
Fletcher 2033

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This October, the Fletcher community will celebrate the school's 75th anniversary. An interesting thought experiment is to consider what we might celebrate at the conclusion of The Fletcher School's first century of existence.

My hope is that we will celebrate the continued success of Fletcher's core mission: to train the next generation of leaders in international affairs. Then as now, foresight will be critical. Will the leadership of The Fletcher School anticipate the skills necessary for significant careers on the world stage at mid-century? Will there be enough willingness in the Fletcher community to adjust the curriculum and career services to fit those new realities? If the answer is yes to both questions, then we can be confident that Fletcher will be thriving in 2033.

Since becoming Chairman of the Board of Overseers in 1996, I have worked hard with Deans Jack Galvin and Stephen Bosworth as well as with their faculties to identify the key long-term trends affecting the school. The two most significant events impacting our deliberations have been the end of the Cold War and 9/11.

The end of the Cold War, in my opinion, posed the biggest threat to Fletcher's relevance. Since then, the composition of cross-border interactions (measured by frequency of travel and communication) has shifted rapidly away from official matters and toward commercial transactions and the activities of a proliferating number of NGOs. Also, the possibilities of

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the Internet and related technologies foreshadow the necessity of finding new ways to utilize Fletcher's pedagogical resources.

At the turn of the century, we inaugurated the Institute for Human Security to create leadership skills for future heads of NGOs and the Global Master of Arts Program (GMAP) to facilitate distance learning for talented mid-career professionals who could not carve out a full year away from their work for academic study. Planning began 10 years ago for an expanded business program culminating this spring in the acceptance of our first class of Master of International Business (MIB) students. In 2008 we will also welcome our first class of Master of Laws in International Law (LLM) candidates.

During our planning for the MIB program, there was concern that the so-called traditional side of Fletcher would be neglected. Then came 9/11, which reaffirmed why skills taught to our Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy (MALD) degree holders are more needed by this troubled world than ever before. We have nearly doubled our scholarship program to make it less financially burdensome for our graduates to begin their careers in public service.

What lessons have we learned from our accomplishments in Fletcher's 75th year that will remain true for the foreseeable future? First, we must remain relentlessly forward-looking and never stop examining those trends

..... that will define Fletcher graduates' careers 5 to 25 years hence. Second, if significant change seems warranted for certain parts of the school, then we must have the courage to innovate rather than hesitate or hope that the status quo will be good enough. Third, as we plan for change, we must recognize that there are no viable zero-sum solutions for an intimate collegial institution like Fletcher. All parts of The Fletcher School need to continuously grow and improve together.

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Institutions have their own unique rhythm and momentum. When each constituency fulfills its promise of excellence, every other constituency benefits. There is a virtuous circle to be sustained between students, faculty, administration, and alumni. In Fletcher's 75th anniversary year, we should all feel proud to be part of a very unique and special community. If we all keep working productively, that virtuous circle will be strengthened when Fletcher turns 100 years old. ■