



MSUO TO OU: REVERSION TO THE NORM

An Informal Conversation with
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and Paul Tomboulian (PT)

In the following record of an informal conversation held in May 2007, three early faculty members recall the beginnings of OU—called MSUO then—and the seemingly inevitable changes that occurred over time.

Foreword by Paul Tomboulian

An Educational Beginning That Worked

Starting a new university is an audacious, complex, and challenging undertaking not obviously destined for success. Many have failed. The amazing outcome from all of the MSUO pre-planning was that the enterprise worked remarkably well, starting in September 1959, and better than one might have realistically anticipated. Much of the success was due to the leadership of Chancellor Durward B. (Woody) Varner, who inspired the faculty and allowed them to pursue their own varia-

tions of his dream. The strong student-centered focus of MSUO, along with the liberal education emphasis, were among the many appealing qualities which broke from previous practices at state universities. The leadership, the dreams, and the innovations attracted a faculty much better than anyone would have expected.

Publicist Loren Pope's press releases about MSUO, beginning in June 1959, embodied his own enthusiastic hopes for a new model in public university education. The sometimes lofty Pope rhetoric and the practical realities were often far apart, but in retrospect, Pope's contributions and image-building were of great value to the morale of both the early faculty and their students.

Fortunately, Varner made it all work for a while and his role cannot be overestimated. He combined the zeal of a missionary with the skills of an entrepreneur. In the first faculty meeting before classes began, Varner encouraged the faculty "to make us as good as we say we are."

A Special Place, Attractive to Faculty

HB: When I came, I was led to believe that MSUO would embody unusual educational values. But I came in 1962 and by that time there was considerable publicity in the national media about this new higher educational experiment. I wonder what the two of you, as Charter faculty, thought MSUO was going to be. Dick, where did you get the information about MSUO before you came?

RB: Mainly from Woody, when he interviewed me. I could sum that up by saying it sounded like a liberal arts college, in that in there was going to be an emphasis on general education as opposed to focused disciplinary studies. I see that as the main difference between a liberal arts college and a comprehensive university. I was already interested in what was being done at

just a few schools in the country such as the University of Chicago, Columbia, Stanford, Harvard and St. John's College (original Annapolis, Maryland campus). Their students went on to become successful professionals even though they started specializing only when they reached graduate school. I saw MSUO as taking that idea seriously. So I came here looking for an exciting general education program and to be able to help build it. The best colleges always have very bright, very competent, and very scholarly students. What was different at MSUO was a high level program being offered to a student body that had yet to be defined.

HB: Honestly, were there going to be any excellent students who would actually come? Realistically, you knew that the best students went to the University of Michigan. The next level maybe went to Michigan State. So who would be attracted to MSUO, and who would actually come? Did the early planners think about it?

PT: That is one of the major omissions by the early planners—they had no strategy for recruiting the kind of students that would benefit from the proposed curriculum. We were actually providing a high level liberal arts education to average students.

RB: Right. Before I came I thought that there would be elite students. I thought it was going to be another school like Chicago. That's what Loren Pope was implying in his messages, and that's probably why some administrators didn't like some of his media pieces. He was describing an elite program for elite students and implying that we would be achieving that goal soon even if we weren't quite there yet.

MSUO Opens in September 1959: Theory Versus Reality

RB: The curriculum design was unusual and intellectually challenging. By the end of the first year when we finally worked out the curricular details, about 50 percent of a student's degree re-

quirements were in the liberal arts. Most students were to complete two years of a foreign language. The Western Civilizations course was the same as that taught at Columbia University. Calculus was required for all science and engineering students in their first year. But probably the most distinctive feature was the year of coursework in non-Western studies. We may have been the only school in the country with that requirement.

PT: *Time* magazine had it right in February 1962 when they described MSUO: “It had one major drawback: serving almost entirely as a commuter college in a low-income area, it was expecting to demand Harvard-level performance from poorly prepared youngsters.”

HB: I guess we assumed that students would self-select and MSUO would get the best in time. What happened was that students who came were those who lived in the neighborhood. Tuition wasn't too expensive because MSUO was a state school. They didn't realize they were being confronted with such a high-level program. Do you have any sense of who was up to it and who was not up to it?

PT: Well, if one measures success by passing grades, the majority of the students succeeded, but there were many failing grades. In the first quarter, 17 percent of all of the grades given were not passing. In the economics, math, and chemistry courses, the percentages failing were much higher, and in the humanities the numbers were much lower. That first group of science and engineering students was clearly not prepared for the required calculus course.

HB: What was the attitude of the faculty when confronted with this student body? Were they disappointed? Were they thinking, “Perhaps this is temporary and we are going to get more capable students later on, down the line?”

RB: We were getting students who didn't know what they were getting into and who hadn't heard about the goals of MSUO. I believed that soon would be corrected and we would start getting students from California and from New York who had

heard about us and were coming here specifically for what we were offering.

HB: So the hope was to create an attractive academic enterprise where students would select themselves, the less academically-oriented students going elsewhere and the better students coming here. But they didn't, did they?

RB: No, they didn't.

PT: The problem of quality was immediately apparent. As Woody commented later, we were going for the top students but we didn't get them. I believe the goal for the size of the Charter Class was 500 students. I recall data from the admissions staff: of the 895 applicants, 676 were admitted, for a surprisingly high admission percentage of 76%. We actually opened with 570 students in 1959, and four years later 102 of those 570 graduated at the first ceremony in April 1963. Later on, more from the Charter Class graduated, a total of 65 through April 1968.

HB: We would usually think of that as a disastrous attrition rate. Less than a third of them made it through the early MSUO program. You had a faculty who discovered they couldn't make the same kind of demands that they could make at the schools where they had taught previously. That must have been a disappointing experience. I wonder if there was a loss of faculty because of that?

RB: I don't remember faculty leaving because the students were not capable. It was one of those situations where we all felt that we could make it work. So faculty started to justify what happened. We argued that we started with a new model and new models always have problems that require adjustments. It may seem surprising, but the majority of the faculty seemed pleased with the way things were going in the early years.

HB: When I came in '62 it was still viewed as a great experiment.

PT: I remember that Bill Hammerle and I, teaching general

chemistry together, were encouraged by the fact that at least some of the students could handle the academic challenges of our introductory chemistry course. There was a capable top group, and we favored the perspective that you should teach to the top end of the class. So we focused our attentions there and didn't worry about the rest. Bill Hammerle's view was that we should push the students as hard as we dared. Beginning with the second quarter of classes, we added repeat or "trailer" chemistry courses in an attempt to assist students who couldn't perform well in the initial class, but the results there were even more disappointing.

RB: I can talk about this in terms of the Western Civilizations courses that I was involved with. At first we taught the same course that was given at Columbia. It didn't work too well because many of our students couldn't understand the complete original source readings. Western Civilizations courses at many state universities use textbooks which have only selections from original sources. If you use such a textbook, you can set the vocabulary at high school level or whatever level you want, and that's the kind of book that we should have been using. But I don't think we ever considered doing that. What we did instead was to reduce the readings from every day to four per week and eliminate a few of the readings that seemed particularly difficult.

What happened was that instead of rethinking the whole presentation, we simply cut it back some but maintained the level. After all, if we adjusted too much, the students that we hoped would come to MSUO wouldn't be interested in the more conventional approaches.

HB: In psychology we also didn't use an introductory text. We used articles and books by Freud and Skinner. Our position was, "This is what we do, we are special, we don't compromise our standards and we teach to the upper level." But we did compromise our position. It seems by 1969 when Varner left, we started using traditional textbooks in the introductory courses.

RB: Yes, that is true.

PT: In chemistry (as well as in physics and mathematics), faculty used standard, challenging introductory textbooks from the beginning. We used then, as we do today, the same textbooks chosen by many other universities who were preparing students for technical careers. We expected our students to perform at the same academic level as students at other institutions. At MSUO and later OU, the use of the standard textbook calibrated the level of the course. Poor student performance was attributed to a lack of student abilities and preparations, and not the books used. The educational approaches were more traditional and not as creative as what you were attempting in Western Civilizations.

HB: By 1969 the Introduction to Psychology course used a standard textbook and we were back to the norm of the external academic world.

PT: Institutionally, we were reverting to the norm.

Harvey, what brought you to MSUO?

HB: I was recruited by Donald O' Dowd and David Beardslee, and what they offered was the opportunity to help create the psychology department. The idea of helping create a department was terribly exciting. What attracted you, Paul?

PT: I was attracted by the academic tone of the pronouncements about MSUO, mostly from what Woody talked about—the traditional non-academic distractions that we were *not* going to have.

HB: Like what?

PT: Like required physical education and ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps), plus fraternities, sororities, and inter-collegiate athletics (we called them frills) that often divert students from the more serious academic pursuits of higher education. I liked the focused academic curriculum—the way that MSUO was initially described, with relatively few courses so the students could pursue each subject in more depth. In addition, there were to be no remedial courses, almost all the

faculty were young PhDs, and graduate students would not be teaching the courses.

HB: But these images are what faculty imagine as the ideal academy, and not necessarily what would be attractive to prospective students.

PT: Right, and when we asked the early MSUO alumni in our OU Chronicles interviews why they had come, the attractive factors identified were the proximity and affordability of attending MSUO, not the academic vision of the planners. Three-fourths of the Charter class was from Oakland County. Another reality that Woody didn't seem to accept is that MSUO students had jobs. He always wanted the students to spend full time on their studies with no employment distractions. It was an unrealistic expectation for the MSUO student body.

HB: It was a model for a residential school, and we didn't have any residential students in the early days. Even when dorms were built, students were primarily commuter students and came from families where they had to work even for the small amount of tuition.

PT: Or they felt they should work.

HB: Yes, they all seemed to have jobs. And another aspect is that many came from families where no one had gone to college before.

Faculty Recruiting and Independence

PT: It is an interesting fact that the first faculty members weren't hired until March of 1959, with a fall 1959 startup. At one point Woody went to Michigan State hoping that MSUO could "borrow" a few of the MSU faculty and get them to teach here temporarily.

RB: They hired some as late as August to start the following month.

HB: I recall a story about one Charter faculty member who had a master's degree and was working on a PhD. She was seated at a concert behind Woody, and somehow they got into a conversation about MSUO. Woody asked her a few questions, and just like that, he hired her!

PT: It's clear that towards the end of that first recruiting season, Woody was almost desperate to hire faculty, seeking them anywhere he could.

RB: In the next few years, though, we hired many remarkable young faculty members, including Harvey here, and Mel Chernob, and Norm Susskind, on and on.

HB: But how did Woody attract established faculty from elsewhere such as Hoopes, Matthews, McKay, Tafoya, O'Dowd, Hucker, Roose, and Galloway?

PT: Wasn't it mostly what you said about yourself: the chance to start something new, and they were undoubtedly charmed by Varner and the enthusiastic faculty pioneers.

HB: It was a rare opportunity.

PT: Yes, I also felt that calling, to plan a new chemistry curriculum, put in the right subjects and approaches, and leave out the unimportant topics—to start fresh from the ground up.

RB: That was very important to me. I was not getting any directions from the philosophy department at MSU. I never heard a word from them, and I liked that very much.

HB: Psychology was also independent. Paul, did you have any connection with the chemistry program at MSU?

PT: None, but I did make use of their stockroom because it was well-stocked with chemicals and modern equipment—that is, when I wanted to make the 180-mile round trip.

RB: Of course we used the MSU library, and we wouldn't have been accredited for a while if we had depended on our own library. The fact that we were able to get books in one day, down from East Lansing, was crucial in the beginning. But we

weren't a branch of MSU. The faculty here were free to develop their own programs.

HB: I recall that if you wanted to transfer credits from Oakland to MSU, or vice versa, you had to go through the normal procedure of transferring credits from one school to any other school in the country.

PT: Yes, that's pretty unusual. We called ourselves sister institutions, but the real connections were more administrative than academic.

Increasing Enrollments and Institutional Change

PT: Woody had the goal to increase enrollments quickly. Herb Stoutenburg, the Registrar and Director of Admissions, said that Woody wanted 25 percent more students in the second year. Presumably, the institution needed to grow, and I assume some of the pressure also came from the legislative appropriations folks, or MSU.

RB: Woody used to give speeches about how some day we were going to have 40,000 students, using the whole 1600 acres, and that we were going to be another MSU. That was his vision for the future. I just blocked that out of my mind, I didn't want to hear that.

PT: Those different perspectives were important. Enrollments were increasing, which is what Woody really wanted, yet many faculty thought or hoped that Woody was just dreaming. The faculty in favor of the small college model argued with those who wanted the large complex university model.

HB: How did Woody juggle the two concepts? It seems to me you can't have it both ways, you can't be a school of 40,000, and also have the intensive liberal arts focus that Woody seemed to be supporting, at least when he spoke to the faculty.

RB: Well, I think he was serious about wanting the large university and that the small college focus was only temporary.

Woody supported what we were doing at first because we were small, we were just getting started. But his vision for the future was not a place where I would have wanted to teach. I would never have taken a job at Michigan State in 1959. That was my idea of the kind of school to stay as far away from as possible. But Woody wanted to build another one of those and was willing to say, for the time being, that he supported the kind of small college that I liked.

PT: I believe that many faculty had one kind of model for the institution and Varner had a different model, and we didn't have continuing dialogue about those differences.

RB: We were small in the beginning and that was important. Faculty knew everybody in all of the other departments, and we could do things that only a small school could do. We had small classes and faculty saw students outside of classes.

HB: I recall that Woody tried very hard to create something special here in the form of the music festival. It was clearly his idea, and he gathered some very interesting people to come to Oakland to teach music and perform in the summer. I am sure Woody got swept up in the notion of a strong liberal arts college. Maybe, simply as a pragmatist he figured he couldn't go in that direction.

RB: I am a little confused now, because I think the kind of world-class people that he brought in for the music in the summer and for the theater in the winter goes with a major university, not with a small college. A small college can't afford people such as Robert Shaw, Itzak Perlman and James Conlon. That direction goes with what Woody was planning all along—to get well-known and big as fast as possible. I read somewhere that Wally Collins in the music department convinced Woody that if we were not going to have major sports, we needed something else to play that role and major arts might do it. Woody bought that idea.

HB: You are probably right, Dick, but what I remember is that the faculty never thought of it as building a large university.

They just loved the musicians coming and teaching music and the theater people coming and teaching theater, and we didn't see a contradiction to a small college. It seemed to be part of our MSUO tradition, a commitment to the performing arts. If Woody really wanted the big university environment, he should have brought in athletics. I remember we talked about intercollegiate athletics at a Senate meeting and some faculty were very much in favor. I remember a vigorous discussion, but we voted it down. We said, "No, this is not us, this is not our image—we are not an athletic institution, we don't play basketball and football, we play music and dance and theater."

RB: The artistic ventures were consistent with the Oakland spirit that we were building in the early years, and it seemed an appropriate direction to be going in contrast to athletics or fraternities and things of that nature. As Paul pointed out earlier, it was attractive for him because MSUO didn't have ROTC, they didn't have sororities and fraternities, and they didn't have intercollegiate athletics. The artistic ventures, however, were also consistent with a large university.

PT: But new artistic activities, or any new ventures for that matter, have to be considered in terms of costs. Whatever activity you decide to pursue at a university, you must consider how you are going to fund it, otherwise you are living a fairy tale. It seemed to me that nobody really focused on how we were going to fund these artistic activities or even the special liberal arts image for this very special school in Oakland County. But then as faculty, we weren't there to solve that problem. It was Woody's responsibility to decide which path to follow.

Pioneering and Esprit de Corps

PT: In the first years, the combination of pioneering spirit, enthusiasm, and intellectual dedication to our new academic directions led faculty to be involved in many ways. What were

some of the non-traditional features that characterized the faculty commitment to this new institution?

HB: Although I wasn't here the first three years, I have heard reports that new faculty would arrive looking for places to stay, and other faculty would assist them in locating suitable housing, which was often a considerable challenge. I also recall hearing about faculty traveling together down to the Eastern Market to buy food.

RB: I wasn't part of that particular set of folks, but I know there were many communal activities in the Meadow Brook subdivision.

PT: Yes, many of the faculty relationships there were very strong, and we shared and cooperated as pioneers. I lived in that subdivision, and the first lawn mower I had was used on a rotating basis with Norm Susskind and Jim McKay, and costs were split.

HB: I remember one story about Woody visiting faculty homes—I think it was about the fourth or fifth year. He reported that there were fiscal difficulties up in Lansing, and we were not going to get the increases he had hoped for. To ease matters a bit, he invited faculty to come over to his place and dig up some trees and shrubs to plant at their homes. There was a real sense of community.

RB: Woody used to talk about that community spirit, as if we were a family. Sadly, I discovered its limit when, toward the end of the first month, I ran out of money and went to Bob Swanson, the Director of Business Affairs. I asked for an advance but was told that they thought it was a bad precedent to set. I found the money somewhere else.

PT: So there were some caveats to the strong feelings of community.

HB: We had faculty and staff picnics down on the sports field, gatherings in the subdivision, and Halloween pranks involving setting up loud speakers to scare the kids.

RB: In addition, faculty interacted with students outside of class much more than they do now. For example, for a few years we had a group of freshmen each year assigned to each faculty member as advisees. Each faculty had about twenty freshman advisees and an allowance from the administration to support activities, such as inviting them over to your place for dinner, or to go bowling.

HB: There was little for them to do on campus, with almost no campus activities outside of classes. MSUO was in the middle of nowhere so we had to create activities for commuter students.

RB: The point was to get the students and the faculty to interact. I remember chaperoning dances at Oakland University.

HB: I came from teaching at Smith College where you were expected to spend outside-of-class time with the students. When I came to MSUO I thought it normal to carry on the same tradition. There was considerable student/faculty interaction, probably because we were small.

RB: That is true, if you are large you don't do it as much.

PT: So maybe after the early period, there were just too many students to have these close interactions.

HB: In a similar vein, we had small departments often with just two or three other faculty, so we would often cross departmental lines. There was also a faculty lunch and dinner room where faculty met regularly. It was a great academic atmosphere.

Vocationalism and Changes in the Student Culture and Attitudes

HB: I am struck by the changes in student attitudes over the years. I taught a course in the philosophy of psychology, and in the early days the students were involved. They read all of the assignments and took long and demanding essay exams. I couldn't wait to get to class. By the time I retired, the students

thought the readings were too difficult and the exams too tough and wondered how the course material related to their concerns with getting a job. I was no longer eager to get to class. The students had changed over the years to be sure, but in the early days the students were swept up with the zeitgeist, the excitement of the new school and participating in a learning adventure.

PT: And it wasn't just your personal charisma to which they were responding!

RB: Right, that attitude was noted by many faculty. Students and faculty were involved, excited, and talking. So when you made demands on earlier OU students, they thought it appropriate. They didn't come back and say, "Well that's a tricky question, you shouldn't ask that." It was instead: "I should be able to answer that question."

HB: Then important changes in the outside world were occurring in the late '60s. In particular, the Vietnam War was causing a lot of students to stay in college in order to avoid the draft. The way to stay in college was to pass courses, and since faculty were the gatekeepers, we could make unusual demands.

RB: Avoiding the military cannot account for all the differences. Faculty I've talked to feel that students across the country are not as responsive to college education as they used to be.

HB: In '69 students began to want the university world to change. Maybe Oakland students weren't moving as fast as Columbia or Ivy League students, and for a while they were more willing to follow our lead. Then they became more vocationally oriented, and instead of listening to the academic discussions, they were saying, "What does it mean for me?" and "How do I get a job?" That's what started to happen in the '70s and the '80s.

PT: I remember the '60s fondly. In the chemistry department, we prided ourselves on getting students into graduate school. We were taking fairly average local students, giving them a lot

of personal attention, and sending them to the best schools. One of our 1964 graduates subsequently obtained a PhD from MIT and is now a distinguished chemist at Indiana University.

RB: Was your goal to get students into graduate school?

PT: Yes, and for a while in the 60's and early 70's, we had close to 50 percent of our graduates entering doctoral programs. That was during an era when students got excited about learning and science. This student interest changed in the subsequent decades, and today you have to do a very hard sell to OU undergraduate chemistry majors to persuade students, especially men, to consider graduate school.

HB: When students first graduated from OU in the 60's, jobs were waiting for them no matter what their major. That is no longer true. Today students want majors and courses that will enhance their vitae and improve their chances for employment. Many students today are saying, "What you are teaching is not useful if it can't get me a job." Of course, that goes counter to our sense of what an education is all about.

PT: Recall that one of the original goals for MSUO was trying to get away from an overemphasis on vocational education, so common in the 50's. The MSUO curriculum was supposed to be much more pure and not focused on job preparation.

HB: In those times we could afford not to focus on job-getting, but it is not true today. Students today ask, "What do I need to get a job?"

PT: But some of that change is in the student culture rather than the reality of the employment market.

RB: Many of our students worked then, and work even more today, some with full-time jobs. Do they really need to work that much? I am sure that our students work more than they need to, and could take more time to devote to their education. If they could be persuaded to do it, I think it would be a wiser use of their time in the long run.

PT: And who is going to convince students to change?

RB: Well, that's the sort of thing that college faculty have to sell their students on. In addition, students tend to have a very limited imagination about what kind of work they might do in the future and how they might go about finding a job in a different area of employment.

HB: But our students come from a job-oriented community and culture where people ask, "What are you going to do, what kind of a job are you going to have? What will the university prepare you to do?" We have moved back toward increased vocationalism at the university.

RB: Societal pressures also are operating. The governor talks about the need for more students going to college because they need the skills to do higher-tech jobs. So it is all feeding into the same kind of job-at-the-end-of-education model.

PT: Of course, Michigan's current poor employment market exacerbates this change in values. Given these student attitudes, it would be difficult for OU to produce graduates who have "sharp abrasive edges," and are "critics of society, not adjusters to it"—goals so picturesquely expressed in 1959 by our first dean, Bob Hoopes.

Changes in the Reward System: Creeping Traditionalism

HB: We talk about student concern with jobs, but it is also true for faculty.

RB: In the early days, the promotion and tenure procedures were very informal, and if people could teach well, they were recognized for that. Faculty would be promoted as good colleagues, and publications were not that important. After about ten years, we began a more classic reward system of rank based on publications as well.

HB: As we grew, the traditional academic reward system was waiting in the wings. Salary and promotion became based on

the classic criteria used by faculty and universities elsewhere—to publish and become identified with a department rather than with the larger institution. We were reverting to what is normal practice at most universities.

RB: That transition is particularly important in explaining why, after about ten years, our attempts to recreate the atmosphere of the first few years were not successful. Three inner colleges were developed involving small groups of faculty and students. The participants hoped to capture some of that beginning spirit. They lasted a few years and then fizzled out.

PT: What might it take to continue and encourage such educational ventures?

RB: You would have to hire a certain percentage of the faculty on a different basis. The university would have to hire two different types of faculty, the way MSU does today. You would have some faculty devoting their main effort to teaching and others to publication.

HB: We were not hired with the notion of an inner college perspective, we were not hired with a University of Chicago mentality where teaching is really critical, we were just hired. Subsequently, we adopted a value system in which promotions require research, scholarship and publications. At MSUO, those traditions were put on hold while we concentrated on building the university, but they were always in the background. After awhile, it became clear that there was no reward system for faculty just being committed to the college. There were no rewards for just teaching and creating courses, spending time with students, doing all of those tasks which take away from research.

PT: For example, look what happened here to some of the OU faculty who spent time in the inner colleges: their careers were detoured and many of those serious teachers were marginalized.

HB: Honestly, could we ever have maintained the whole university the way it was at first? Basically Oakland got too big to maintain those values. The small liberal arts colleges can do it because they are richly endowed.

PT: What about academic and institutional support for advising, as well?

HB: Advising requires faculty to make certain kinds of time commitments to the life and future of the students. We need to talk, to find out who they are, what their future looks like, and spend the time necessary to work with the student. This is what ideal faculty advising of students should be. Not, “Take this class and that class and another class selected from the list.”

RB: And we no longer have faculty doing that. There was a period when they actually hired staff just to advise.

HB: It’s normal practice to outsource what might be viewed as auxiliary activities, especially if the perceived faculty focus is research with grant support. It is interesting that advising students was seen as an auxiliary activity.

PT: Now we are describing a conventional university.

HB: One must work very hard to go counter to the normal inclination, and really infuse money and time, as we tried to do the first few years.

PT: You need a reward system for outstanding student advisors.

RB: I remember when we still had those. Similarly, there should be many awards for teaching, not just one annually from the whole university.

Succumbing to the Inevitable

PT: Some of the earliest excitement at OU was undoubtedly due to the Hawthorne Effect: that performance and behavior improve following any new change.

HB: It is often the case that any new academic experiment or approach will work for a while. When MSUO opened, the first students got excited by the novelty and worked hard. The faculty as well were excited by the newness. But the novelty wears out over ten years.

RB: But if we succeeded at the beginning with average and even below average students, why couldn't we keep doing it with students who came later? Some of them would be bright and some of them wouldn't. Maybe the answer is that the Hawthorne Effect wore off for students, and the faculty in the subsequent decades just didn't receive the incentives needed to put effort into the liberal arts focus.

HB: I don't think there was anything that could be done to maintain that early excitement. It was just a matter of time before we succumbed to the norm of rewarding publishing rather than teaching. Now we are no different from any other university, and this was inevitable without commitments from the very beginning that other rules would apply.

PT: But how could you maintain that without a whole different mindset, given the pressures from the legislature for economic efficiencies?

HB: But that's the point, Paul, you would have needed that commitment from the onset, that MSUO was going to be supported as a new kind of school.

PT: Therefore, in order to prevent the inevitable changes from occurring, there must be appropriate respect and funding for this liberal arts orientation. Well, nothing like that took place.

HB: Maybe because we were small, we could fool ourselves into thinking that we could maintain quality. We ignored what should have been obvious and we drifted to the inevitable.

RB: So we are saying that without some serious countervailing forces, the changes that make us look like every other larger university will happen.

PT: And where does that leave us?

HB: With our quiet informal reminiscences of how lucky we were as faculty . . .

RB: . . . and how fortunate those early students were to have such experiences here.