



Office of the Chair and Graduate Chair

## DPES 2010-36 Chair's End of Term Message

From: William Gough, Chair, DPES

Date: December 21, 2010

Recently I was driving with my son and we were accompanied by Miley Cyrus warbling "The Climb". "What's the climb, dad?" This was followed by a detailed explanation of the metaphor in full parental lecture fashion, extolling the virtues of not focussing on the goal but rather the lessons learned on the pathway to the goal. A small silence followed and then an unpretentious, forthright, five-year old passed judgement, "I don't get it, dad".

This led not so much to a questioning of my parenting or teaching abilities but rather quick but intense soul-searching. Goals after all are important and what's the point in having them if they are unachievable which Miley seemed to be implying by depressingly promising that's there's "always gonna be another mountain".

So I thank Joshua for advertently or inadvertently (he's been somewhat coy about what he didn't "get") re-elevating goals in my life to their proper place. Of course I still cling to the principle that there must be an internal consistency or integrity between the goal and the pathway to achieving the goal. And sometimes there are valuable lessons that form us anew and make us worthy of our goals. More simply as the song says, "... these are the moments that I'm gonna remember most, yeah".

During the last six months I have been pondering with you what DPES' goals are and how we achieve them. In her seminal critique of Canadian literature, Margaret Atwood, identifies "survival" as the dominant Canadian theme. As a thirteenth generation Canadian (I descend from a Tremblay who arrived in 1634 and managed to survive) this of course completely resonates. Indeed some days in the Chair's chair it feels that way, "Rose, we survived another day", but most days are more upbeat, "Rose, I need another problem to solve". The Cyrus chanteuse warns us though, "Every move I make feels lost with no direction". Not Shakespeare but you get the point. A pathway with no direction or goal is not really a pathway at all. We must go beyond just survival.

As we move into 2011, we can reflect on the progress made to date and look forward to refining our goals and seeing more clearly how we get there. We are more than just surviving. We developed a Constitution to govern ourselves in a more transparent and effective fashion. We updated our Academic Plan in a more coherent and internally consistent way which fed directly into a Space Plan grounded in academic priorities.

It has been an enormous honour and pleasure working with all of you since the beginning of July. The quality of the faculty, staff and students are unparalleled. Recently another Chair confided he dreaded coming to work each day. Even though there have been challenging moments, I have never felt this way. I eagerly anticipate the progress we will make together in 2011 and the years to come.

I wish you a happy and restful break.