

The Problem with the Solution

by Dana Ainsworth
Special to the Clarion

Last week, Psychology 101 learned about "Confirmation Bias." The term means "to commit to one hypothesis without adequately testing any other possibilities". One student gave a compelling example: President Van Horn's commitment to a football team as a means of making money and drawing attention to Brevard College.

It is true that Brevard College is in need of a solution to the problems they have faced since expanding to a four-year institution: underpaid employees and professors, an unusually low retention rate, the lack of maintenance across campus, a closed pool, a closed dormitory, deplorable athletic facilities and music classrooms that at times lack heat all reflect the monetary needs of this school.

The football team, which was meant to be the solution, seems to have simply generated greater problems. That's not to say that the presence of a football team is unwelcome; obvious indicators might however suggest that it is not serving its intended purpose. Which leads one to wonder... was the football team the only solution? One might ponder whether the football team was simply a familiar strategy created in the absence of imagination. In other words, the commitment to one hypothesis without first testing other possibilities.

A commitment has certainly been made. Students brought in to play on the team were not only promised a field by now, but many were also promised refurbished weight rooms and a pool. Different players report varying guarantees made by the school in an effort to obtain contracts. Deadlines for that elusive field have repeatedly been moved and the sight of the new weight rooms still hosts an abandoned pool. It is unfair to the players to have to train and play in the conditions that they do, especially after such promises were made. Further, many of the football players rely on athletic scholarships to attend school. What would happen to them if the school were no longer able to support the team? Would they be compensated? It is quite the dilemma.

So when, if ever, would the towel get thrown in, defeat admitted? Or will the game simply continue on, stubbornly blind to the opinions of those most directly affected by it? Robert Todd Carroll says, "If we become blinded to evidence truly refuting a favored hypothesis, we have crossed the line from reasonableness to closed-mindedness". Which brings us back to the idea of confirmation bias. If the commitment to one hypothesis turns out poorly, when is it time to start testing other possibilities?

Brevard College has some amazing and unique attributes that cultivated properly could be a major draw, both monetarily and physically. It seems that a vast majority of

students are attracted to this campus for its serene location and its unique environment and wilderness programs. There are not many schools that have rows of kayaks stacked outside their dorms or drum circles on weekend nights. Surely with a little imagination, this appeal to green living and a natural environment can be shaped into something productive. There must be a solution that reflects the ideals, standards and unique lifestyle of the community of Brevard as well as the general population of the college campus. It is time that the board thinks outside the box and gets creative about finding an answer for the needs of Brevard College.



By Karam Boeshaar

4/08