THE PROVOST AS LEADER AND HEALER

I suggest that there is one principal task--and therefore one primary qualification--for a new Provost: To lead us back into the excitement and freedom of creative experimentation in education. I put it to you that in the process of being such a leader, the Provost will also be the healer that we so badly need. (Or, more in the spirit of modern health practices, we will become the healers of ourselves.)

My contention follows upon Jane Jervis's reading of us: That we are a college devoted to research in education. I suggest that our principal trouble (at least one of our principal troubles) is that we have lost that edge of excitement, of continuous engagement in creative work. I want a Provost who can come in from the outside, in the manner of Patrick Hill and Jane Jervis, appreciating what we have achieved and then spurring us on to regain that sense of novelty, creativeness, and excitement. I don't know what form or method she/he would use. (If I did, I'd be smart enough to do the job myself.) I would want the Search DTF to make this the principal criterion for a new Provost and to listen carefully to candidates' ideas about how they would do the job.

In this way, a leader, clearly. But a healer? Yes. I put it to you that the lack of shared engagement in the common educational endeavor is the main reason for the demise of community. A community is not simply a bunch of people who live in the same place. They must also have some shared values and purposes, some com,mon work. If we can regain that sense of common purpose in our educational research, if we can spend our time telling one another stories about our individual experiments and successes, then I believe we will come to understand one another; I have a faith that then our mutual fears and suspicions will fall away and we will move back toward a sense of real community.

I suggest that if we conceive of the Provost as having this dual role of educational leader and promoter of our self-healing it will give the correct tone to the search process.