

Quality Higher Education

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

Directed efforts to address myself this evening
I was happy to learn that your 24th Annual Meeting is addressing itself to the issue of quality for the needs of the nation. Just last Summer, I reread John Gardner's book, Excellence, in its new revised edition. It is just as relevant and important today as it was twenty years ago when he first wrote it.

I was pleased to see my favorite paragraphs in the first edition reappear in this one. May I share them with you.

"It is no sin to let average as well as brilliant youngsters into college. It is a sin to let any substantial portion of them -- average or brilliant -- drift through college without effort, without growth, and without a goal. That is the real scandal in many of our institutions.

"We must expect students to strive for excellence in terms of the kind of excellence that is within their reach. Here we must recognize that there may be excellence or shoddiness in every line of human endeavor. We must learn to honor excellence in every socially acceptable human activity, however humble the activity, and to scorn shoddiness, however exalted the activity. An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher. The society that scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a

humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water." (Gardner, Excellence, P. 102)

John Gardner, I trust, would also cheer the theme of ~~this conference~~. *My remarks this evening*
His whole book is on quality for the needs of the nation.

I would like to emphasize two particular themes in my remarks:

1) The importance of academic excellence as the most essential quality and hallmark of higher education's social responsibility in the service of national needs, and

2) Beyond the nation, the need to incorporate into graduate education a commitment of service to humankind everywhere -- the often missing international dimension.

Neither of these themes are fads. Excellence is important always and everywhere, and our universities and graduate schools will be at their very best when they cherish and foster academic excellence. Secondly, no man or woman is an island, as John Donne wrote. We must care for everyone, everywhere, always. Both these themes, academic excellence and concern for the good of humankind everywhere are endemic and essential to the highest quality of graduate education in our times, and in every time.

The first theme is our social responsibility to the nation as institutions of higher learning: to create and preserve and promote excellence in all its intellectual and moral dimensions, especially in the lives of our students and, subsequently, in society at large.

Why did our society give us birth in the first place? We get a clue from the founders of Harvard who did not want their colonial religious leaders to be without learning and culture. We get another clue from Thomas Jefferson who declared it impossible to create a democratic republic, in contrast to the aristocratic societies of his day, without an educated citizenry. He was rather blunt, to say the least, in outlining the alternatives:

"I hold it to be one of the distinguishing excellences of elective over hereditary successions, that the talents which nature has provided in sufficient proportion, should be selected by the society for the governance of their affairs, rather than that this (governance) be transmitted through the loins of knaves and fools, passing from the debauches of the table to those of the bed." (Letter of Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, September 9, 1792; Writings of Thomas Jefferson, III, p. 466)

The practical implementation of this theme was Jefferson's founding of the University of Virginia. He preferred to have this act stand as his epitaph rather than that he had written the Declaration of Independence and had been our third President.

Others like Jefferson and the founders of Harvard, founded colleges that dotted the landscape of America, fostering culture, science, and arts, giving new vistas to the sons and daughters of immigrants, matching their march to the West.

There soon enough came a time in the last century, and increasingly in this, ^{WHEN} ~~that~~ the development of all professions, and all arts and sciences, called for a natural progression from those somewhat primitive, but effective, classical undergraduate colleges to a higher form which we called graduate schools, following the German university model.

Graduate schools were born of the need for greater excellence in our pursuit of education and professionalism and culture in our society. If all education worthy of the name requires excellence, how much more our graduate schools which were born of a need for higher excellence in academic life and practices. At a certain point in the growth of our modern society in America, it became evident that academic excellence required not only the preservation and transmission of culture and learning, but the growth and discovery and creativity necessary for the vitality of our culture in a very competitive and pluralistic world.

Such were our roots. Our task today is to make the tree and branches and fruit worthy of those roots so deep in our history as one of the first really free and democratic societies. Our institutions of higher learning are not of divine origin, nor are they granted automatic immortality. They will grow in quality and flourish only as we are true to the requirements of excellence that gave them birth. We are the guardians of that heritage and to the extent that we are faithful to that heritage of excellence, we will not just survive, but prosper.

But here, in the real and concrete world, we face some very specific and somewhat unique problems in America. We have a dual requirement at the very heart of our educational endeavor, and on all levels, that almost seems a contradiction in its demand. We are required by the very nature of our endeavor and of our society to strive simultaneously for quality and equality.

The two goals are only differentiated by the letter "e," but they are often in seeming conflict with one another. Yet if we do not achieve both together, the one unachieved, either quality or equality, will spell the failure of our total educational endeavor in America.

Quality is perhaps easier for us to understand, even though always difficult to achieve. Let us face it honestly, many of the activities and tendencies in our institutions are anti-quality and pro-mediocrity. ~~Unionization, for example, tends to focus attention on maximum material rewards for minimal working hours. It doesn't have to be this way, but this is how annual contract discussions are described and it says little about standards for excellence, quality of teaching, academic morale, differential performance from awful to awesome, academic productivity of high or low quality, and many other salient indicators of quality or the lack of it. Everybody is judged to be in the same boat, and everybody receives the same rewards, irrespective of differing personal efforts and results.~~

~~All this is hardly a formula for excellence. I say it realizing full well that unions in academia, as in industrial enterprises, have~~

I thought celebration is in the right direction celebrating excellence

raised dismal to decent wages. But that is for us only the beginning, not the ending of the road to excellence. The methodology of the market place is ~~not~~ necessarily ours, too.]

→ The best ^{universities} ~~graduate schools~~ ~~also~~ generally pay the best salaries, but that alone does not make them excellent. Other completely different factors do: like the quality of their intellectual life, their dedication to great teaching and vital research, their ability to attract and support talented ~~graduate~~ students, the availability of fine libraries and laboratories and computer facilities, the whole general atmosphere of learning and discovery that makes the place exciting and the work rewarding.

Creating such a place and such an environment should command most of our time and efforts. I must admit that most of the time I have spent presiding over ^{faculty} discussions elaborating the ever more complicated and constricting details of academic regulations and administration have added little to the quality of the institution. In many ways they are counterproductive. We all believe in fairness and due process. Administrators especially should be bound to these norms and should be above personal prejudice and petty vindictiveness. But all of these byzantine regulations often impede the tough decisions regarding excellence that alone can insure the continuing quality of an institution. Often enough, regulations foster and protect chronic mediocrity or moribund scholarship or deadly dull teaching. More and more, I find administrators ultra cautious in doing what they know they should do to achieve greater excellence, especially because they

know if they do it, a lawsuit is bound to happen and the department will be embroiled in contention and bad feelings.

Again, excellence, and only excellence, should be the rule. Tough decisions do not preclude humanity and compassion in the way we act, but act for excellence we must, or we will not ever achieve or maintain it.

I remember once visiting the Vice Chancellor of Oxford University, *Sir Maurice Bowra.* At ten o'clock in the morning, he was sitting at an uncluttered desk, no telephone in evidence, reading a book of Greek poetry. I asked him in astonishment -- thinking of my own office back home and the rather constant turmoil of my days -- "How does this place get run?" His answer was simple, "By tradition." Then I realized that he was speaking about a tradition of excellence that really governed the place, that "thin clear stream of excellence" about which Sir Eric Ashby, former Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University, so often speaks.

I really do not believe that presidents ^{or chancellors} can do much about academic excellence beyond first cherishing and nurturing it wherever it can be found, supporting and liberating scholars who alone can achieve it, creating the academic conditions in which it can flourish, attracting the scholars who personify it, and lastly, of course, soliciting the funds that make it possible, both for faculty and students. *He recognized early on that* ~~No one ever claimed that excellence~~ *does not* ~~comes~~ cheaply. Also, ~~presidents must insist upon and support wholeheartedly those tough decisions, up and down the line, that root out mediocrity and reward quality.~~

at least 8
I was delighted to learn that the funds for many
unimpaired professorships came from George W. Perkins,
who attended both Notre Dame & the Univ. of Nebraska - Lincoln.

John Henry Newman once said that "calculation never made a hero." Mechanical regulations and egalitarian compromises never made excellence either. The way to excellence is against the grain and up river against the current of easygoing, laissez-faire acceptance of what is, rather than asking constantly, what should be.

If quality is that difficult, what of the other twin goal of equality that must also characterize our universities and, especially, our graduate schools? I cannot give you easy answers here either. We have spent more than two centuries trying to make equality a reality in America. As a guesstimate, I would say that we are probably more at ease and more deeply committed to quality than to equality of opportunity within our institutions. Equality is a particular imperative of American ^{universities} graduate schools, one deriving from a particularly bad heritage within our society which began with the claim that "All men are created equal," and then pursued slavery and tolerated its aftermath for more than a century. It is a long way from the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 to the omnibus Civil Rights Act of 1964, a rocky road indeed.

One cannot claim that the '64 law changed everything, but it did eliminate forever the system of apartheid that existed in all states South of the Mason-Dixon Line, de jure there and often enough, de facto in the North. Systemic, legal, institutionalized denial of opportunity was abruptly terminated in '64, but positive equality of opportunity requires far more than a law.

During my fifteen years on the Civil Rights Commission, from its beginning under President Eisenhower until President Nixon's re-election when he fired me, it was evident that the untractable triangle of equal opportunity was made up of education, jobs, and housing. Of these, education on all levels ^{is} ~~was~~ the most important by far.

With a good education, a black can generally obtain a good job at good pay, rent or buy a good house in a good neighborhood with good schools so that his and her children can repeat the process and reverse the dismal traditional downward spiral that operates for the black who is born in a ghetto, with bad education, no job because of no qualifications, no money for decent housing, no opportunity for the next generation, etc., etc.

We are at the upper end of the ascending spiral, but it would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of ^{university,} graduate and professional school contributions to the final achievement of equality in America.

Since 1964, about five times more blacks complete high school than before and four times as many attend college. As to graduate schools, I would wager that most of them have fewer black students ^{today,} than during the first fervor some ten years ago when many more blacks began to graduate from college. Professional schools do somewhat better, since they offer a quicker road to upper-middle-classdom through law, business, ^{medicine,} and medical practice, the same route that other minorities have taken.

All of us who have been concerned about the presence of more blacks on our faculties find that we have been standing still or

slipping back over the past five years. What is even more dismal is the shrinking number of black graduate students along the spectrum of the arts and sciences and engineering. If there are few in the pipeline for the Ph.D. in these areas, how can we possibly recruit more black faculty members in the future?

What I have been saying of blacks is relatively true of other numerous minorities, especially Hispanics. It seems to me that new and creative endeavors are needed, such as recruiting the most promising minority students in our own undergraduate colleges, persuading them that they can be necessary role models for the upcoming generation, and seeing that they are financed -- as most promising white students are -- through the Ph.D. in areas where they are now terribly unrepresented. We must grow our own seed corn ^{or} ~~of~~ there will be no future harvest. And at the moment, the future looks ^{quite} ~~absolutely~~ dismal.

I have been involved in a program called GEM which has had considerable success in motivating minority students to pursue graduate studies in engineering. We need similar efforts in all disciplines.

Other countries may not have our dual problem of quality and equality, but our primary social responsibility is to the country that has nurtured our institutions. We cannot expect someone else, like African or Caribbean universities, to solve our society's and our universities' problem. We must solve it and we have the means to do it. We also need the motivation and the programs and, of course,

the financing. As to the latter, I find we can generally finance anything we really want to do, like obtaining a good quarterback.

As in the case of quality, here again the president ^{of the university} is impotent (and, I might add, frustrated) without the total commitment and cooperation of the faculty.

Look upon equality of opportunity not as a diminution of quality, but a broadening of talents within our schools and universities. We are a variegated nation with more blacks than Canada has Canadians, more Hispanics by far than all Australians in Australia. As Jefferson said in an earlier citation, we only have to find and nurture "the talents" which nature has provided in sufficient proportion" and I would add, among all races and ethnic groups that populate our blessed land. We pride ourselves on the number of Nobel Laureates that Americans garner each year. I would remind you that about half of them were born in other countries and flourished here because of our equality of opportunity and commitment to quality education.

I conclude this first part of my remarks as I began them. We have these two high goals of quality and equality which represent our ^{University's} ~~graduate schools~~ social responsibility to the nation that gave us birth and favored as well as financed our growth. Unless we achieve both of these goals together, our total debt to America will remain half unpaid.

As to the second part of my discussion, may I begin by asserting that the social responsibility of American ^{universities} ~~graduate schools~~ does not cease at the water's edge of our coasts. Humanity and its problems range worldwide and so do our social responsibilities.

Some may counter that we have enough problems at home. The larger problem is that we are the most affluent country on earth. Our poverty level is above the income of most of the people on earth. We, despite our problems discussed above, have the lion's share of all the blessings that humanity seeks on this planet: food, housing, health care, communications and transportation, education, and, most especially, freedom. In our particular context, no country on earth can begin to match our higher educational establishment which has quadrupled since 1950, what it took over three centuries to build from 1636 to 1950. We have every type of institution, large and small, private and public, religious and secular, black and white, endowed and unendowed, two and four year colleges and a wide variety of graduate and professional schools that teach at the highest levels of doctoral and post-doctoral studies, every conceivable art and science and profession on earth. As a result, we produce a veritable army of well educated men and women, including about 350,000 ^{annually} from other countries.

If we make them work and help them grow, as John Gardner says we must, he adds that we must also provide them with goals that transcend the accumulation of material wealth.

Another way of saying it is that for education to be truly meaningful, it must also endow a person with values. Of course, we can educate our students to be competent, but the further question is: how will they use their competence, for self alone, selfishly, or for others, too, in service? Service to the wider world community

with its enormous human needs is not automatically given by all those or any of those who are competent to help.

I believe we are simply unworthy of our unique and abundant blessings and of our high calling as educators if we cannot present enough of the world's plight to our students that they are moved to compassion, as the good Samaritan was moved to compassion after the priest and the Levite had passed by, averting their eyes from the wretched scene of the robbed and wounded man, because they did not want to become involved.

We've had enough of that attitude ^{in our large cities} ~~at home~~ where neighbors close their ears to screams of someone attacked on their very street, in front of their house, because they do not want to get involved.

We are involved by the simple fact that we are human beings living on a small planet with other human beings who lack almost everything we take for granted: freedom to live our own lives as we wish, not only political, but economic freedom as well; the chronically poor are not free at all. A roof over our head, heat when it is cold, even air-conditioning when it is hot. Most of the others live in hovels much worse than our housing for farm animals. Food to eat, often too much, while a billion of them were hungry yesterday, are hungry today, and will be hungry tomorrow. Half of that billion are chronically undernourished and 40,000 of them, mostly children, will die ^{each day} ~~of~~ of the consequences of malnutrition. That's a Hiroshima or Nagasaki every other day. There is food enough in storage, but it's our storage. Even better, we could teach

them to grow food where they are. But generally, we don't. We spend billions annually on medical care; most of them do not see a doctor from birth to death. We are concerned with our production of Ph.D.'s and our care of post-Docs; over a billion of them are illiterate.

I could go on, but let me just make the point that there is a humane imperative that those who are strong should help those who are weak -- animals don't, but we are humans. Those with abundance should have compassion and help those in need. If our students at the highest level simply are allowed to live in a world of sunshine without ever hearing of the darkness that surrounds them, even here, but especially beyond our borders in all directions, then we are allowing them to live without compassion or commitment, in a dream world that is unworthy of them, unworthy of us and of our educational institutions and unworthy of America, too.

It is the responsibility of leaders to lead, even, or especially, when it is difficult or seemingly impossible. I believe deeply that young Americans are most generous when given a vision that transcends their petty little personal worlds, when challenged to give rather than grab everything selfishly for themselves. They are even capable of heroic effort when the vision is great enough and the demand humanly compelling. I have not even mentioned religious motivation, but this, too, is a valid appeal if we believe in the highest of all appeals -- serving God in the person of suffering humanity.

I believe that this worldwide dimension of our higher educational responsibility today is so compelling that we can only sidestep or

neglect it at our own risk. The great ^{out} risk ~~being~~ ^{is} for us to be untrue to our own best traditions as a nation.

How we do it is yours, not mine, to prescribe or devise. For myself, I will never cease to stress its educational importance in season and out. I hope all of you will, too.

I could add a postscript that involving our graduates in problems worldwide will also involve them in other cultures, in other modern and esoteric languages, in history, geography, anthropology, sociology, economics, and so many other academic interests lost forever to those who lead provincial and circumscribed lives. Graduates of the Peace Corps experience, some ^{125,000} ~~100,000~~ of them over twenty ^{five} years, *else* ~~and more~~, have given ample testimony of this educational growth. X

Even our nation would perform better internationally if somehow all of our graduate schools could divide up the world and become the focus of international interest for every country and region on earth. The State Department can hardly read the wonderful reports of our political, economic, and cultural affairs officers worldwide, but the university involved mainly in that region or country could also specialize in the history, literature, language, politics, economics, art and culture of the country ^{particular} so as to be a veritable national resource for Ambassadors and other officers going there to serve officially.)

One last word, beyond what I have promised to say here today. Last year, I had the privilege of addressing the Presidents of Canadian and U. S. colleges and universities in Toronto. On that occasion, I

spoke of the moral imperative of our institutions to indicate to our students, somehow, in the course of their years with us, the dimensions of the nuclear threat to humanity, what it really is, in actual dire detail, and what they might do about it, since it threatens literally to obliterate everything in their world. I will not repeat that speech, although you will be able to read an enlargement of it in a chapter in a book the American Council on Education is publishing soon on The Moral Dimensions of Higher Education.

I would close by saying positively that ^{higher}graduate education in America, for all its faults and problems and challenges, has never been stronger. ~~It~~ It may become smaller as the cohort of ~~graduate~~ students shrinks, but even this possible constriction can be an opportunity for fine tuning together, everyone not trying to do everything, quality rather quantity, greater equality of opportunity, even within a diminished universe, whatever that costs, and the inspiring of those students we have, even if fewer, to look out upon a broader world that might very well be enriched by them. They, too, will be enriched by their enlarged and generous compassion and commitment.