMICALLY RIGOROUS, AND INNOVATIVE.

years. In that capacity, he has been intimately familiar with details of our recent history, in which NEASC, our regional accrediting body, plays a (let's just say) major supporting role.

In *Academic Turnarounds*, which was published in 2007 and based on research involving more than three dozen institutions, here is what he has to say about Goddard:

"And some academic turnarounds require a significant dismemberment. Trustees of Goddard College faced the prospects of going bankrupt or selling off the campus and its programs. Beset with a low student-faculty ratio and a relatively expensive full-time faculty, the traditional undergraduate program could not be sustained. There were questions regarding continued accreditation. Ultimately, the college shut down its undergraduate program in favor of a low-residency alternative for older students. Closing the traditional program and dismissing its faculty saved the college, and today it is a going concern."

Suggesting that a major problem for most distressed institutions is that they remain frozen in Stage I, in which they "resemble neighborhood convenience stores," MacTaggart describes through case studies and illuminates through extensive analysis what must be done to accomplish a transformation.

I can't say for sure whether Goddard is in Stage II or Stage III: maybe both simultaneously? But I am certain we have not been, are not, and will not be stuck in Stage I. While we will maintain our vigilance of our financial situation, we will at the same time go beyond being a "going concern" to become a growing concern, sustainable, socially responsible, academically rigorous, and innovative. Our reinvention will in some ways take us back to the future: Goddard's coming as one of the premier institutions of progressive higher education into a bright, exciting, collaboratively-constructed newness.