

The background of the top section is a photograph of the Albany State University building, a large, multi-story brick structure with a prominent portico supported by columns. The building is set against a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The title 'FACULTY AFFAIRS' is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the top of the image.

FACULTY AFFAIRS

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Albany State University at the Crossroads of History *A Synoptic Appraisal of an Institution in the Throes of Historic Change*

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In the early 1960s, Albany averted the brutality that attended the Civil Rights Movement's civil disobedience campaign in some parts of the South. This was accomplished by the effort of the city's police chief, Laurie Pritchett, who devised a means of transporting demonstrators to neighboring jails rather than employ police baton sticks, high-powered water hoses, and dogs to disperse the peaceful marchers.

Granted, Chief Pritchett's tactic was ugly but more humane at the time than the alternatives that were deployed elsewhere. Chief Pritchett and civil rights leader, the Rev. Andrew Young, were foes at loggerheads during the Albany civil rights demonstrations but eventually became friends. Hence, when Pritchett was applying for a job elsewhere he sought and received a letter of recommendation from Young. Creatures of their times, neither of them permitted the trying past to arrest the promising present, nor to derail the coming of a brighter future. Looking back, it is safe to infer that the Pritchett-Young rapprochement was a harbinger of things to come. Albany is more promising today, in the early twenty-first century, than it was in the middle of the twentieth century.

In 2015, more than half a century later, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia selected Albany to be the touch bearer of yet another great experiment by consolidating Albany State University and Darton State College. A propitious undertaking this was, an undertaking that holds great promise for the future.

Both the 1962 and 2015 events were historical social "products" of their respective times. Admittedly, memories last as long as the people who experienced the events, first-hand, live; and sometimes long after their time. But memories are functions of the mind. When reality dictates a pragmatic approach to solving social problems, memories cannot but adjust to existing realities even as they are kept alive—etched in the minds of those who witnessed the events.

Yes, endowed with the capacity to overcome, humankind cannot be held captive by memory... for change is the single unalterable constant in life. We are born, we grow old, and eventually die. But in this process of change, which is experienced by all things in nature, we procreate and bequeath to posterity the capacity to overcome and register progress much like our forebears did, and as posterity surely will.

Change is good, and progressive change is even better. The Consolidated Albany State University represents progressive change.

Nevertheless, this Consolidated ASU is an uneasy and daunting enterprise. It should not be taken lightly. With neither a tried and tested blueprint nor an exemplary experiment to follow as guide, the new ASU is a veritable work-in-progress that calls for inventiveness from all stakeholders, as they navigate through the tempest called life much like inexperienced sailors who never left dry land find themselves cast adrift at sea. The enormity of the task at hand notwithstanding, this is a rare opportunity for Albany to rise up to the challenge and show America and the world what this "Good life city" is made of, and the caliber of humankind that inhabits it.

Will Albany meet this new challenge with resoluteness, a sense of purpose, and the understanding that the historic mission she has been summoned to execute? I think so! But the Consolidated Albany State University needs the unwavering support of all: the local community and state leaders to ensure that this great experiment works as envisioned. The movers and shakers, however, are and will always be the faculty, students, administering and support staffs. It is they who will determine what manner of university ASU will become in the ensuing years.

This is a time of hope for the future and not a time for fear of the past. A time to extract the best of both institutions and blend them into a combustible success-generating whole, and a time to discard the worst of each. To accomplishing yet another historic task, Albany has been beckoned by destiny once again. May the motto and vital élan of this great endeavor be "Forward Ever, Backward Never!"

The Noblest of Endeavors

By Emmanuel Konde



The two strands of learning are knowledge acquisition and knowledge application. All learning is designed to impart knowledge that the learners can acquire and apply in innovative ways to solve problems, cure diseases, and trigger change for the betterment of humankind. Indeed, learning is, and should always be, an enjoyable activity. The acquisition of knowledge is a noble endeavor that loses its luster and seductive prowess whenever it is made difficult. This noblest of endeavors, learning, is fashioned and transmitted by members of the noblest profession: the professoriate.

The freshmen who come to us at ages 17 and 18 are young but they are not children with respect to mental acuity. They have fertile minds capable of absorbing all knowledge if presented properly and in a challenging manner that awakens the burning desire to learn. These young minds should be introduced to the classic texts and ideas that shaped the Western world and continue to dominate the world. Our freshmen should never be assigned books beneath their current level of educational pursuit. They will rise to meet the delivering professoriate at that higher and appropriate level.

Why is our world and society configured the way they are? Why is a particular group dominant? How did this happen? What can be done to alter this configuration? Can it be changed or do I have to simply carve my own space in it? Spark inquiry, and set aglow the burning desire to learn. There are no other texts in the world that can agitate the mind with equal fervor.

Lest I be misunderstood, permit me to emphasize that the current dominant Western tradition has ruled the world the past 500 years. This is an undeniable fact. It must be well understood by all, especially the young men and women entrusted to our tutelage.

As a point of fact, our freshmen constitute the brightest generation of humankind. They know at 18 what older generations did not know at 30. What more? All knowledge has been placed in the palm of their hand in a small device they carry with them everywhere.

I remember vividly my first semester in college fresh from Cameroon, West-Central Africa. The course was Introduction to Political Philosophy. We read more than seven classic texts from cover to cover, and wrote analytical essays on selected chapters of each book. These texts included Rousseau's *Social Contract*; Hobbes, *Leviathan*; Aristotle's *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*; Plato's *Republic*, Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, etc.

A new world of ideas suddenly opened before me. I was so amazed by the breadth of thought expressed by these great minds that one afternoon I went to my professor's office and inquired of him: "Sir, how did the thinkers whose works we are reading come up with their ideas?" He smiled at me, pulled a puff of smoke from his pipe, exhaled, and retorted: "They thought. Ideas come from thinking about things you observe and things you seriously think about."

I still have copies of the graded papers I wrote for many of my courses in college. We were taught to think critically, write analytically, and imbued with the ability to dissect problems in order to arrive at workable solutions. In writing, we were taught how to compose essays, paragraph by paragraph, from the introduction, thesis statement (and definition of parameters), and development of the thesis statement systematically into an academic paper.

It was a remarkably simple process, properly explained in uncomplicated language, and understandable to us (students). All writing emanates from thought. All problem solving competences issue from thought. Teach the student how to think, and think correctly, and all else will fall in place. The mind is the only thing that we, as human beings, truly possess. Thinking, the most vital function of all functions, is the only thing that the mind can accomplish. Admittedly, the mind, and by implication thinking, can be a terrible thing to waste!

Next Issues

The next issue of *Faculty Affairs* will present the genesis of Black History Month by way of highlighting the work of the minds whose intellectual struggles brought about what we now call Black History Month. Subsequent issues in February will feature student perspectives on Black History Month in a special series "Faculty Apprentices' Workshop."