

Miller: Drake's mobile PR man

By J. T. BRESLIN
Times-Delphic Contributor

He shakes your hand at graduation, greets all the important VIPs at Drake and welcomes assorted groups meeting on campus. He's the number one fund-raiser for the school and a mobile public relations department.

Yet, just who is Wilbur Miller?

The degrees and career experience that fill Miller's resume are as varied and many as his job is. But just what Miller does in a typical day is hard to pinpoint.

"You see, I might be at a meeting out of town, or here and then address or welcoming a group to Drake," said Miller. "And when I have free time I often am at Drake-related events, such as the symphony, drama or athletics."

Following Miller around for a typical day was difficult. While several meetings were open to the public, the bulk of meetings the president attends are closed to all but faculty, staff or university officials involved with a particular project.

MILLER'S POWER extends beyond campus boundaries. He was named to the Des Moines Register's list of the 25 most powerful men in Des Moines two years ago.

"Much of the school's support comes from local people," said Miller. "There is a lot of support for Drake among Des Moines residents. Just look at the number of people we employ, the number of people we bring in for meetings, the Drake Relays and other events that fill hotel rooms and restaurants."

In addition to his university presidency, Miller serves on the boards of four corporations — the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, Northwest Bancorporation in Minneapolis, Financial Security Group Insurance in Des Moines and Cowles Communications Inc.

"I think this gives us added exposure and gets our name into areas where we might not otherwise reach," said Miller.

When Miller is in town, which is about half the time, he spends time answering mail, dealing with university problems and just trying to keep up with current trends in education, business and in the school.

HOW CAN MILLER be an effective president when he is away so much? Part of the answer lies in his administrative style.

"I trust people to do their jobs," said Miller. "If something happens in Don Adams' area, (student life) I expect him to handle it and not have to have me intervene."

Subordinates agreed with Miller.

"Dr. Miller is a solid academician — he doesn't get rattled by a situation," said Donald Adams, vice president for student life. "He is a very stable man, what you need in an administrator."

Miller holds weekly meetings with the four university vice presidents to deal with problems and new programs.

"Sometimes there are difficulties between two areas, say between Carl's (Kasten, vice president for business) and finance and Don's (Adams) people," said Miller. "If there is a need to bring me into the discussion, fine, we'll work it out."

"I CONSIDER one of the main tasks of mine to be fund-raising," said Miller. "I try to attend some alumni meetings that are held around the country and talk to people that can be of help to the school wherever I go."

"There is a greater need for new support for the school — part of my job is to find that monetary support and bring it to

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Drake's President and chief fund-raiser Wilbur Miller, who is in town only about half the time.

Miller 'doesn't get rattled'

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Drake."

The president is hired by the board of trustees and serves at its pleasure.

An official at the University of Denver, where Miller served as vice chancellor for academic affairs before becoming president of Drake, said that he was well-respected at the university.

"He served as acting chancellor at a time when things were bad at the school," said the official, who asked not to be named. "Dr. Miller was hard working and able. I guess you could say his background and training were to become a school president eventually."

"I think I have had the best training for this job (Drake presidency) by being in many assistant positions," said Miller.

"I understand the problems of people under me, because I served in many of those positions at one time myself."

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