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TVC: Getting Older and Getting Better

Deborah E. Hunter

It is not cool to be old on a college campus. Novelty abounds: new students, fresh thinking, cutting edge technology, and ground breaking research. Even the birth of the student affairs profession is marked by a shift from old to young. Old ladies serving as House Moms in campus residence halls stepped aside for a younger cadre of new professionals believed to connect better with college students. Like it or not, valuing youth over experience is at the root of our profession's growth.

The truth is, as we age we need to work very, very hard to be relevant amid an energetic and fast-paced campus culture. We must continually strive to “get it,” to “stay in touch,” and not become stuck in our ways. Still echoing in my ears is the popular refrain from my Vietnam-era college days: “Don't trust anyone over 30.” Being 30 signaled being “over the hill” and slipping slowly toward old age and old thinking.

So what does it mean that our HESA program now marks the rite of passage into middle age for one we all hold dear? Our beloved “Vermont Connection” is now 30 years old. The publication of the 2010 volume of *TVC* gives us reason to celebrate and contemplate the growth of one we have all played a part in raising.

The Vermont Connection (TVC) was conceived by UVM's former Dean of Students Dr. Keith Miser and birthed in 1980 along with the efforts of his graduate assistant Michael Dunn. Together they hoped their publication would grow into a professional journal, produced by a student-run editorial board and supported by money pieced together from several sources. They envisioned a journal that would entice members of the UVM HESA community to write articles and share ideas with others in the field.

These past 30 years have witnessed the maturation of *The Vermont Connection* into a prestigious professional publication that surely exceeds the hopes of its creators. And, while other graduate HESA programs publish journals, the quality of *The Vermont Connection* is without compare. The guardians of *TVC* are a committed Board of first and second-year HESA students carefully mentored by

Deborah Hunter is a product of the New Jersey public schools and received her B.A. from Muhlenberg College in 1970, M.S. from Indiana University in 1976 and Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1985. After six years as a student affairs administrator at the University of Indianapolis and the University of Louisville, she joined the UVM faculty in 1985.

a HESA graduate employed at UVM. HESA students garner financial support by soliciting funds from our hundreds of generous graduates and friends. All members of UVM's HESA community are welcome to contribute manuscripts exploring timely topics and raising haunting questions. The TVC Board edits tirelessly, improving not only manuscript drafts, but through the process, their own scholarly skills. Each year's finished product, *The Vermont Connection*, is a source of pride, joy, and inspiration for us all.

In recent years, the generosity of our growing number of alumni/ae has allowed the Board to reach beyond their previous scope of activities. Publishing the journal remains the primary goal, but their efforts now extend to offering welcoming activities for new HESA students, sponsoring professional development opportunities, and organizing lively exchanges between HESA students and campus leaders. TVC members assist with the annual Legal Issues in Higher Education conference and are gracious hosts at our NASPA and ACPA receptions. They maintain the online HESA Directory, making it easier for graduates to connect. Each year, these committed and savvy students function as ambassadors for the HESA program and as such, they embody the true spirit of a "Vermont Connection," linking us all.

I was not present 30 years ago for the birth of *The Vermont Connection*, as I arrived on campus five years later when *TVC* was already thriving in a healthy, stable environment. But I, and the 12 others who have served as advisors and co-advisors to the TVC Board these past 30 years have been honored to lend a hand to the 30 Editors and their Boards in shaping the developmental path of *TVC*. Each of these years marked subtle and sure signs of maturation as the journal developed new identifying traits and emerged as unique among graduate program journals across the country.

The Vermont Connection has grown both in size and stature. I am heartened by the efforts *TVC* has taken to promote scholarship advancing the importance of caring communities and social justice. The theme of this 30th Anniversary volume calling us to "think globally and act locally" could not be more current and compelling. Time and time again *The Vermont Connection* spurs us to seek ways to craft a healthier future while bonding us as a community. No "old thinking" can be found within its pages.

So how do we pay homage to one who has joined so many of us together in a noble purpose over the course of 30 years? What words might capture all that *The Vermont Connection* has meant to our HESA community and all that we want it to mean to our profession? I almost think UVM's most famous alumnus John Dewey was saluting *The Vermont Connection* when he asserted:

The things we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by the grace and doings of the continuous human community in which we are a link. Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we received it. (A Common Faith, 1934)

Well done, *TVC*! Happy 30th and many, many more!