

BRIDGE TO NOWHERE

To the Division of Academic Affairs,

I have spent the last few days in Cincinnati. Twice, I walked across the Roebling Bridge to the Ohio side from the hotel in Kentucky. The bridge seems to arc up to the Underground Railroad museum. And there you have America at its best and worst. The bridge, a marvel in public works, sibling to the Roebling wonder across the East River in New York. And the museum, a testament to fortitude and political dedication but a reminder of destitute and depraved public policy, slavery, that poisoned America.



Today, we build bridges to nowhere, barely educate students in K-12, and drain support for students of color who might want to go to college. 50 years ago, we built the Master Plan, California's bridge to the future. But now, because we as a people are morally bankrupt, we are financially bankrupt. Read Lincoln's Second Inaugural. He knew we had much to pay for. We know that it will take god's grace upon political reform to get this right again. The underground must come above ground.

I say this to encourage perspective. Your dean, your university, and I have not done this budget to "you." Nor has CFA, nor has the student body. Anyone who can subtract and divide can prove diminishing support compounded by enervating compliance demands and the part-timing of the work force since the '70s. Folks, if we take out our frustrations internally on one another, then we allow "we the people"--or rather the merchants of mendacity who malign the public commons--to get off the hook.

As Jolene has said, we anticipated much of this and have planned adequately. Nonetheless, I am sure we will face, let's be honest, nightmares that we did not foresee. So, we all must try to care; we must not let the fissures in the polity make us a house divided. Obviously, we will look for ways to save money and time because they allow us to help people. Meanwhile, get to me if you have questions. My instinct tells me that when fools are afoot in the land, bullies will blather and bludgeon those who cannot or will not think for themselves.

Harry Hellenbrand
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
October 23, 2008