

## TALKING POINTS

Dr. Boyer's remarks to Board of Trustees of Franklin and Marshall College, alumni representatives, and friends (30-40 persons) for 10-15 minutes at an informal reception from 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. at the University Club, Washington, D.C.

June 13, 1979

When Aaron Martin invited me to this reception, he asked if I would say a few words, and I think the emphasis was on few. Your president, Keith Spalding, seconded that invitation.

A possible topic suggested to me was "The Future of Small, Private, Liberal Arts Colleges." Since Franklin and Marshall falls within the scope of this topic, I assume that Aaron and Keith hoped I would choose my few words carefully.

Although private liberal arts colleges constitute about 20 percent of all institutions of higher education in the Nation, they enroll only about 7 percent of the students.

During the last half of the 1960's the number of private liberal arts colleges expanded rapidly, but since then the number has been steadily declining. From 1971 to 1975, only 15 opened and, during that same period, 50 closed, merged, became public, or changed status in some other way.

For the most part, it is the very small or newly established private liberal arts college that is struggling along or has given up the struggle. Almost half of today's liberal arts colleges enroll 1,000 students or more.

A review of our history of higher education reveals that the survival rate of small colleges has never been high. For example, it is estimated that of the 891 colleges founded between 1770 and 1870, 650 died.

Yet, during that period, Franklin and Marshall was founded, and it continues to be a vibrant liberal arts college offering preprofessional training to its almost 2,000 full-time undergraduates. I know that Franklin and Marshall is proud of its students, and I know that the parents of the one in seven applicants accepted are even prouder.

Is there a secret to the success of long-established liberal arts colleges such as Franklin and Marshall? What have they seen as their mission over the years?

Prior to 1870, the role of American colleges had been clear and, for the most part, unchallenged. They had adhered to the Aristotelian philosophy that liberal arts subjects must demand the exercise of an individual's higher abilities rather than the mere carrying out of routine activities.

By 1890, times had changed, and new challenges as well as threats began to emerge. Two rivals appeared -- the high school and the university. Expanding knowledge in the sciences and social sciences began to demand recognition. Other changes included the shifting of training for careers in such fields as medicine and law from apprenticeships to professional schools. Also, there was growing recognition of the value of college training for the preparation of teachers.

Pressure grew for colleges to provide actual occupational and skills training leading either to direct employment or to entry into professional schools. Some institutions met this demand with the "elective system," in which students made most of the choices about what they would study.

The question of providing for vocational, technical, and professional training and relating it to the liberal arts education became a serious curriculum issue for Franklin and Marshall. It attempted to avoid the extremes of the "elective course" system. Instead, it opted to cling to the prescribed liberal arts requirements and simply add a few new courses.

Before long Franklin and Marshall students found themselves carrying 10 courses at a time. Not until 1894 were seniors permitted a limited number of electives.

In 1899, a delegation of juniors, for the most part premedical students, petitioned for relief from some of the requirements in the classics so that they might take more courses in science. Their efforts resulted only in the replacement of Greek by some courses in science and modern languages. Over the years other limited accommodations were made to meet the needs of students who planned to go on to professional schools.

After the turn of the century, collegiate work and bachelor degrees began to be required for admission to professional schools, and the sense of threat to liberal arts colleges began to wane. In fact, in 1907, Franklin and Marshall's president, John Stahr, told the board of trustees that any fear about the future of the small liberal arts college was really groundless.

Today, high caliber, long-established liberal arts colleges such as Franklin and Marshall can be just as confident of the future as John Stahr was 72 years ago. Because they have continued to offer preprofessional training, to maintain oversight of the curriculum, and to

improve academic facilities, these colleges have earned for themselves an important place in the higher education community. They not only add vitality to the college experience but also continue to offer a vision of hope and moral integrity for our Nation.

One of the attractions of the private liberal arts college is the opportunity it offers students to relate to faculty members. The average age of liberal arts faculty is more than 40. They are usually highly qualified but tend to be less active in research than their colleagues. Instead, they devote more time and attention to their students.

The small liberal arts college offers an opportunity for flexibility and diversity, and its autonomy or semi-autonomy offers an opportunity for the questioning of values and policies. It makes possible the discovery of new knowledge by building upon the accomplishments of the past and maintaining an awareness of the present.

In Plato's classic treatise, the Republic, he envisioned the good life as always linked to educational policies and recognized that in order to plan for a good society, one has to make decisions about education.

In America, we have continued to affirm that education and democracy are inextricably interlocked. Thomas Jefferson's commitment to universal education was a commitment to excellence as well.

I believe that students must be free to follow their own interests, to develop their own aptitudes, and to pursue their own goals. But truly educated persons must also move beyond themselves. They must gain social perspective and see themselves in relation to other people and other times. They must understand their origins, wants, and needs, and how they are tied to the origins, wants, and needs of others.

You, the trustees, alumni, and friends of Franklin and Marshall are entrusted with important decision-making power. That ancient wisdom revealed in the philosophy of the liberal arts is reflected in your approach to education today.

Your plans and policies help mold the character and develop the abilities of Franklin and Marshall students. Yours is an awesome responsibility. You have met it with great distinction in the past. I know you will continue to do so in the future.

# # #

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is a private coeducational liberal arts college.

Historically, it is related to the United Church of Christ.

Chartered as Franklin College, its first baccalaureate was awarded in 1783. It later merged with Marshall College, which was established in 1834. The present name of Franklin and Marshall was adopted in 1853.

Today, it enrolls between 1,975 and 2,000 full-time undergraduates. It is primarily a preprofessional college. Many of its graduates go on to schools of medicine, law, and business administration. The college has been coed for 10 years.

In September of this year, 540-550 freshmen will be enrolled. They will be selected from 3,800 applicants.

Franklin and Marshall thinks of itself as a regional college, drawing students from a triangle -- North to Boston, Massachusetts; South to Richmond, Virginia; and West to Cleveland, Ohio.

In 1973, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, in its "A Classification of Institutions of Higher Education," lists Franklin and Marshall among 144 leading private liberal arts colleges in the Nation. In compiling this list, it used the following criteria: (1) Astin's

selectivity index based on qualifying test scores of all students who took the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in 1964, classified according to each student's first choice of college; or (2) colleges included in 200 leading baccalaureate granting institutions in terms of numbers of graduates receiving Ph.D.'s at leading doctoral-granting institutions, from 1920 to 1966.

An article in the December 1976 issue of Liberal Education, "The Re-emergency of the American College: A Multiple-Case Study, 1870-1920," uses for the case study four institutions: Bucknell, Franklin and Marshall, Princeton, and Swarthmore.