

“And somewhere in the darkness...
the gambler, he broke even.

And in his final words
I found an ace that I could keep”

THE TOP TEN THINGS THAT DAVE WANTS TO SAY

The Final
Report / Rant / Rave / Ramble / Recommendation / Resolution / Rhetoric
of

Dave Tompkins
USC President 1996-97

This report is dedicated to:

The people from the Coca-Cola® commercial
The frosted mini-wheat dude
and
John Belushi

Don't Look Back in Anger

They all thought I would be the first to go.

I was one of those live fast, die young, leave a good-looking corpse types, you know?

But I guess they were wrong.

There they are. All my friends.

This is the USC cemetery. Come on up.

Jerry was the first to go. He died in a high-speed car crash,
distracted when someone dropped crumbs in his new car.

I guess that no one bothered to tell Ron that "Nobody beats Big Al".
What a way to go... face down in a huge pile of poker chips.

Keith was murdered for his money by a jealous ex-girlfriend.

Scott should have never borrowed money from No-Neck Vinnie.
They still haven't found his body.

Walsh was found murdered, and with a stupid grin on his face.
No one knows what happened, but we're all pretty sure he deserved it.

The USC presidency was the best experience of my life.

And now they're all gone.

I miss every one of them.

Why me? Why did I live so long?

They're all dead.

I'll tell you why.

Because I'm a dancer.

Soul Man

Coming to you, on a dusty road
Good loving, I got a truckload
And when you get it, you got something
So don't worry, 'cause I'm coming

I'm a soul man (x4)

Got what I got, the hard way
And I'll make better, each and every day
So honey, don't you fret
'Cause you ain't seen nothing yet

I'm a soul man (x2)

Play it Steve

I'm a soul man (x2)

Listen

I was brought up, on a side street
Learned how to love, before I could eat
I was educated, from good stock
When I start loving I just can't stop

I'm a soul man (x4)

Well grab the rope, and I'll pull you in
Give you hope, and be your only boyfriend

Yeah, Yeah

I'm a soul man (x2)

You're a soul man

I'm a soul man (x3)

Ha, Ha

INTRODUCTION

I believe that I write good reports.

I'm not very good at writing reports.

There is a subtle difference between those two sentences that I, unfortunately, know all too well.

This is the sixth re-draft of this final report. I normally start out well and get a couple of pages into the report. Then it happens: writer's block. I'm not sure if it's "writer's block" or "writer's indecisiveness". Whatever the correct term is for it, it's very frustrating. I sit at the computer screen and try to think of what to say next. It's not necessarily what to say but rather how to say it. I usually have far too much to say, so I try to filter it down concisely. I also put ridiculous expectations on myself that everything I write has to be witty and insightful. But the trick is not to look like I'm trying to be witty and insightful, but rather be nonchalantly witty and insightful (as if everything I do is witty and insightful). Nonchalant writing is not an easy task – but I hope to be the master of it one day. To paraphrase the first gentleman to ever pay me to program a computer, "You can die a brilliant man, but if you don't get it down on paper, nobody will know or care."

I've always found reading to be a selfish thing, and writing a very selfless thing. You read to increase your knowledge or to entertain yourself. However, when you write you do it mostly for others. Maybe that is why writing can be so hard. I hope you enjoy reading this report, because I wrote it for you.

THE TITLE

"THE TOP TEN THINGS THAT DAVE WANTS TO SAY" is very significant. I carefully chose the word want as opposed to could, should or would (if given the chance). The reason for that is because being the USC President is a job. Yes, it is a very unique job. And yes, to many people it isn't a real job. Still, when it comes right down to it – it is a job, and there are parts about any job that you will love, and there are aspects that you will not love. For me, writing a final report is somewhere in the middle.

So when writing this report, I have decided to write about the things I really want to say. The things I want to have on record and the things I want to represent my last act as USC President. I could kill a lot of trees writing down every little detail of the job – what I did, how I did it, what I did right, what I did wrong. I won't kill a lot of trees. This report is about one tenth of the original size I envisioned it to be. Originally I had little tidbits of

At the bottom of each page I have decided to share a little story from my term as President. Strangely enough, quite a few of them take place in bars. For example: On Sunday, September 8th, 1996 Ben Thornton, Dan Simpson's campaign manager, punched me in the face at the Ceeps.

information like “When you send out Christmas cards, personalize them with short messages”. I hope that by keeping the size of this report down ten times as many people will read it. Heck – I’ll be pretty impressed if more than ten people read it.

WHY DID I DO IT?

This was the question I was most frequently asked this year. By strangers, by USC insiders and outsiders who knew my background, and by friends and family who just didn’t understand. And after a year in the job, I still don’t have a good answer to this one. The response that seemed to get the biggest response (both positive and negative) was “to meet women” and I liked saying this one to people just to see their reaction. When it comes right down to it, for a short period in my life I convinced myself that I could change the world, buy them all a Coke[®], and teach them how to sing – in perfect harmony.

WHY DIDN’T I DO IT AGAIN?

Even the most conservative student political hacks thought that I would win in a re-election. I suppose that I’ll never know for sure. When it came to making the decision, I doubted my ability to change the world in one year, and I was unsure if I could do it in another. After serious consideration, I couldn’t justify dedicating another year of my life. I think Jerry said it best: “If you were to run again it would be the best thing for the students of Western, but it would be worst thing for Dave.”

KNOWING WHAT POINT ‘B’ IS

I fundamentally believe that everyone should know what tools are out there for them to use and then choose the tools that they will work well with. Some people work for years not knowing there is a tool out there that could cut their workload in half. Other people use a particular tool just because someone else recommended it, even though it is a horrible match for them. Some tools you can try out before you commit to them. Some tools are just too expensive to make them practical. I hope you realize I’m not just talking about screwdrivers and hammers here. Tools can be everything from computer software to marketing data to money management techniques to (what I am leading into) goal setting exercises.

When I got elected, I really didn’t have much of a game plan. In my campaign literature I had some vague ideals that I wanted to uphold and some examples of how to support those ideals. I suppose that I was politically astute enough to put a sufficient number of buzzwords in my pamphlet to get me elected, but not in a way that would tie my hands.

Rich Cordon, a friend of mine once grabbed my eyeglasses, took one of my business cards and walked around the Ceeps pretending to be me. He walked up to a girl and the conversation went something like this: “Hey, I’m Dave Tompkins, USC President” “No you’re not – he’s fat.” “Hey – I’m on slim-fast!”

I like blank canvasses. I like to start on a journey and not necessarily know where I'm going to end up. If anything, I may have a vague notion of the climate or atmosphere of where I'm going and a hazy sort of vision about how I want to feel when I get there, but that's about it.

I should know better. Over the years, I've sat through enough seminars, sessions and workshops to be an expert on goal setting. But I am not an expert on goal setting. It's just a tool that I'm not very comfortable with, and it isn't very effective for me. Just like any tool, some people are very successful with it, some people could greatly benefit from it and others waste their time with it. I guess that it's just not my bag.

So when people ask me if I accomplished everything that I wanted to do as President, I have to shrug my shoulders. Yes, I made it from point 'A' to point 'B', but I didn't have a final point 'B' out there that I was shooting for. There was no finish line. There was no master checklist. There was no elaborate agenda. Over the course of the year, I sauntered over to my own point 'B'. I suppose that if my goal really was to change the world then I failed. When it came right down to it, I just wanted to be the best darn President that I could, and I was. I was the real thing.

People would often recognize me, but would be unable to determine where from. Quite often they would think I was "that guy from the Barenaked Ladies". One girl was so completely convinced, she demanded an autograph, so I signed a Styrofoam plate at the Spoke "If I had a million dollars, I would buy you a green dress" and made an illegible signature.

10. THE CRISIS IN THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

One of the surest signs that you are getting older is when you start talking about “The Good Old Days”. Naturally, the terms ‘Old’ and ‘Good’ make these days highly contentious and very different for people of different ages and perspectives.

I’m sure for many Senior Alumni the good old days were when UWO was a very affluent and uppity campus built on a golf course. Others talk about days when professors and students would smoke dope together and protest the war. Some refer to the carefree days of kegs and toga parties.

For me, one of the things I think about in the “good old days” was how students really enjoyed, got involved with, and fully participated in extracurricular activities.

Does anyone really look back to their university years and remember the classroom? I don’t. I don’t think about that time I stayed up all night trying to understand why I wasn’t getting the right answer on an Applied Math 270 question (it was because my handwriting was sloppy and I misread a ‘s’ as a 5). I think about all the great times I had with my friends and all the various activities we got involved in.

So what is the crisis? It’s something that I’ve observed in my 7 years at Western and from talking to students who were here before me, I fear that it’s getting even worse. Students are not getting as involved in extracurricular activities.

More and more students have to get part-time jobs now to support themselves while they go to school. The rising costs of tuition have made it nearly impossible to survive on the income from a summer job. Students are weighing the options of participating in school activities or working and are choosing the financially viable one.

The rising costs of education are also shifting some priorities in the academic arena. It is now an economically big deal to fail a course or to take an extra year to finish a degree. There is more and more pressure being put on students from both themselves and their parents to get high marks and to focus on their studies. Extracurricular activities are being portrayed as ‘distractions’ and are ‘detrimental’ to a student’s academic success.

I spent a significant amount of money and time in front of the “claw game” located at the Spoke. I considered myself an expert, and would win stuffed animals quite frequently. One day in December, long after the “claw game” had been removed I met a girl named Jennifer from Huron, who knew I was proficient at that game. She mentioned how she had tried many times to win the “duck with the purple hair” but was unsuccessful. I went back to my office and found that I had won that particular doll. I tied a bow on it, and gave it to her for Christmas. Spreading joy to Western – one student at a time.

The worst part of this dangerous trend is that some people look at it in a positive light. Students are paying more attention to their studies and their economic position. That's great for a public that hates spending money on whiney university students.

For example, during my term I was on a call-in radio show to discuss rising tuition. One Western Alumnus (whom I knew, and I knew was fairly affluent) actually called in to say tuition increases are a good thing – because she believed her property value would go up if students had less money to party with.

When I look at this trend I fear it is the beginning of the end. I'm afraid that student organizations are going to falter. They won't have as many resources, and won't have as many dedicated people to help carry on the torch. The student groups are going to have to compete for the active students, and only the strongest will survive. Many groups will go the way of the Glee Club.

Positive steps must be taken to promote the general idea of extracurricular activities. I think of how the 'Imagine' campaign promotes general community and volunteer work, and I think something like that would be appropriate. It should focus on the positive benefits, the leadership and organizational opportunities, and the way it can enrich a student's life. With the right buy-in and participation from the various clubs, councils, athletic groups, and the greek community this initiative could start reversing an ugly trend and avoid a crisis.

While I was at student leadership conference, I was playing a ridiculous social game which involved making unusual body actions. The body action I chose was supposed to be a "walk like an Egyptian" – Bangles style. It turned out that everyone thought I was doing the "I'm a little teapot" – kindergarten style. That is why some of the most powerful student leaders across the country referred to me as "Teapot". That was the same leadership conference where I split my pants dancing to the "Rasputin".

9. BIG BUSINESS

When I ran for President, I really expected to have more direct control of the business side of the USC. And in retrospect, I think that I probably should have.

This is a fairly complicated and sensitive issue and I don't want to spend a lot of time dwelling on it, but I don't want to ignore it either.

Whenever a discussion of this nature comes up a word that is invariably mentioned or hinted at is the word 'trust'. It's usually used in the context "The President should trust the managers to do their job". However, I think the trust street has to go both ways, and I think the managers should trust the President to be a worthwhile contributor to their management meetings and their decisions.

I really do think that it would be worthwhile to have a VP Operations, or some student politician dedicated to overseeing and influencing the operations. This is not to be interpreted in a way that shows mistrust of the managers, but rather a way to enhance the relationship between the political and business spheres of the operation.

I fear that the USC has become too focused on the business side and has lost sight of its' political role. I'm not referring to the council itself but rather to the staff. Our businesses are fully staffed and equipped, and yet it's nearly impossible to get resources to help out on a political objective. For example, why aren't our top-notch promotions people helping to get the word out about tuition hikes? There's a completely different paradigm when considering hiring a full-time or part-time employee for one of the operations and hiring someone to work in an advocacy capacity. This is not right.

While I'm discussing finances, I want to say how disappointed I was with our fee increase. It broke a campaign promise that I really believed in. Unfortunately, I realized far too late in the budget cycle that I had missed my big opportunities. Don't misinterpret me – I think that our budget is fantastic, and I stand behind it and the people who worked on it. I just wish that I had more influence before the budget cycle started.

I always liked attending the Spoke on Monday Nights. It was Retro-Night, and I always enjoyed the music. One of the DJ's (Josh) liked picking on me, and he would automatically enter me in his dance contests. I was a little disappointed when I didn't win the break dancing contest, but I did manage to win the Irish Jig competition. My favourite win was during the '97 presidential election dance-off. I'm still surprised that I won... not because my rendition of "Flashdance" was anything less than spectacular, but because it was hard to compete with my CRO Jamie Deans who took off his shirt in the middle of his dance sequence.

Regardless of any changes that I think should happen in the political side, I fundamentally believe that it is time for another external corporate review, with the focus to be entirely on the operations (including the media operations and entertainment productions). A lot has changed, and it is about time to sit back and have everything re-evaluated by a third party. The timing was inappropriate in my year, but is very plausible this year, and if it isn't done this year then it should definitely be included in the 98-99 budget.

At one point in the year we obtained five sets of boxing gloves. On occasion we would let off some steam and spar in the office. We had some big matches scheduled, but they never materialized. The most notable was to be the big USC vs. King's Finance face-off between Chris Keith and Lucy Pinheiro. Boxing was fun, but wrestling was much more commonplace. Once during a board meeting a note was passed around that said "When I say 'NOW' we jump Walden". In hindsight we got lucky and caught him off guard, because with Jim's military background he could have probably killed us all – just using his thumb.

8. DIRECTIONS FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

I admit freely that the External Affairs portfolio was not what attracted me to the position. I have never studied politics, and it is definitely not a hobby. I went through mood swings throughout my term where I would get very enthusiastic about the portfolio and then very dispassionate. I have decided to identify three topics that I think should be taken to new heights.

STUDENT AID

Student leaders have to get more knowledgeable and more involved with student aid – immediately. The President, Vice-President Issues and the researcher should spend at least a day in the financial aid office to get up to speed on how and why all the policies work the way they do. Next, some in-depth discussions should be happening at the provincial and federal levels on upcoming changes to policies, possible options for the future, and the pros and cons of the existing and future models.

The students have to win this fight. I don't think that anyone believes that the banks, the government, or the administrations are going to put together the best package for students. I sincerely believe that the students can have a positive and profound influence on the reforms to student aid, but it is going to take some considerable effort to become competent enough to discuss it properly.

REPRESENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Students at Western got the shaft this year in representation. What happened with the UWO Act was ridiculous. It demonstrated how downright overbearing and autocratic the senior administration at Western can be.

To make the best of the situation there is only one choice. The issue must be tackled at the provincial level. The UWO Act must be used as an example of how the Universities are making a mockery of public accountability. A similar tactic was used with the Ancillary Fee issue, and it was Western's overbearing actions that triggered a new Ministry policy.

The night my Vice-Presidents were elected I took them all to Waldo's. It became a tradition for us, and we returned there several times throughout the year. On the night of the Charity Ball, we even made special arrangements so everyone could smoke their 'stogies'. However, I don't think anything could beat the first night. There was no sign of the chef, so after waiting patiently, Jerry and Scott jumped behind the serving area, strapped on aprons, and started cooking us some pasta. Delicious.

It is not unfeasible to lobby the Ontario Government to institute a policy similar to the one in Manitoba (where students are guaranteed a percentage of representation). However, The government will find itself with conflicting objectives. On one hand, they will want to preserve the autonomy of the institutions. On the other hand, they understand the principles of accountability and transparency, and they believe that the people who pay the money should have some say in how it is spent. Once again, I believe that students can make a difference on this issue.

THE LEVEL OF TUITION

I believe that a researcher should be hired either by OUSA or by the USC to write a report about the rising costs of tuition. The report should take a serious look at comparing, contrasting and analyzing the institutional costs of a university, and the cost of educating students. I believe that when all the analysis is done, this report will clearly demonstrate that students (or at least social science students) are paying more than what it costs to educate them.

I have said it before, and I will say it again. I believe in all of the principles upon which Universities are founded. However, I don't think students should fund them all. There is a clear responsibility on the public to fund the research and institutional costs of the University system and a portion of the educational costs.

This campaign should not just be targeted at the university and government communities. The general public and private sector must be educated on the increased costs of post-secondary education. The private sector should be lobbied to provide more student discounts on goods and services. An argument that I like to use is that students are in a similar economic demographic to senior citizens and should be afforded similar discounts (i.e.: restaurants and taxis).

For example, I think the USC should scrap the current "gold card discount" concept. I don't care if it does make money. It shouldn't. The USC should approach all London retailers, and offer them free advertising in the Gold card if they offer students a 15% reduction. Print a company's logo for a 30% reduction, and perhaps a free advertisement in the Gazette if they offer 40% off or more. This is one small way that the USC can help offset the increased costs of tuition, and it is only the beginning.

I never claimed to be an expert in fashion.

In fact, I was once referred to as "the worst dressed President in recent history".

Tara Carriere, a friend of mine who turned out to be an excellent source of perspective and illumination throughout my term, gave me a fashion lecture after one of my presidential candidate forums:

"I know they're comfy and all, but you can't wear light gray socks with black pants and black shoes."

7. USING THE MEDIA MORE EFFECTIVELY

Over the course of the year, I think that I used the media well, but not nearly enough. During the active times of the school year the USC should be sending out at least one press release a week. I was always hesitant to send them and was afraid of not getting the necessary attention when something really important was occurring. In hindsight I think that was foolish. When the really important releases go out, there should be numerous follow-up phone calls and perhaps even a press conference.

So what should be going out in these releases? Everything.

It's green week on campus: Press Release.

UWO is planning to raise tuition again: Press Release.

The Science Students' Council is having a big event: Press Release.

Any student group raises a whack of money for charity: Press Release.

A UWO student wins a big award, tournament, or competition: Press Release.

The X-Files club is having their annual weekend: Press Release.

Any time that a Western student is doing something fairly extraordinary and positive, a press release should go out. I think that this endeavor alone will help improve the USC's image and reputation amongst the community and the University. And besides, the students being highlighted will definitely appreciate it.

Whenever possible, the USC and the Administration should issue joint press releases. For example, whenever there is a major announcement from the Ministry or other large body and the views of the students and admin are going to be fairly similar, then there should be quotes from both groups.

The London Free Press loves to publish weekly profiles, and I think that a Western student of the week or a Student Group of the week would be a fantastic addition.

At least once a year, preferably right before a big campaign, the USC President should meet with the London Free Press Editorial Board to go over the hot issues of the day and to elaborate on the positions of the students.

Originally, I wanted to have a talk show on TV Western every two weeks, but as it turned out I only had time to do "The Dave Show" twice. I had a lot of fun doing the show, but I also had a lot of hassle. You'd be surprised how many naked men get upset when you walk into the Campus Recreation locker room with a video camera.

6. REPRESENTING EVERY STUDENT

I wanted to mention a few topics that fall under the spectrum of “representing every student”. Throughout my term I had to constantly remind myself to do just that.

Representing every student means that policies should represent popular opinion. It means that steps must be taken to determine what students really do think. It means you have to advocate on behalf of the minority to ensure that their opinion is heard.

I don't know if I did enough advocating in my term. The few occasions that did arise I found to be very rewarding, but I probably could have done more. The use of the USC as an advocating body and the availability of the Ombudsperson's office are two things that need to be promoted better.

There is some notion out there that continuing education students and other students who do not pay fees are not represented by the USC. That is ridiculous and very irresponsible. The USC can not allow for these loopholes. It's really quite simple: the USC chooses not to charge all of the constituents a fee, in accordance with the Universities' fee policy. Steps should be taken to dispel those notions. There is nothing wrong with representation without taxation.

The USC does not do enough for the professional faculties. For this report, the professional faculties will include every faculty other than the big three: Arts, Science and Social Science.

It becomes quite natural at the USC to target the big three faculties. In fact, it usually takes additional effort just to reach those professional students. Unfortunately, the professional students are usually busier, and don't participate in as many activities. Targeting the professional students can become very frustrating, with very little payoff, which is why they are often ignored.

The smaller faculty councils are much better at communicating with, and understanding their constituency than the USC. This is a good thing. Despite popular belief, the USC cannot be all things to all students. However, the faculty councils and the USC cannot and should not live in isolation from each other.

As I've already discussed, students are facing a crisis in the student movement. Resources and good volunteers are disappearing, and so it will become even more essential to share those people and resources. There shouldn't be any duplication of efforts. The USC should encourage and nurture the areas that the faculty councils do well and should pick up the slack and assist in their weaker areas. I sincerely believe

The night I was elected a girl I had never met before came up to me and gave me a big kiss. I just thought that I would mention this story because it doesn't happen to me very often.

that this can be done in a friendly, co-operative fashion, but it is going to take some buy-in from the various councils and good intentions from the USC.

When interacting with the professional faculties, there needs to be a good communication link in place. When an issue is big enough all of the councils should get involved. Conversely, when something is going to affect just one faculty, the issue must be brought to the attention of the USC so that it can be handled appropriately.

Although the dynamics are different, the above comments can be applied to residence and affiliated councils and, I suppose, even to some clubs and groups on campus. But there is one issue that all those associations have in common: insurance. I fundamentally believe that the USC should be looking out for every student association. I don't care if it is the Waterbuffalos sending a bus trip to Oktoberfest or the Arts Council hosting a poetry reading. The USC should be there for them, and the USC should be proactive about it. There should be literature explaining the various legal issues and how the USC wants to protect them. If the association wants to do something with legal risk then the USC should outline precautions, but insure them regardless. After all, the USC represents those students.

This is one issue where the corporate responsibility and the political responsibility of the USC may conflict. Corporately, it would be in the USC's best interests to disassociate from these groups and protect itself from legal liability. I find that sort of lawyer-speak completely unacceptable and politically irresponsible.

It should be noted that not all student representatives have the proper accountability mechanisms. There are students selected to sit on committees scattered all over the University. Some of these students sit on surprisingly powerful committees, and may not realize the impact of their decisions. Some of these students are hand picked because they are 'yes' people or because they will advocate strongly on one topic. There needs to be a comprehensive review of every committee, regardless of size, to consolidate a list of student representatives. Ideally, every applicant for these committees would be screened through the USC's Nominating Committee, but that isn't always practical. Students who are selected for these committees should be responsible to file their non-confidential minutes and meeting packages with the USC Researcher and should report to a member of the USC executive or the caucus chair on any upcoming important or contentious issues. There is a lot of infrastructure involved in representing every student, but it is absolutely necessary.

I think that my most disgraceful moment as President was the sub-eating contest. I used my patented technique of pouring Coca-Cola® all over the sub before I ate it so it would require less saliva and go down faster. It wasn't the most appetizing site, but I wolfed it down in record time. Hey – anything for charity.

5. BUILDING BRIDGES

What kind of Engineer would I be if I didn't talk about building bridges?

Years from now, scientists will completely break the genetic code. What will astonish the scientists is that the gene that makes people run for Student Council President is the same gene that makes a person talk about "Strategic Partnerships". The most bizarre part of that same discovery will be that it is also the same gene that makes a person procrastinate while writing a final report.

The USC should always be on the lookout for new partners. I don't think that I have to dwell on the subject, because anyone who has watched one or two Sesame Street episodes knows the power of co-operation. However, I think it would be helpful to discuss a small number of the existing partnerships. I also want to highlight some of the new partners the USC should seek.

The first partnership that springs to mind is the Alumni Association. Our relationship with the Alumni seems to be strong, but there are still dozens of new opportunities for the two organizations to work together. If I had one dream in strategic partnerships (in a professional sense) it would be that the USC could tap into the Alumni network and harness the political power it holds. Imagine the impact of literally thousands of alumni expressing their discontent with a new university direction or decision.

The other pillars of Western are the Faculty and the Staff. I can't foresee too many UWOSA / USC joint partnerships, unless they include all of the key players. I suppose the PMA could be included in that category as well. However, the Faculty Association is a fantastic ally. I think student leaders would be surprised with how frequently the Faculty and Student political views are in sync. It is always worthwhile to keep in constant communication with the Faculty Association, and it should be maintained as a healthy relationship where agreement is sought, but not forced on the tougher issues.

It is always worthwhile to know what is going on with the Graduate Students (SOGS) and the MBA students, and it is doubly worthwhile to keep SOGS and the MBAA apprised of what the USC is up to. It is important in the relationship to be the gentle giant, and not the big bully. However, on occasion it is okay to flex a little muscle and establish who is the bigger player. SOGS has had some difficulty in the 'Tact' department in the past, so it doesn't hurt to discuss some strategy with them. Try to

One of my favourite stress-busting activities around the office was playing a game of chess. Chris Walsh and I even developed a version of drinking chess. You can find our rules on-line at:

<http://www.usc.uwo.ca/archives/96-97/executiv/prez/chess/>

There was a lot of competition, because Scott, Jerry, Walsh and I each thought that we were the best. It got so competitive that we would even bet on the games. But, after the year is complete, I must confess. Guys... I'm the best.

avoid at all costs the situation where the USC and SOGS will take opposite viewpoints, especially in public or on the floor of Senate.

A relationship that has been going fairly well lately and that should be nurtured is the one with the Mayor, and the City of London. This includes any of the action teams, programs, or committees that happen to be in place. Believe it or not, London is renowned for having the various sectors of the community working together co-operatively. Any new or existing opportunities to work together should be approached vigorously, especially any possibilities to co-operate with the neighborhood associations.

I think one new group the USC has been positive with this year has been ITS. This relationship should be maintained and expanded upon. There will continue to be new and exciting opportunities for co-operation in the future.

If I had to pick one new partner that I think the USC should be teaming up with it is simple: The Ministry of Education and Training. I sincerely think that the President, VP Issues and External Affairs Commissioner (Provincial) should spend a day at the Ministry and meet some of the key players. There were numerous times throughout my term that I wished I had a good contact at the Ministry to discuss the predicament I was in. The Ministry has all the power in Post-Secondary Education, and the USC should be better equipped to tap into that power.

There were several categories used in the judging for the Homecoming King/Queen contest. There was a talent component, a question and answer component, a comedy component and there was supposed to be a sketch component, but it was eliminated due to time constraints. Instead of depriving the audience of their sketches, MC Meigan Terry decided to put me on the spot and asked me to ad-lib.

It wasn't my most spectacular performance, but under the circumstances I thought I did fine. I don't think Meigan was too impressed, because after the sketch she begged the audience:

"Please... Everyone! Get out and vote next year!"

4. WESTERN'S SENIOR ADMINISTRATION

Every man has a line that he won't cross. It's been pointed out to me numerous times that my line is much farther out than most. I wasn't really sure if I should write this section. The fact that I was hesitant to write this section indicates one thing to me: I'm way past the line. I suppose that made me want to write it even more.

I happen to know a fictional person named X. X may or may not remind you of some real individuals, but any resemblance is purely co-incidental, and has no relation to the title of this section.

PROBLEM #1: ACADEMIA

X did very well in his undergraduate studies. In fact, he did so well that he decided to go to graduate school. Near the completion of graduate school, X decided to continue on and get a Ph.D. While being a professor, X again performed very well, and someone saw a "spark" in him and made him a department chair. X was so ambitious that it wasn't long before he was Dean. And before you knew it, X had moved beyond Dean and was a senior administrator.

It's unclear if X started out as a snooty, well off and affluent academic, or whether X just evolved into that stereotype. After all, being a snooty academic is what gets you that final big promotion.

Where along the timeline has X stayed in touch with the average student? Heck, X was never an average student himself. X has trouble understanding that not every student wants to go to graduate school. X almost refuses to believe that his University is now more like a community college - cranking out thousands of people just looking for a piece of paper so they can get a job. X thinks that the students struggling financially to stay in school are the exception, not the rule.

Even though X is my fictional character, I don't know everything about him. I'm curious to know where X developed the proper skills to run all the facets of the university. When did X learn anything about running a business? When did X develop a true appreciation for customer service? When did X become a master of marketing and promotion? A very frightening notion just occurred to me. Heaven forbid... but perhaps X doesn't have the proper skill set to run a University.

I'm a pretty easygoing guy, and it's pretty hard to embarrass me. However, I can think of one time that I was completely embarrassed. It was 5:00 on a Wednesday, and I was exhausted. Jerry offered to wake me up if I wanted to take a nap in my office. I closed my eyes and fell right to sleep. The next thing I remember was hearing the phone ring. It was 7:10, and Jerry was calling from the Business Building. There was a Council Meeting that night.

PROBLEM #2: BLINDERS

Unfortunately, my imaginary friend X has a bad habit of wearing blinders. Sometimes, when there is a very complicated problem put in front of him he jumps to conclusions. He likes to narrow in on one small aspect of the problem and presume a solution. It's not always X's fault. Sometimes he's so busy running around he doesn't have time to think it through. Sometimes he's doesn't even have time to think for himself, so he trusts other people to do his thinking for him, and produce a nice tidy report for him to read. I can think of many imaginary problems X has imagined. In fact, one imaginary problem I'm fond of discussing is the "party school image".

If I hear one more person complain about Western's "party school image" I think I'm going to lose my lunch. Either that or I'll go out and get drunk. I am proud of the fact that Western is known as a school that knows how to party. I would rather have that than be known as a Waterloo, which is renowned for its inability to produce socially well adjusted members of society. The people who are the most successful in life are the ones who are well rounded and are both intelligent and sociable. Well guess what? If you are sociable when you are going to University it means that you're going to attend a couple of parties.

Fact: Students are going to party. Unless the province bans alcohol and every tenth person is an undercover narcotics agent then there are going to be parties. Given this fact, what is the responsible and intelligent thing to do?

I know what X thinks. X thinks that all of his problems in recruitment and reputation stem from these parties. X doesn't like those party people. In fact, I bet you X never got invited to the good parties when he was going to school. Or maybe he did, but he was too busy planning out his career. One thing is for sure: X doesn't want a whole bunch of party people running around on his campus. That's right... his campus. X wants his campus filled with socially inept people clumsily bumping into each other because they're carrying too many textbooks. So X is determined to squash every party in his path. In the name of legal responsibility or whatever banner he can find to fly, he will purge his campus of those demon-spawned parties.

However, X forgot about the one simple fact: Students are going to party. The responsible way to deal with this fact is to ensure that they are partying in moderation, in a responsible way, and that they are protected (as much as possible) from legal liability. There is no other choice. X should embrace responsible parting. But X was

I was in a meeting with Mayor Haskett, and we were discussing strategies to improve relations between the students and the neighbourhoods. She was trying to explain how she believed the "responsible neighbour" message would mean a lot coming from me, but it didn't come out quite right.

I believe she said something like,

"Dave, it seems to me that your predecessor ran on a platform of strong academics and community involvement. While your campaign platform seemed to be nothing more than... Let's Party!"

never in the business of parting, and he shouldn't be. He should leave it up to the fine people at the USC.

Here's another tip for my imaginary friend X: Stop drawing attention to this imaginary problem... you're only making it worse.

PROBLEM #3: DICTATORSHIP

My imaginary friend X is used to getting things done, and done his way. After all, X is a powerful man. When X says to jump, people should ask how high. That's the way a university should be run. X comes up with policy, and people should approve it immediately. Why bother to question the wisdom of X? Don't you understand that X knows best? You don't think X is working in your best interests? You probably just don't understand. Don't worry... not everyone can be as wise as X. Just trust your future to X and everything will be okay.

Resistance is futile.

No, It's not.

PROBLEM #4: REPUTATION

You're never quite sure what is motivating X. One thing that's for sure is that X really likes being associated with a school with a good reputation. A good reputation is very important to X. Unfortunately, reputation is very hard to measure. Maclean's certainly can't do it. Some people measure research dollars or the average income of graduates, but a popular measure is the quality of students. However, measuring the quality of a student can be just as difficult as measuring the reputation of a University, unless you focus on one particular attribute such as academic standing (there goes X, wearing those blinders again).

So X wants the A+ students going to his school. That will improve X's reputation, which is a big motivating factor for X. That is why recruitment is so important to X. But this should be easy for X. X was an A+ student, so all he has to do is come up with a recruitment strategy that would have worked on him.

Once I had a dream where I saw my imaginary friend X give a speech to graduating high school students, trying to encourage them to attend Western. It was a very vivid dream, almost as if I was really there... right in the McKellar room. My dream was a

I was coerced into participating in a Charity Bachelor Auction.

I was pretty nervous when I entered into it. Strutting around stage and 'showing off the goods' isn't exactly in my comfort zone, but I survived. I went for \$100, which was the highest amount any one man went for. As it turned out, I was purchased by not one, but eight lovely ladies who took me out for a night on the town. I was blindfolded and chauffeured to the finest restaurants and bars in the city.

This isn't really a funny story, I just don't often get the forum to brag about such a fabulous night.

nightmare. Mr. X's speech was horrible. I couldn't believe it was happening. X was talking about irrelevant topics, sharing boring details and stories, and made Western sound as exciting as a root canal. I actually saw students nod their heads and go to sleep (which is ironic, because X has been known to sleep during convocation).

Mr. X would make a horrible car salesman. And that's unfortunate, because car salesmen are very good at selling. If a car salesman was giving that speech then everybody would want to go to Western. A car salesman doesn't spend the majority of his pitch going over every inch of the engine. Why? Because every car has that! And the customers who know the subtleties between two engines have probably already made up their mind before they got on the lot. He tells you how great you would look in the car. He tells you how versatile that car is. He tells you about his customer service and warranty protection. He tells you about his satisfied customers. He shows you all the cool options. He focuses on the things that the other car dealerships can't offer you and convinces you that you're a complete loser if you don't drive his car. Features, Advantages and Benefits: the cornerstone of the sales pitch.

Pay attention, X. You see... car salesmen don't make all their money on new cars. They make their money by keeping customers for life. Happy customers... for the entire life of their car. Customer wants to change their model? No problem... not an administrative nightmare. Need to refinance? Piece of cake, he'll get you through this. Something's broken or not right? He'll fix it... no questions asked.

I had another dream where I was at a meeting for SCUP, and X was explaining how great it was going to be now that he could offer every option to new car buyers. When I asked when that was going to be available to 2nd year car owners, X actually laughed at me. Something told me X was only concerned about the initial sale.

I wish I had a nickel every time I heard something like this: "Western treated me like shit. I'll be damned if I give them any money when I graduate."

Satisfied customers... what a novel way to measure Reputation.

At the Brescia Ball they crown a Queen and a Princess (instead of a King and Queen). Much to my surprise, they announced Daan DeKerpel (the President of King's College) and myself as the winners. When we went to the podium to receive our flowers and crowns we were disheartened to discover that it was only a joke. So Daan and I decided to upstage the real Queen and Princess (and their dates) by slow dancing together during their victory song. I don't think the nuns were too impressed.

PROBLEM #5: RELUCTANCE TO CHANGE

Really, I think this is self-explanatory.

So there are some interesting comments regarding my imaginary friend X. I could have discussed many other things about X, but I have decided not to. I think that it is always important to try to understand X, so if you have to deal with him, you can know what to expect. No matter what, don't be afraid of X. Just always be prepared with facts, because X likes facts, and if you don't have any it makes you look foolish. X also has his weaknesses. Sometimes X is too busy to collect his facts.

And never ever forget about two of X's traits: his tendency to wear blinders, and how much he values his precious reputation.

*I visited several residences for dinner throughout the year. I think I had the most fun at Sydenham. A girl named Noela asked me to purchase a drink for her because she wasn't wearing any shoes or socks. I was flabbergasted to find out that you couldn't be served food in bare feet. Later in the evening I met the head cafeteria lady – I believe her name was Carmen. In the name of vigilante cafeteria justice I took off my shoes and socks and ran through the serving area, all the while being chased by Carmen.
I guess you had to be there.*

3. COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

One of the true benefits of a University education is the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of experiences and opportunities. But that's the problem. There are a wide variety of experiences and opportunities out there.

There are hundreds of events going on around campus every week. There are thousands of people walking around campus every day. How do you communicate with all those people to let them know about all those wonderful life-enriching experiences they may be interested in?

It's hard. In fact – it's impossible. I'm not just talking about USC events. I'm talking about chess club events, guest lecturers, football games, senate meetings, employment seminars, writing skills sessions, fraternity rush events, financial aid workshops, aerobics classes, awards receptions, announcements, add/drop dates and a merchandise sale at Varsity Authentics.

Posters, billboards, signs, TV-Western ads, newspaper ads, flyers and rave cards. It's a sea of flashy logos and neon paper out there.

This is another one of those "I could fill pages discussing this topic, but I won't" because I don't have all the answers... But I have two hopes.

I hope that there will always be hundreds of events to attend every week.

I hope that the Internet lives up to its' potential and cleans up this mess.

During the summer months, I hosted the Wednesday morning "Wake Up Western" show on CHRW with News Director Mike Mitchell. We had a lot of fun doing the show, and stretched the CHRW format to its limits. My favourite musical segment was our tribute to mambo, but my favourite segment overall was when we phoned several donut shops live and on the air. We discovered that the police actually prefer bagels, and that the most popular donut in London is the Boston Crème. Mmm... Donuts.

2. ORIENTATION WEEK

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

I think that my best speech all year was the one I gave at soph weekend in Althouse College. It was very energetic and I received a standing ovation. My opening speech to the frosh was okay, but I dated myself by quoting the Van Halen song "Dreams" which had been released more than 10 years before my speech. However, I'm still glad that I chose the topic I did for my closing speech to the frosh.

*I paraphrased a speech from one of the great classic movies of all time.
There's absolutely nothing like standing in front of thousands of people and saying,
"I am a Nerd, and I'm proud of it."*

1. BEING THE USC PRESIDENT

You know... it's fantastic to be the President on campus.

In fact, there are hundreds of people that get the honour every year.

Just considering the undergraduate students organizations, you have: clubs, fraternities, sororities, the IFC/Panhellenic Council, faculty councils, faculty clubs, campus recreation clubs, non-ratified clubs, affiliated colleges, residence councils, and so on. In addition, there is all the graduate and MBA clubs, and then you can start including all of the staff, faculty, alumni, administrative and union associations. That's a lot of Presidents.

As USC President you should never forget that you are just one President of many. And each of those other Presidents have their own problems, their own struggles, and their own victories. Their own concerns are far more important to them than your petty concerns will ever be. They are not less important than you are. They have simply chosen to get involved in a different organization. Never trivialize or patronize them. Some of them have more direct contact and influence with students than you ever will.

For the remainder of the report, I have decided to leave all my notes and thoughts scattered. It's a style thing.

*I want to make it clear that I didn't always follow some of my own advice...
But I wanted to.*

Be true to your own personal priorities, and be mindful of other peoples' priorities.

Stay humble. Don't get too cocky.

Make time for the things that you *really* want to do.

Try to remember as many people's names as possible.

Sometimes it's okay to be a figurehead.

*For the USC President, the second day in office is one of the best. You've had a full day to get over the jitters, you've re-organized your office, and you feel like you can conquer the world.
On my second day in office Jim Walden forgot my name.*

Go to as many events as you possibly can. Join some clubs. Make it out to some of their meetings. If you can't attend their event A, find out about their event B. If you're not invited, don't be too proud to invite yourself. When you do go, don't be shy. Shake hands. Introduce yourself.

There is a very big difference between being infamous and popular. Remember that.

Send lots of correspondence. If a sports team does well, send their captain a letter. Congratulate the athletes of the week. Get lists of scholarship winners and congratulate them. Send sympathy letters. That sort of stuff can go miles.

Be careful about what you say in public. The walls have ears.

Here are 3 of my favourite "big picture" quotes that were said to me this year:
"Take advantage of the position, not the people." (Michael Burns)
"Believe half of what you see, and nothing of what you hear." (Jim Walden)
"Dare to care." (Andy T)

Always dress appropriately.

Never pass up an opportunity to thank one of your volunteers.

People will like you for the wrong reasons. Accept it. People will hate you for the wrong reasons. Accept that also.

Never forget your roots.

There are times to step into the spotlight. There are times to leave the spotlight. The timing is crucial.

If you put your foot in your mouth, pull it out.

Smile.

Never take a freebee or perk you don't feel comfortable accepting. Don't always feel comfortable accepting perks and freebees.

Unbeknownst to us, Pat Weiler, our Executive Assistant had been making a different set of minutes during our Board meetings. At our farewell staff party, she coordinated a sketch that poked fun at my Executive. Instead of the "Testosterone Team" (the staff's pet name for us) they had the "Estrogen Team" which behaved exactly like us, but was comprised entirely of women. Mario Circelli from CHRW played Rosy Palmer (me) and mimicked some of my behavior and idiosyncrasies perfectly. After requesting that someone give her "The Reader's Digest version" and doing a "Franklin Synchronization" she stood up and did my patented "deep thought" gaze out of the window at University College (and the concrete beach).

When you feel like there is no one to turn to... there isn't. Deal with it. You're the President.

Never lose touch with the average student.

Try not to play favourites.

Take calculated risks. You'll sleep better at night. Prepare for the worst. Expect the worst. Deal with the worst. Just do it! Take calculated risks.

Praise in public... reprimand in private.

Always be the best you can be. And try to be yourself.

Because when it comes right down to it...

That's what the world wants today.

The real thing.

It was a privilege to be the only student leader from Ontario facilitating the 1997 Super-Conference in Manitoba. I was doing a session on code of conducts, and I was expressing my usual opinion that students shouldn't be punished academically for non-academic offences such as setting off smoke bombs yada, yada, yada ... At the end of the session, one of the delegates commented that he thought the session was going to be on the proper decorum for student executives. This President was concerned that his Vice-President would get drunk in their student centre, and he was looking for discipline advice.

I simply replied, "Hell – How could I discipline that? That was my campaign platform."

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What the world wants today

Coca-Cola[®]

It's the real thing

What the world wants today

Coca-Cola[®]

It's the real thing

There were a lot of fabulous people that made this year very special.

Unfortunately, I've never been very good at saying "Thank You".