

FLUMMOXED MIDWIFERY

Anne Hendricks—Editor

On Tuesdays in my Introduction to Literature class, we spend the first few minutes discussing that day's devotional. Often I'll ask the students to interpret one of the metaphors the speaker used. Sometimes I'll ask for questions about issues presented in the talks. On October 22, 2002, following the dedication of the Gordon B. Hinckley Building, my students had two primary questions: Had I ever heard of the word "flummox"? And did I know what it meant?

Because my students were doubtful that this was a real word, we turned to a ragged paperback dictionary—the freshman student's favorite research resource—found in the bottom of one student's backpack. Here's the stingy definition: confuse. The *Oxford English Dictionary* adds synonyms such as "confound," "bewilder," and "collapse." However, I like President Hinckley's word best—flummox, a great onomatopoeic reflection of these emotions and others.

We have all probably felt flummoxed at least once during the transition from Ricks College to BYU-Idaho. We've had many justifiable reasons for this emotion: e.g., adjusting to the name change, understanding and accepting the change in the athletic programs, determining how to meet the demands of upper division courses, deciding which majors to offer and when, accommodating more students, and so on. Many situations have been resolved; and many questions have been answered, at least in part. However, others still require work. And I'm certain we face more flummoxes in the future.

From one state of bewilderment to the next, one significant focus is clear: the challenge to rethink education. As *Perspective's* editorial board, we realize this will be a continuing theme for the publication. While the University's focus is clear, the means to accomplish the task may not be. Robert Bird offers part of the answer in "Socratic Questioning in the Classroom." He introduces his topic with Socrates' description of himself as the "midwife of ideas." As we rethink education, *Perspective* becomes a midwife to our ideas.

Dawn Anderson leads this semester's rethinking of education by outlining three specific areas in which to begin. Rod Keller offers five principles for dealing with teaching load and other issues over which we might not have control. Leon Parson and Kip Hartvigsen both explore how we learn so that we can improve our teaching. On campus, a significant example of rethinking education is the development of clusters, and in this *Perspective* we begin a discussion of this topic.

We are not the only university rethinking education. In April 2002 two representatives from the Tatar-American Regional Institute (TARI) visited our campus and shared with us challenges they face as their institute evolves. Their thoughts, struggles, and suggestions are included.

Thank you to those who have shared your ideas in this issue. Thank you for your influence on campus. As a new faculty member, I learned about the scholarship of teaching, in part, through this publication. Now in my first semester on *Perspective's* editorial board, I spend even more time learning from these articles. My experience with *Perspective* has been similar to the one-by-one teaching experience President Bednar has suggested we provide our students. I may not have spent time, face-to-face, with Lyle Lowder and Leon Parson, but they have taught me. Perhaps this issue, and others, will provide a one-by-one experience for you as well.

This *Perspective* ends with the dedication of the Gordon B. Hinckley Building; we wanted to give President Hinckley the last word on this semester's progress in BYU-Idaho's transition. As we reflect on the confusion of these first years and the work ahead, let us remember President Monson's dedicatory prayer: "May doubt be dispelled. May faith provide that shining light which fills minds and souls with truth eternal." How can we do our part to realize these blessings? I offer President Hinckley's comments as an answer. At the close of his remarks, President Hinckley challenged BYU-Idaho students to stand in front of the mirror daily and proclaim, "I can do the right thing today, God being my helper." Sitting in a darkened classroom in the Smith Building, listening to these words, I had a brief impression of Captain Moroni offering another Standard to his people. Perhaps President Hinckley's advice to our students can be a Standard for us as we continue this transition. "I can do the right thing today, God being my helper." Even moving from flummox to flummox, we can succeed. ☺