

Wine, Women and Winnie the Pooh

Accomplished educator, researcher, and higher education leader Kay Moore, recipient of the Alumni Achievement Award, gave the Capstone Leadership Lecture at the 2014 National Conference, at which delegates voted to dedicate a portion of time at future conferences to help chapters develop best practices in leadership, programming and membership selection for the stated purpose of advancing the status of women.

I have been asked to give some remarks on what I have learned about leadership and life since I was [selected to] Mortar Board back in the 1960s. Who better than someone whose training is in educational history and policy, especially about colleges and universities? And I am someone who began my academic career when women faculty were as rare as hen's teeth, and who began and remains an inveterate reader of literature—children's literature. Naturally, with that background and experience, I selected three themes Wine, Women, and Winnie the Pooh; and I will add a little Alice in Wonderland too.

Let us begin with Wine. It can safely be said that drinking has been associated with college student life from the beginning. Wine, beer and the conviviality associated with them have been a part of most student groups, plays, songs, literature and student customs for centuries. And for those same centuries, college officials have labored to curtail, if not absolutely prohibit, the use and abuse of the stuff. The Harvard student conduct laws of 1745, for example, listed three separate rules out of 19 against drunkenness, boisterous entertaining of other students or strangers, and possession of unauthorized liquors.

But lest you think that the colonial colleges were total prohibitionists. Beer was dispensed at meals, including breakfast, and large quantities were provided at commencement—for everyone. No, the Puritans were not teetotalers, but they did demand moderation and despised drunkenness.

Eating must be considered along with wine as the heart of student life throughout the ages. Colleges have struggled with how to provide food to students for just as long. And students have protested the result just as long. One of the earliest student riots was the Bad Butter Rebellion when students marched behind the stirring banner, "Behold, the Butter Stinketh." Not the most romantic rallying cry, but it got our tradition of student protest started.

But despite the many downsides of alcohol on campus—and they are many and serious, wine is also a metaphor for me of the energy and new ideas that students bring to our campuses. Students are often like new wine that, when put into the old bottles of college customs and tradition, simply overflows and pushes out the corks to create something new.

Political activism is of course an important effervescence of student life. Issues of the day, including war, politics and big ideas have always fascinated students. Colonial college students protested English policies before the Revolutionary War. Students at the University of Virginia styled themselves as gentlemen cavaliers and rode into the Civil War as though it were a lark that would soon end. In the 1950s, the Beatniks coined the phrase “far out” and turned the neighborhoods of many urban universities into centers of unorthodox religion, poetry and politics. But it was the 1960s that rocked and shocked the nation in an orgy of counter-culture talk, dress and behavior. Never before had so many students been roused into political awareness.

Looking back at that time that is so fast receding from our collective memory, it is impossible to capture all the important points or outcomes, and I will not attempt it this morning. Let me select just two that I think are particularly salient for today as examples of the impact of students.

The first is civil rights. The second is the relationship of the student to the university.

Although there is a giant tapestry of events to be included in the full story of the civil rights movement in this country, it touched the campuses in several specific ways. I am thinking first of the many courageous and, some would say, outrageous black leaders—Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, James Meredith, and many more. Then came the early sit-ins at the Woolworth’s lunch counters, the Mississippi Summer Project, and the Freedom Riders in which African Americans were joined by white students in literally putting their lives on the line for civil rights. Students made a critical difference.

The second issue is perhaps more disputable as a major outcome of the 60s, but for my purposes, it is as important as many others; that is, the challenge by students to the university itself. Until the middle of the 60s, the university was seen not as a field of confrontation for major social issues such as civil rights, but

as an institution that was important for its intellectual resources and its tradition of critical thought.

But the Free Speech Movement that began at Berkeley in 1964 was significant because it brought home to the university some of the tactics of the civil rights movement, including civil disobedience. But also, rhetoric about the meaning and purpose of the university grew heated.

Suddenly everyone was talking about the university, its role in the military draft, its policies for permitting recruiters on campus from the Dow Chemical Company, the maker of napalm, and for other connections to corporate America instead of the common man. Strikes, sit-ins, teach-ins and takeovers moved from the streets to the campuses of hundreds of universities and colleges. Protests grew more violent. So did the response.

But underneath the rhetoric, around the corner from the violence, transformations were occurring that have altered the relationship of the university to student and to society. The first is an acknowledgement in fact and deed that students are adults. The second is that students have a right to participate in the important decisions facing our universities. The third is that the learning environment itself should be less hierarchical and authoritarian and more responsive and reciprocal. Looking back over the more than 350 years of our American academic history, these changes are no small potatoes.

At the beginning of my own undergraduate years at Ohio State in the 1960s, the university like most others was enforcing a group of parietal rules by which women had to keep hours and men did not. Failure to obey these myriad rules subjected women students to the full power of a student-run judiciary as well as administrative sanctions. I spent a good share of my time as a leader, first in the residence halls and then in the Women's Self Government Association, trying to make the system work effectively and fairly; and, at the same time, through the legislative process and in discussions with deans, trying to get it abolished. While such policies seem now to be quaintly ridiculous or even pernicious, they did have certain positive aspects. While some might argue that the opportunity to develop leadership skills could have been accomplished in other ways, that wasn't an option at the time, particularly for women. And for the most part, the system tried to be benign if paternalistic.

The whole apparatus of *in loco parentis* fell away in the 1970s. And it dragged with it a system of counseling and support for women students that, at least in a large public university like Ohio State, had provided pockets of concern and opportunity for women that did not exist in the larger university.

That brings me, of course, to my second theme: Women.

When Elena Cornara Piscopia became the first woman ever to receive a university degree, the year was 1679 and universities had been in business for over 400 years. Her graduation drew such a crowd that they had to move the ceremony from the University of Padua to the Cathedral.

Two hundred years later, in 1879, a noted American physician, Dr. William Smith, claimed that he had discovered the cause of most ill health in women. That cause was overeducation. Education took blood to the brain that was needed for women's muscular and generative organs. "Over-education," he warned, "overdevelops the nervous system, causes women to lead abnormal lives, and not to marry until 26 or 27 if at all, whereas they ought to marry at 18." Finally, the good doctor said, "education raises women's standards so high that no man can afford to marry them."

Well, despite these scares and alarms, women have persisted in attending and succeeding in college. They now make up 57% of all students. In the last decades, women have accounted for 80% of all enrollment growth.

The Council of Graduate Schools reports that women now earn over 59% of all master's degrees and over 48% of all doctorates. And the percentage of women with medical degrees has increased from 9% in 1970 to 49% in 2013, along with 47% of law degrees.

That is some of the good news about women in higher education in this country. But regrettably there is a flip side. Let me mention a few points. First, money:

Women who receive a baccalaureate degree are still likely to earn less than a man with a high school education.

Women physicians on average earn less than 50% of their male colleagues.

Women scientists and other women faculty generally earn between 15 and 50% less money than men with comparable jobs. According to the American Association for University Women, this amounts to over \$1.5 million in lost earnings over a woman's career.

Now for the opportunities:

Women compose over 75% of all teachers in elementary and secondary schools, and they hold fewer than 40% of principalships and fewer than 15% of school superintendencies.

On moderate and large-size campuses, women comprise approximately 35% of full-time faculty. And at research universities fewer than 26% are full time and only 6% are full professors. If you are looking for a female role model or mentor on one of these campuses, that scarcity is a problem.

And of the 3,200 two-year and four-year colleges in the country, women head fewer than one in 25.

Do you wonder about the reasons and justifications for such persistent discrepancies? So have I. For most of my academic career I reviewed research and conducted my own regarding the status of women in higher education and participated in countless policy discussions. So let me save you some time and tell you that when you take into account all the likely factors that might explain the differences, such as fields of specialization, marital status, time out for child-rearing, possible differences in work assignments or performance. Take all of those factors separately and together, and still there is a residual of difference that favors men in salaries and promotions.

That residual has a name: It is discrimination.

We have come a long way in America in providing the opportunity for women to gain education. And we have come a long way in setting clear criteria by which to measure occupational success. But if you thought the fight was over for gender equity in higher education or in society generally, IT ISN'T.

Toward the end of that masterpiece by Lewis Carroll, called *Through the Looking Glass* or *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice sighs and says "There's no use trying. One can't believe impossible things."

"I dare say you haven't had much practice," replied the Red Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as SIX impossible things before breakfast."

Well, I have taken the Queen's advice. But since I am not as practiced as she is, here are just two impossible beliefs. I hope you will consider them carefully. And perhaps come up with your own.

Impossible Belief #1

I believe sexism (and racism) and other forms of invidious inequality can and will be eradicated if we try, if we listen, if we encourage ourselves and others to develop the habit of freedom and the courage to see things, say things and do things with honesty and truth.

Not long ago, I had a conversation with two African American women students about their classroom experiences. They were both terribly discouraged. It seems that several of their instructors were blatantly sexist and racist. These young women hastened to tell me, however, that they were not complaining, but rather they wanted me to see how well they were adjusting and surviving anyway.

My response to them was this: Don't you dare adjust! Don't you dare merely survive! You are not here to slide along. What you do matters, not just for you, but for all the women and all the African Americans who follow you. Your leadership starts here; it starts now, and I will help you.

Impossible Belief #2

I believe that there are many men of good faith and good will who will listen, who will learn and who will help bring gender equity and opportunity into being, if women seek them out and insist, persuade and show them how to help.

Not long ago, a friend and I were dividing a piece of chocolate cake. We were dividing it for two reasons: First, we knew we should not have any of it. Second, we knew we couldn't resist. So we were dividing one piece between us, each lusting in her heart for the whole piece. At that incredible moment when my knife was poised above the cake and I was torn between love of my friend and love of

my own dear stomach, my friend grinned slyly and said, "You know, my mother has a custom for circumstances like these."

"Oh?" I said my knife still poised.

"It was her rule," my friend continued calmly, "that the person who does the dividing has to let the other person pick the piece."

I can't help but think that such kitchen-table ethics would serve us well as we analyze what all the trouble is about in women's efforts to enter and succeed in education and work. Put as simply as the nursery school lesson they obviously forgot, some men have not wanted to share. They have wanted to cut the cake and serve the pieces their way. And all their talk about meritocratic values, excellence, and professional expertise is often sheer rationalization for the basic gut feeling: I don't want to share.

When it comes down to it, isn't this one of the basic problems in the world at large? Men don't want to share with women; rich don't want to share with poor; the powerful with the less powerful?

But the issue must not remain men or women running our institutions, for that too is a false dichotomy. Rather, we need men and women sharing the enterprise, because that is what matters, that is real power.

We who are members of Mortar Board share this particular impossible belief. Since 1975 we have included men in our membership. And, I probably don't need to remind you that a new phrase was added to our Constitution at that time that stated our "commitment to the advancement of the status of women" along with our traditional purposes of leadership, scholarship and service.

This brings me, of course, to that noble leader, Winnie the Pooh.

In that joyous children's book by A. A. Milne, *The House at Pooh Corner*, Chapter VIII, we read:

Halfway between Pooh's house and Piglet's house was a thoughtful spot where they met sometimes when they had decided to go and see each other. And as it was warm and out of the wind, they would sit down there for a little while and wonder...

For many residents of academe, neither worldly wealth, nor power, nor travel to distant frontiers has ever been that compelling. Riches for them lie in ideas; frontiers exist in the discovery of ideas, and true authority resides in the command of ideas and their careful explication. It is these riches, these frontiers, this power that the university tries to impart to students. As houses of intellect, the central task of universities is learning.

Yet the puzzle, the paradox so easily pointed out in these early days of the 21st century is that universities are embedded in a society whose principal engagements are elsewhere and otherwise. And the temptations and the demands to respond to the world outside are many and strong. Students are carriers of many of these demands. They bring the world inside. They are the new wine inside the old bottle.

At times, both the university and the students are patient with each other. Bargains are struck: We teach; you learn. We stay; you go. At other times the gates are stormed, new students and new ideas flood in, not out. The battle is carried inside.

Today at many universities, I sense the wine is working in the bottles again. Ideas and actions are starting to fizz once more. Gender equity, hazing, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual assault, GLBT rights, athletes' rights, guns on campus, digital learning, immigration, etc, etc. The ideas and the talk are already bubbling as a new academic year is about to begin. Those of us here need to consider how and in what ways we can have an impact as leaders regarding these new demands and expectations. To do this we need thoughtful spots where such questions can be discussed, where solutions can be posed.

If ever you doubted the value of your work as a leader, whether you are a student, a chapter adviser, an administrator or a friend of a university—if you ever doubted, now is not the time. We need your skills, your thoughts, and your commitment. If ever you doubted the value of Mortar Board as a locus for that necessary discussion, it is not now. Mortar Board can be, indeed, must be an essential thoughtful spot.

In particular, I believe Mortar Board, as an organization with a deep legacy of concern for women's issues can be a leader in addressing these continuing challenges to gender equity. And you, who are among the most respected

students on your campus, you are the ones who must see to it. Indeed, you are among the few who can. I ask you to be the new wine on your campus. Think about the two impossible beliefs, which if they came true, would change your campus for the better.

Well, I have tried to show you, however briefly, that history as I have studied it and lived it can have some lessons to teach. Perhaps you recognized in the mirror of the past some familiar features.

Winnie the Pooh, though a bear of little brain, knew the value of a thoughtful spot and of friends to share it with. Mortar Board has been such a spot for me. I hope it is for you.

Note: information on the status of women, current and past can be found in such on line resources as On Campus with Women or the American Association of University Women as well as each campus' Affirmative Action Office.