

PREPARING FOR THE MILLENNIUM

Historians remind us that the first millennium brought forth predictions of the end of the world. The advent of the second millennium--the year 2000--seems to be attracting some of the same prophecies, especially in a time when nuclear weapons can virtually destroy humanity.

Setting aside the larger issue of global survival, the unusual historical benchmark of the second millennium, now 17 years away, provides a useful focus for evaluating one of mankind's most impressive endeavors--our attempt to educate ourselves. A decade ago, the Carnegie Commission on the Future of Higher Education published a report entitled The Purposes and the Performance of Higher Education in the United States: Approaching the Year 2000, and, more recently in 1980, its successor group, the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, put out a final report called Three Thousand Futures. These two reports, as well as the more than 100 other studies their bodies produced, tell us what we might expect in the field of higher education as the second millennium arrives.

Generally, we are told that there is no compelling reason for either panic or euphoria, that what is most certain for the next 17 years is uncertainty, that higher education's challenge of managing growth has become the more difficult task of managing retrenchment, and finally, that the expansionist era of full steam ahead through clear seas to wide open horizons is to be followed by two decades of avoiding shipwreck.

Among the uncertainties in our shoal waters are student demographics. The young women and men who will people our institutions in the year 2000 are already born and, compared to the current age cohort, there are 23.3 percent fewer of them. Since students are the life blood of our institutions--the public ones because

they are generally funded per capita, and we in the private sector since we operate mainly on tuition income--it does not require a prophet to discern the anguishes that this situation will engender. When the food is scarce, the many hungry natives really do get restless--nothing like hunger to focus attention and overstimulate competition--,even among colleagues.

I do not foresee highly selective colleges and universities engaging in what seems to be an escape hatch for some, institutions to uphold student levels today by lowering standards, adding all sorts of vocational attractions, using faulty advertising, luring the older student, reaching out to those in jail or the services, or anywhere--warm bodies, but generally not students in any real sense. How long will this student drought continue? Three Thousand Futures charts it from a high point for students in the years 1979-83 to a nadir in 1997, then rising again to the 1983 level in the year 2010. By then, we will have fought our battle, won or lost.

What of graduate students? Curiously, here the Council sees a slight increase between now and the year 2000. The current graduate school gloom, they say, is because we are losing, or will lose, 50 percent of the academic Ph.D. students who are presently preparing only for a teaching career--mainly in the humanities and some sciences, such as physics and botany. However, this loss represents only 1/12th of the whole graduate enrollment nationwide. Other graduate and professional programs seem to be holding stable, especially theology and business.

The lesson here for a Notre Dame is to decide which graduate programs we can do better than most, and which are related to our special strength as a Catholic university. One thinks of philosophy and theology, special segments of the humanities, science where we have both special facilities and a long tradition of strength, business as a growing field searching for ethical enlightenment,

law where one can be among the best in our special tradition, engineering, where there are very special areas of burgeoning interest such as robotics.

What is needed across higher education at this historical moment is a tighter ship, and only the faculty can rig it. But it will require vision and perceptiveness, strength and decision that have not always been present on more expansive and more affluent days. Duke University Chancellor Kenneth Pye put it this way, "Duke can be qualitatively superior only if it restricts the scope of its educational programs and concentrates the resources available on fewer activities." And Princeton University's Priorities Committee recently concluded that "in the face of financial adversity, it is better to do fewer things and do them well, then it is to spread the effect of a cutback evenly across all segments of the University."

Turning to the faculty, more than half of the current teachers in higher education were appointed in the 1960's and 1970's. Since, nationwide, about three quarters of them are on tenure, they will presumably be holding down the only available faculty positions until the next millennium. No need to guess what this implies for women and minorities (most of the current faculties across the land are white men). We can also easily imagine what it means for junior faculty competing for tenure, what it could mean for young intellectuals, especially in the humanities, who are seeking Ph.D.'s for teaching posts that do not exist. Also, what happens to the young scientist who can no longer be placed in a university laboratory, where alone he can associate freely with his mentors (and in the past be financed by government grants) to do that basic research which has made America unique? How economically productive and competitive will America be in a world of the future without this basic research which universities have largely provided in the past? Young scientists may be employed elsewhere,

mainly in industry to do applied research, but they will not grow and become the next generation of teacher-researchers on the cutting edge of science and technology. One can, of course, make the same case for young engineers in the university. In the frontier days of extreme hardship, this situation was called "eating your seed corn." Imagine what it will mean to have an aging and aged faculty (not to mention administrators!) who are not being stretched by younger colleague competition, who are most distant in some cases from younger students, and who have few if any other positions available in academe for which they might otherwise compete and into which they might grow.

If future financing during a potential downturn in higher education is still in the realm of uncertainty, there is no uncertainty about what happens in higher education when financing shrinks and inflation grows. A whole series of things happen: positions are vacated without replacement and salaries currently paid get frozen or reduced; maintenance is deferred, which means you pay ten times more later to replace the whole roof for not having fixed the leak; laboratory equipment becomes not one, but two or three generations, obsolete; library resources are cut, books are not bought, and periodical subscriptions are cancelled; computing facilities shrink or become outdated or both; programs without sufficient students or strength are cancelled and with them attending faculty, even though tenured; new promising programs are simply shelved for a better day, new opportunities lost for decades; faculty development, books and travel, sabbaticals and important conferences, secretarial help and fringe benefits, all look relatively unimportant in the face of survival.

The Carnegie report predicts that a number of existing institutions of higher education (some mention the figure 200) are unlikely to be around to usher

in the new millennium. In a somewhat cruel and yet realistic fashion, the report implies that these unlucky ones deserve their fate, mainly because they will react in a short-term manner to long-term (at least two decades long) problems; they will not analyze their particular situation and take corrective action; they will attract few students,^{and} they are already educationally marginal and behind the times, with weak faculties and curricula, lowered standards and bottom-of-the-barrel students.

Let me briefly review nine points summarized in the Carnegie report (a tenth, basic research, I have treated above) and comprising major challenges to higher education approaching the millennium.

1. Quality. This is central to the whole endeavor and should be the focal point to be emphasized and not compromised in any and all academic adjustments during the present time of crisis.

2. Balance. This means, in a word, that each university must decide what are its special priorities among all the possible academic programs available. This often involves curriculum study and reform, a breaking of the campus academic fortresses defended so persistently on the walls, even when largely empty of treasure within.

3. Integrity. If we are to deserve widespread support from our constituencies, we must be able to articulate our educational vision. Integrity also speaks to the inner life of the institution--what we really stand for, and what against, not only institutionally, but in our personal lives as faculty, administrators, and students.

4. Adaptation. This means that we do not sell our birthright while planning to survive, grow, and become better, even in difficult times. Distinctiveness is hard won and easily lost. There are fewer and fewer places of strong personality in American higher education.

5. Dynamism. This means that we have to be lively and inventive enough to do with confidence and vigor what must be done--to grow inwardly while not growing outwardly, to be able to substitute this for that, if this is better.

6. Effective use of resources. This speaks primarily to the money available, but also to the people. Faculty productivity in the United States has been unchanged in the past 50 years. There may be innovative ways of doing more with less, such as using the new technologies and arranging our working patterns somewhat differently. At least it is worth a look, although one's initial reaction is usually to maintain rigidly the status quo. It has been reasonably reported, for example, that the quality of teaching is more related to the approach of the teacher than to the size of the class. Obviously, some classes must be small while others can be larger. The savings involved in knowing the difference, and doing something about it without affecting quality, are tremendous. Also involved here is the needless proliferation of courses, especially those that attract very few students and contribute little to an integrated education. Clark Kerr once said that every university has at least twice the number of courses as teachers, representing for each, one they wanted to teach and one they had to teach. That may sound cynical, but it is not far from the mark.

7. Financing. The report warns us not to expect more, even probably less, federal financing, although we might guide the effectiveness of the support available--for example, financial assistance preferably for able, but indigent students or for basic rather than applied research. Again, private sector support is directly related to educational vision.

8. Leadership. Since I am here speaking of my office (the report does not ask for more presidential power, or at least, for fewer roadblocks and veto bodies), as well as speaking for provosts, deans, directors, and department chairmen, may I just for once quote the report:

"A period such as that ahead does not readily attract the ablest leadership--the tasks are grinding ones, the victories too often take the form of greater losses avoided, the constituencies are more likely to be united around doing nothing than doing something."

The report calls for leaders combining compassion and realism, while admitting these qualities are rare.

9. Independent higher education. How best can we preserve the private sector of higher education, which in 25 years has gone from 50-50 public-private share of students to 80-20 today. All agree that we in the private sector are what makes American higher education unique over the world, but how small a percentage can we become without losing that uniqueness or effectiveness?

Among these "hard choices," the report notes that the worse choice is no choice. Strong institutions can get stronger, not by growing externally, but by pursuing frugality, integrity, and quality internally. This will require careful analysis to determine what is fat and what is bone and sinew, but a leaner institution can be a more healthy one. The choices will call for understanding on all levels of the university, cooperation in applying stringent solutions instead of competing for scarce turf. The common good of the institution must be the overriding consideration, and all must believe--in the words with which Willaim Faulkner accepted the Nobel Prize--that their institution will not only survive but prevail.

University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

Department of Information Services

April 18, 1983

Dr. George B. Weathersby
Commissioner, State of Indiana
Commission for Higher Education
143 West Market Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2892

Dear Dr. Weathersby:

Father Hesburgh is off campus speaking to Notre Dame alumni, and he asked me to respond to your letter of April 5.

He would like to adapt his 1982 Annual Address to the Faculty, entitled "Preparing for the Millennium," for consideration by Change Magazine. Because of his schedule during these days of spring madness on campus, it will take a couple of weeks for him to get around to doing the necessary editing, but a manuscript will be sent to you in the near future.

He remembers the success of the article on liberal education and is grateful for the opportunity to return to the pages of Change.

Yours truly,

Richard W. Conklin
Director

RWC:ir

bcc: Father Hesburgh

State of Indiana Commission for Higher Education



143 West Market Street Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2892 (317) 232-1900 Dr. George B. Weathersby, Commissioner

April 5, 1983

Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.
President
University of Notre Dame
State Highway 31
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

Dear Father Hesburgh:

On behalf of the Change Magazine editors, it is my privilege to share with you our plans and to seek your participation. As you probably recall, in the mid-1970's George Bonham sent out over 4,000 questionnaires asking college presidents to identify influential leaders in American higher education. You, John Brademas, Clark Kerr and Claiborne Pell led the field by far. To provide some perspective on changing issues in our sense, Change is hoping to run a contemporary and reflective comment from each of the "four horsemen" who have provided such magnificent leadership over the past years.

Perhaps you saw the pieces by Clark Kerr (the postscript of his re-issued Godkin Lectures) and John Brademas (his ECS speech last August upon receiving the James Bryant Conant Award). We would like very much to publish an article giving your reflections on major issues past, present and future. If there is any appropriate address or treatise you have prepared and not yet shared with the wider audience reached by Change, I would appreciate receiving a copy.

I am certain that it will please you to know that your article on liberal education, adopted from your fall address to the UND faculty two or three years ago has been one of the most requested reprints of a Change article in recent years. The four articles will undoubtedly be viewed as a milestone event in our recent literature on American higher education.

I do hope you will share your thoughts with me on this topic and allow Change to publish an article by you in the near future. If you have any questions, please contact me directly.

Meanwhile, my very best wishes.

Sincerely,

George B. Weathersby
Commissioner

GBW/dm

cc: Dr. Robert E. Martin
Ms. Linda Dove

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Date 4.6.83

Referred to Mike C. [unclear]

- for your information
- for your files
- for appropriate action
- please prepare reply for my signature
- please answer direct
- please send copy of reply
- please advise me
- please read and return

Handwritten notes:
 Mike - Jid rather
 date annual seminar
 out of the N.P.
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Remarks: Could we put the
Faculty Talk (yr 2000) to
fit this? Thanks
Jid

I don't see why not. I would send him the
typescript (rather than the printed version)
and invite his reaction. If he responds that
(over)

17
MAY

It needs editing, I'll be happy to take
the task on.

Autotype

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