In Memory of Keith Miser

From the archives, the *Journal of Student Affairs* reintroduces a piece from 1998 by Dr. Keith Miser in celebration of his service and dedication to the field of student affairs. In *A Final Thought*, Dr. Miser discusses changes within student affairs influenced by cultural and legal shifts. This article acts as a time-capsule reminding its readers of both the progress and stagnation within the U.S. higher education system. Namely, Dr. Miser predicted that the next decade, 2000 - 2010, would be characterized by changes in technology, politics, economics, and the cost of higher education - issues still hotly debated more than 20 years later. In addition, these issues, along with the foundations of the field, have been insidiously constructed with a racist and anti-Black lens, a topic that has gained recent widespread traction but has been pervasive throughout history. With rapid changes and development, a question arises: how does the field of student affairs grow and adapt to meet the needs of future generations of students? Dr. Miser advises that we lead with optimism and creativity to not repeat the past, but rather to reimagine a better future. We are grateful to have inherited a piece of Dr. Miser's legacy, and may he forever be remembered in the pages of our publication. Thank you and rest in peace.

Tanisha Muquit
A Final Thought

Dr. Keith M. Miser

Come gather 'round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you
Is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin'
Or you 'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a changin'

Bob Dylan, 1963

This classic song by Bob Dylan in many ways was the mantra of the 1960s, a period of significant change in America. This era saw a transformation in values, youth culture, law, and social institutions. Of course, the 1960s also are heralded as a time of significant change in institutions of higher education. Student Affairs as a profession changed dramatically in response to societal changes and to different legal interpretations. Changing our role so quickly from predominantly behavior controllers under the legal doctrine of *in loco parentis* to the philosophy and practice of being student development educators was a tremendous challenge. However, we did become more concerned about students’ personal and educational development, rather than about controlling their behavior. An entire new professional foundation was developed. Among the former deans of men and deans of women of this era, some became leaders, advancing revolutionary concepts and philosophical directions that indeed changed the entire profession. Some of these deans could not or would not change and retired, resigned, or resigned themselves to work in a profession grounded in a different set of beliefs that they could not support and in which they did not believe.

Since the 1960s, little has changed in our profession with regard to its fundamental philosophy and operating understandings. For over 30 years, we have maintained a rather consistent direction with only minor adjustments, even with the recent call to emphasize student learning and interaction with faculty partners as a primary role of student development.

Now, 35 years later, "The times they are a changin' again." Higher education will look dramatically different and will rapidly change, particularly over the next decade. Distance learning, virtual universities, privatized training institutes managed by business, new advances in the technology of teaching and learning,
and the actual delivery of education profoundly alter our profession as we enter the next century.

Driven by new technologies, political forces, and the exorbitant costs of higher education, America is creating new approaches and systems to allow an increasing number of citizens to be educated. Student Affairs professionals again will be challenged as we reshape the process and delivery of education and services in response to this different environment. As student development educators, we must find new ways to meet students' needs, while incorporating new approaches, techniques, and technologies. We must not be idle by duplicating our predecessors' approach when they declared that the new approaches (in the 1960s) would destroy higher education, thus excusing themselves from responding to those changes.

Some of the questions raised about the delivery of higher education and student personnel education are daunting. Can the use of virtual reality techniques be used to enhance counseling and career advising? How can we link with students taking classes by a television or other forms of distance education? What are the essential student personnel services and educational programs that must be preserved and maintained with their delivery to students via new technologies? How can student affairs professionals be a powerful active force by responding as partners with faculty in new virtual universities? How can we use new technologies to link people together rather than isolate them? What opportunities do we have to link internationally via the new educational delivery systems to truly internationalize our profession? Will these new advances become a "social leveler," allowing economically disadvantaged individuals to share in higher education, or will it isolate them even more by creating an educational technologically elite class? What is our role as student personnel professional leaders to become active partners in this period of rapid change?

As student development leaders, we soon will be facing these issues, and they will reshape our profession and our lives much more dramatically than the changes we saw in the late 1960s.

This is a time of excitement, opportunities, and challenges for our profession and each one of us as student affairs leaders. We must respond with optimism, creativity, and leadership. As Bob Dylan said, "then you better start swimmin' or you will sink like a stone, for the times they are a changin'."

The challenge is great, but the rewards for each of us as individual leaders and professional educators are great. And, the benefits for our students will be significant and will transform the quality of their life forever.