

# Self-Assessment

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I have now been at the University of Dubuque for two and a half years, and I hope I'm beginning to stabilize. The ups and downs have been pretty severe, beginning with the fall of 2005. On the first day of orientation, I found out about Paul Jeffries. Soon afterward, Hurricane Katrina hit my former hometown of New Orleans. In the summer of 2006, I visited New Orleans, walking through my nearly abandoned old neighborhood. One neighbor had move back in, two were living in FEMA trailers, two houses were torn down, and the rest of the neighboring house stood empty. Everything was grey with dirt and decay. The house I had owned and lived in for 12 years had had seven feet of water in it.

That same summer of 2006, Dan Call was denied tenure. We had had one departmental meeting the entire 2005-2006 year, and things seemed out of control. We of DNAS were without offices for the summer, went into temporary quarters in the fall, and then moved into the new building in January. During the summer, I applied for a new job outside of academia. I love teaching, but I wanted out. My wife encouraged me to see a psychiatrist for depression. The psychiatrist said I might be depressed but that I had some significant issues that needed addressing, and she referred me to an analyst. The analyst kept asking me essentially the same questions, "What can you change? What do you have to either accept or get out of?"

One of the answers was to work on communicating. I began meeting with you (John) regularly about my concerns. By late October, I began to feel that I wasn't making any progress and that things were not going to change. I applied for a job in science education in Colorado. However, when you offered for me to be the head of DNAS, I withdrew my application. Jamie was relieved, as she loves Dubuque and didn't like what she read about Greeley.

December and January were fairly manic. Besides working with Henry Pittman on an assessment plan for DNAS, I got the faculty together to revise the biology curriculum. The revisions had been being tossed around for two years with no progress except for a proposed course and curriculum submitted by Richard to COAC without any discussion with other faculty members. In a single day, we reached a consensus about the form the biology curriculum needed to take, fleshed out the course sequence, and ironed out points of disagreement. This was one of my proudest moments in years. Another happy moment was when Cheryl Moonen joined us as our secretary, a position that had gone open all fall.

At the beginning of the spring semester, 2007, I surveyed the faculty of DNAS as to their priorities for the department. The top priority was working with students in independent research, followed by recruitment and curriculum revision. The three go together strongly—we have revised the curriculum to appeal to more potential biology majors, enhanced our independent research capabilities, especially with the new building, and are using the individual attention that is available for science undergraduates at UD as a major part of our recruiting effort.

Throughout the spring semester, a focus of mine has been on community-building. We held a baby shower for Mark Sinton, a 31st-anniversary party for Dianne Jaeger, a wedding shower for student Sarah Timmons, two trips to Breitbach's open to all, a student trip to Chicago overnight, and two going-away parties for Chulsung. Cheryl Moonen has proven a perfect addition to the department with respect to community building—planning the showers, baking great snacks, keeping a candy bowl full for the students and faculty to pilfer from. In addition, four of our students have taken leadership positions in student government. Our Web of Life club is showing new life. Rasika joined us and has settled in well. And the grand opening for the building was a success. All in all, there's a sense of new birth in the department.

As to my personal state, I'm making progress. Being committed to staying here and having a goal to work toward that I feel I can make progress toward—the well being of DNAS and UD—has increased my energy level and productivity. I like the people I work with, and I want good things for them. I'm also grateful for the opportunity at this stage in my career that being department head has provided. A goal and gratitude are keys to happiness. Add caffeine and Prozac, and I'm ready to *Carpe Diem!*