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The first man to compare the cheeks of a young woman to a rose was obviously a poet; the first to repeat it was possibly an idiot.  
--Salvador Dali

## Nobody Was Ever Fired for Choosing IBM

Temple University rightfully prides itself on being a center of innovative research and creativity. Unfortunately, when it comes to defining our university's direction and place within the academic community, our administrative leadership tends to feel more comfortable as a follower rather than the national leader that Temple could aspire to be. For the past many years, I have heard an obsession with following the choices made by our so called "peer aspirate" schools, rather than attempting to find ways we can lead the academic community in new directions. I would like to propose three endeavors in which Temple could, if it had the courage, provide real leadership to

American higher education.

The first of these I have written about before. It is time for us, all of us, at all levels, to put football behind us. Current research continues to show that football (along with other contact sports) causes irreparable brain damage which we do not know how to prevent. We now know that it is not sufficient to detect and respond to concussive events, because the damage is caused by undetectable sub-concussive events. As long as we can in no way prevent this damage, it is unconscionable to support and encourage this activity which provides no real benefit beyond entertainment. It is time for some forward-looking institution to lead the charge to change the culture to one which regards football as the unthinkable pastime that it is. I would be proud if that institution were Temple.

Second, we are experiencing the homogenization of American higher education. This increasing commitment to "one size fits all" education deprives both students and scholars the opportunity to compare different approaches to higher education and choose an institution well suited to their needs and interests. One of the prime causes of this homogenization is our willingness to honor and kowtow to the various rankings which infest the country, notably, but not exclusively, the *U.S. News* rankings. The increasing obsession with rankings has caused universities to make unnecessary and expensive changes to influence the ranking organizations. This has created a spiral, increasing costs as each institution tries to outperform the others in the rankings. If even a few university presidents could work to persuade their colleagues at other similar institutions to simply refuse to provide information to *U.S. News* and other organizations, we could free ourselves of this useless expense and work instead toward each school finding its own path to its own unique excellence. I would be proud if that process could start under Temple's leadership.

Finally, we need to recommit to the importance of undergraduate education. Scholarship begins with educating undergraduates, else where would graduate students come from? The bulk of our income results from undergraduate tuition. Yet, we staff far too many of our undergraduate sections with faculty that the University regards as second-class employees. Hiring multiple part-time faculty to teach undergraduates where full time faculty are available does not show respect to our undergraduates. Tenuring superstar scholars and researchers who teach few or no undergraduates while refusing to tenure superstar teachers is an asymmetry which once again is disrespectful to our undergraduates and the tuition dollars they bring us. It is time to re-think these policies. Again, I would be proud should Temple be the vanguard of such a movement rather than bringing up the rear.

We have a President and a Provost who have the strength and the respect to undertake such leadership. Do they have the courage?