

MESEISET

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REVISED: NEW VISION, NEW MISSION, AND NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

by Alton Higashi

Get ready, ladies and gentlemen! All of us — administrators, faculty, staff, and students — have new guidelines, as approved by the COM-FSM Board of Regents in May 2013. These are a new vision statement, a new mission statement, and six new strategic directions. The purpose of this article is to compare and contrast the “old” and the “new”.

(1) **VISION STATEMENT.** The “old” was, as follows: *“COM-FSM will assist the citizens of the FSM to be well-educated, prosperous, globally connected, accountable, healthy and able to live in harmony with the environment and the world community”*. Wow! This was a broad sight into the future — maybe too expansive.

The “new” states: **“COM-FSM will provide educational opportunities of the highest quality and will embrace the life-long pursuit of knowledge and the enrichment of the diverse Micronesian communities we serve”**. This is definitely more succinct than the “old”; however, brevity does not guarantee that we can see better into the future. To be sure, I do prefer the “new” over the “old”, but I presently worry about two points. The first is the word “highest” — how high is “highest”? I hope that “highest” means — someday — offering degrees higher than AA (such as BA, MA, and even Ph.D), as well as more courses to be taught at state campus, not just at the National Campus.

The second is the word “knowledge”. In the field of education, knowledge is the lowest level of student learning. There are five higher levels of learning, in order: comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (or creativity). I would like to believe that the “pursuit of knowledge” does not leave us at the lowest level of student learning.

(2) **MISSION STATEMENT.** The “old” was indeed old-fashioned: *“Historically diverse, uniquely Micronesian, and globally connected, COM-FSM is a continuously improving and student-centered institute of higher education. The college is committed to assisting in the development of the FSM by providing academic, career, and technical educational opportunities for student learning”*. The “old” was okay, but too many people (both internal and external stakeholders) had trouble trying to figure out several key words, such as uniquely, committed, assisting, globally, and development. So, out with the “old” and in with the “new”.

(continued on page 2)

In this issue....	page
Revised: Vision, Mission, and Strategic Directions	1
The JACADS Project, Part 1	3
The JACADS Project, Part 2	3
A Valentine Poem to My Teacher	3
My Personal Philosophy.	5

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REVISED: NEW VISION, NEW MISSION, AND NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

(continued from page 1)

The “new” mission statement is, as follows: **“COM-FSM is a continuously best-practices, learner-centered institution of higher education committed to the success of the FSM by providing academic, career, and technical educational programs”**. This revision is definitely more simplistic and understandable than the “old”. Let us hope that everyone will understand it.

(3) **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**. We used to have nine strategic goals — the “old” — and now we have six strategic directions — the “new”. Look at the “old” nine:

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Promote learning and teaching for knowledge, skills, creativity, intellect, and the abilities to seek and analyze information and to communicate effectively

GOAL 2: Provide institutional support to foster student success and satisfaction

GOAL 3: Create an adequate, healthy and functional learning environment

GOAL 4: Foster effective communication

GOAL 5: Invest in sufficient, qualified, and effective human resources

GOAL 6: Ensure sufficient and well-managed fiscal resources that maintain financial stability

GOAL 7: Build a partnering and service network for community, workforce and economic development

GOAL 8: Promote the uniqueness of our community, cultivate respect for individual differences and champion diversity

GOAL 9: Provide for continuous improvement of programs, services and college environment

Now, look at the six strategic directions below and compare them with the “old” above. Some of the “new” remain similar to the “old”. Read the “old” and the “new” and compare them:

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: Focus on student success.

DIRECTION 2: Emphasize academic offerings in service to national needs.

DIRECTION 3: Be financially sound, fiscally responsible, and build resources in anticipation of future needs.

DIRECTION 4: Invest in and build a strong capacity in human capital.

DIRECTION 5: Become a learning organization through development of a learning culture guided by learning leaders.

DIRECTION 6: Evoke an image of quality.

Believe it or not — the 6 strategic directions overlap a great deal with the 9 strategic goals! In my opinion, the 6 directions are better than the 9 goals. From a student’s point of view, Directions #1 and #2 may be the most important. Let us go back to these two directions and see how their specifications guide us:

- Direction #1: *COM-FSM will pursue excellence in student success and will develop a balance between “access and success” with appropriate career pathways for FSM students.*
- Direction #2: *COM-FSM will increase the number of 4-year program opportunities while also strengthening the career and technical educational opportunities for non-college-bound students.*

All the same, each student is responsible — in one way or another — for achieving all 6 strategic directions. **DO NOT FORGET IT!**

All 6 directions are essential, of course, but I personally consider Direction #5 the top priority. How does Direction #5 guides us:

- Direction #5: *COM-FSM will operate under the assumptions (i) that learning is a skill and is worthy of investment and mastery, and (ii) that the communication of information and participatory governance are pivotal to organizational success. There will be support of the time, energy, and resources necessary to foster critical reflection and experimentation toward institutional improvement through double-look learning and systematic thinking.*

And, at the same time, each administration/faculty/staff member is responsible for achieving all 6 directions. **DO NOT FORGET IT!**

Okay, everyone, I hope this overview of the revised vision and mission statements, as well as the new strategic directions, will guide and lead us in the next few years. φ

THE J.A.C.A.D.S. PROJECT

ORANGE IS AN UGLY COLOR

(Part 1)

by Valerio Manuel

Agent Orange was born in the 1960s. It was the brainchild of the U.S. Army — and Agent Orange was used to fight in the Vietnam War.

Agent Orange was actually a chemical poison. The U.S. military developed this poison, put it into bombs, and used it to hurt America's enemies, the Viet Cong, in South Vietnam. When the bombs were dropped, they exploded. An orange smoke leaked out and spread over the land. Plants were not hurt, but small animals were killed. People breathed in the orange smoke and got sick. They did not die, but something worse happened.

The Vietnam War ended in 1975, and the U.S. Army stopped using the Agent Orange gas bombs. The only problem was that the U.S. military did not have any way to destroy Agent Orange. So, the U.S. military had a problem — how could it get rid of the chemical bombs? It found a simple answer by starting the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agents Disposal System Project — better known as JACADS.

JACADS began in 1990 on Johnston Atoll. Military experts and civilians alike had a job to do — burn the chemical poison, put the ashes into numerous 55-gallon drums, and seal the drums in about 25 cubic feet of concrete. Then, the military dropped the concrete

(continued on page 4)

THE FUTURE HANDICAP

(Part 2)

by Andrea Nimwes

The Johnston Atoll Chemical Agents Disposal System was a 10-year project (1990-2000) of the U.S. military. To be sure, project activities ended 13 years ago, but JACADS effects will continue into the 21st century. These effects which I am talking about began in the country of South Vietnam, but they will continue in our own beloved FSM.

What am I talking about? Let me explain. The war in Vietnam ended in 1975 — less than 40 years ago. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the U.S. Army dropped Agent Orange chemical bombs on South Vietnam. At first, the effects of the Agent Orange poisonous gas was not noticeable. However, French scientists studied the effect of Agent Orange on the people of South Vietnam. In December 2011 the scientists published their research findings. You can easily go to various Internet sources, as I did, and learn what these researchers learned.

When the Vietnamese people became contaminated by the poisonous gas, they got sick. Worse was the fact that many Vietnamese women experienced genetic changes. Pregnant women began to give birth — actually stillbirths — to babies that looked like undeveloped fish and dogs. I am not joking — just read this information on your own in the Internet sources.

(continued on page 4)

A VALENTINE POEM TO MY TEACHER

by Jessicalynn Hartman

Fall 2010

*You've taught me; you've caught me.
I'm wiser and quieter
though tired — fatigue.
You're there to teach;*

*I can't give more, I can't afford.
My prayers I give, sincere gratitude
to thee I give — these I can give —
long as I live.*

Have a great ♥ day!

THE JACADS PROJECT (Part 1): ORANGE IS AN UGLY COLOR

(continued from page 3)

balls into the Pacific — two miles deep and half-way between Johnston Atoll and the Marshall Islands. Since the year 2000, when the JACADS Project ended, that is still where the concrete balls rest.

There are many Internet websites that describe the truth about the JACADS Project. Several of these sources explain what the U.S. Army said — that the concrete balls will crack and the metal drums will rust in about 10-50 years. Since the project ended in 2000, the earliest time for the poisonous ashes to escape from their concrete prisons might have been in 2010 — three years ago. In the beginning, I am sure, the leakage would be small; however, by the year 2050, most of the poisonous ashes will leak out into the ocean. What ocean? Our Pacific Ocean, of course!

Then, the ocean current — which flows from Johnston Atoll straight toward the Marshalls, then Pohnpei and Kosrae — will bring the poisonous ashes directly to Chuuk. By the year 2023, when Compact 2 ends, we

the Micronesians will probably not even be aware of or infected very much by the poisonous ashes.

Remember — in the same ocean water are lots of tuna and other seafood. They swim around in the poisonous waters, and in time they will get sick and die — slowly at first. We will not even realize what will be happening to the fish.

We will experience a dangerous situation. We will catch the fish, and the poison will transfer from fish to us. Our children will swim in the ocean, and they will also get sick.

But that is not all. I have written Part 1, and now you have to read Part 2 written by Andrea Nimwes. Her article will complete this story of the JACADS Project and its effect — very, very bad effect — in our islands of Micronesia. φ

INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

ISLOs? What are they? In the COM-FSM dictionary they are “institutional student learning outcomes”. Got it? Our Board of Regents approved the following seven ISLOs for our **STUDENTS** to achieve:

- (1) Effective oral communication
- (2) Effective written communication
- (3) Critical thinking
- (4) Problem-solving
- (5) Intercultural knowledge and competence
- (6) Information literacy
- (7) Foundations and skills for life-long learning.

Each and every student at Chuuk Campus will have to study hard to achieve all seven. If a student wants to fool around or does not care, he or she will have to face negative consequences. Here is an example of a foolish student during the Spring 2013: She chose to fool around all semester long, rarely attending classes and never submitting assignments. Then, she wrote just one final-exam essay — very poorly written — and got a letter grade of F for the semester. She then begged her instructor to pass her with a D, and the teacher refused. Well, tough luck!

To all students — STUDY HARD! φ

THE JACADS PROJECT (Part 2): THE FUTURE HANDICAP

(continued from page 3)

Many Vietnamese children were born, and are still being born, handicapped, because of Agent Orange — born without arms and legs — born with crooked bodies. Deformities include huge heads, protruding eyes, and worse. I cannot explain more, and so I encourage readers to go to Internet sources on the JACADS Project and look for yourselves at real pictures of these handicapped children.

The same problem can occur in our islands. Since we eat a lot of seafood and swim in the waters, the Agent Orange poison will enter our bodies. Women will experience genetic changes, and their pregnancies will be a tragedy.

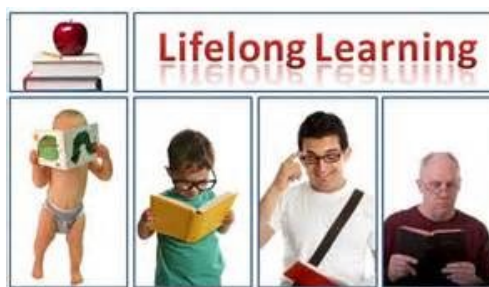
This is not the kind of future I want to see in the history of Micronesia. We can stop eating seafood. We can stop swimming in the sea. Unfortunately, these are not realistic options for us to take. Rather, we need to find other solutions. I do not want to recommend that we migrate from our beloved islands. I do not want to recommend that we stop having babies. Then, what else can we do? I honestly do not know, but we must ask — no, not ask — but demand from the U.S. government appropriate assistance.

Yes, I realize — the U.S. government looks at money as the solution, but money will not cure physical and genetic handicaps. Medical scientists and researchers hope to find a cure for the Vietnamese women. Will we need the same help in the future? I learned a saying and share it with you now: “*It is better to try and fail than to fail to try.*” Just as the future looks bad, the options of survival look bad too. φ

MY PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY: LIFELONG LEARNING by A.J. Bisalen

Name of Philosophy = LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong learning is not a new idea. English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704), who helped set the foundation of “inductive thinking” more than 300 years ago, described how the human mind works as “tabula rasa” (blank slate) as a way to learn from birth to death. In the 20th century a Chuukese philosopher named Kintoky Joseph described learning as an unending process. He explained how a person learns in four ways on the continuum of learning – physical skills (psychomotor), emotional feelings (affective), mental development (cognitive), and wisdom (*ocholapei*). In childhood and youth a person learns to become smart (*tipachem*), and throughout adulthood he learns to become wise (*miriit*).



Metaphysics

- Anthropology
- Theology

Learning is a lifetime experience. It begins at home, in the family, at school, in marriage, on the job, and in society. After all, it is the Nature of Man to learn. Sad to say, there are many people in Chuuk who think that learning stops when they are legal adults, 18 years old. They are wrong. According to an American political leader Newton D. Baker a hundred years ago, “*A man who graduates today and stops learning tomorrow be-comes uneducated the day after*”. Baker was right.

Why are these Chuukese uneducated and ignorant? The reason may be that they do not know nor understand the parable of Rachepai. Long ago a young man named Rachepai lived on Polowat. One day he looked at the vast ocean and wondered, “*Where does the ocean end?*” He decided to find an answer to his own question. He set out in his canoe into the open sea, thinking that his journey would be a short trip. Many years passed, and Rachepai could not find the ocean’s end. Finally, he realized that there was no end, and so he returned to Polowat. He was not unhappy. Back on Polowat, Rachepai told people about his travels and quest. He said that the ocean had no end. Some people believed him, and others did not. So, many disbelievers went on their own to travel to the end of the ocean. They never returned home.

The parable of Rachepai reveals an important symbolism – that the ocean is like learning. You may think that there the ocean has an end – and you may think that learning has an end. To think like that is foolish.

Epistemology

- Empiricism
- Logic and Reasoning
- Intuition

(continued on page 6)

MY PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY — (continued from page 5)

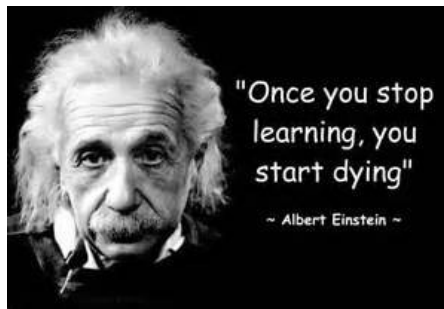


Now, be aware – our own COM-FSM has a goal, and it is called lifelong learning. Many instructors share the same goal, and so they try their best to teach this goal to Chuuk Campus students. I do not know how many Chuuk Campus students accept this COM-FSM goal as their own personal goal. I do know, all the same, that life-long learning is a natural goal for all persons on earth. I do believe, however, that most Chuuk Campus students are uneducated and ignorant, and so they choose not to accept the idea and practice of lifelong learning. They are losers in life. Our Chuukese people should learn this important goal and make all effort to achieve it.

Axiology

- Ethics
- Aesthetics

So, the purpose of my personal philosophy is like a piece of advice – never stop learning. As the American scientist Albert Einstein said, “*Once you stop learning, you start dying*”. I fear that too many Chuukese people are already dead in life.



Value Systems

- (1) lifelong learning
- (2) dead in life