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THE URBAN UNIVERSITY

IN THE

NATION'S SERVICE

Remarks by:

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Introduction

President O'Neil, Chancellor Horton, Distinguished Regents:

I am honored to participate in this silver anniversary celebration.

There is no university in the United States that more dramatically reflects the partnership between the campus and the nation than the University of Wisconsin.

This world-distinguished institution--rooted deep in the land grant tradition--has for more than one hundred and thirty two years served the educational, social and economic needs of the region and the ~~nation~~ world.

The spirit of the land grant college was vividly captured by Willa Cather when she described her fellow students and teachers at the University of Nebraska in the 1890s

- ° (They) Came straight from the cornfields with only summer's wages in their pockets, hung on through four years, shabby and underfed, and completed the course by really heroic self-sacrifice.
- ° Our instructors were oddly assorted: wandering pioneer school teachers, stranded ministers of the Gospel, a few enthusiastic young men just out of graduate school.

- There was an atmosphere of endeavor, of expectancy and bright hopefulness about the young college that had lifted its head from the prairie only a few years ago.

Not everyone applauded these strange new frontier institutions.

- Traditional educators looked with amused contempt at Ezra Cornell's pledge of the 1860s that he would found an institution "where any person can find instruction in any study."
- They ridiculed the "cow colleges," and rejected the idea that large numbers of "ordinary" young people were going to college.

The conservative view of that era was reflected in a sarcastic ditty:

Education is the rage
in Wisconsin
Everyone is wise and sage
in Wisconsin
Every newsboy that you see
Has a varsity degree
Every cook's a Ph.D.
in Wisconsin

Woodrow Wilson, professor of political economy at Princeton, was among the skeptics.

- In an 1896 essay somewhat ironically titled "Princeton in the Nation's Service," Wilson worried that "science has bred in us a spirit of experiment and contempt for the past. It has made us credulous of quick improvement, hopeful of discovering panaceas, confident of success in every new thing."

In spite of the skeptics, confidence "in every new thing" prevailed.

- After visiting Madison in 1909, Lincoln Steffens observed: "In Wisconsin, the university is as close to the intelligent farmer as his pig-pen or his tool-house."¹
- And Governor Robert LaFollette forged a link between the campus and the state that was known nationally as "The Wisconsin Idea."

Simply stated, the great land grant universities helped build America. They not only opened up the West, they strengthened the economy and offered hope to millions of new Americans as well.

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But we are here today not just to celebrate the past, but to anticipate the future.

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The question we now confront is this: How does the land grant tradition fit the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as it looks toward the year 2000.

What in short is the mission of the Urban University?

In response to that essential question, I have three rather familiar suggestions to propose.

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I.

First, this great urban university has a special obligation to serve--as it has always done--traditionally by-passed students.

- o It is significant that today there are more minorities attending the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee than any other college in the state.
- o And it is significant that better than 60 percent of entering freshmen at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee are the first in their family to go to college.

This commitment to equality of opportunity has always been a part of the land grant tradition, but I believe it will take on a special urgency in the decade of the 1980s.

- o Today we hear a lot about how we've gone from a baby boom to a baby bust,
- o and we're told that by 1997 the number of 18-24 year olds in the United States will drop 23 percent.

However, the real demographic story is what's going on just below the surface. The majority white population is growing older while the black and Hispanic populations remain young.

- Today, slightly more than one-quarter (28%) of white Americans are under 18 years of age,
- but nearly one-half of all Hispanics and over one-third of all blacks are ~~over~~ 18 years of age and under.

Clearly, these demographic trends have special significance for the urban university.

- Since 1970, the proportion of black high school students in New York City has risen from 30 to 40 percent;
- Hispanic enrollments increased from 21 to 26 percent of the total.
- In the same period, the percentage of students here in Milwaukee high schools, who were white, dropped from 75 to 34 percent.
- Of the 20 largest school districts in America, 12 have over 50% black and Hispanic students.

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There is another impact to be considered

- In 1979, only 39 percent of all white households had school-age children.
- In contrast, nearly half (49 percent) of all black and 61 percent of all Hispanic households had school-age children.

With fewer school school-age children, white America's commitment to education may well decline.

- At the same time, minority parents with more young children have a growing stake in education and historically they have had insufficient political and economic power.

But here's the most urgent issue we confront. Minority young people, who will increasingly populate our urban schools are precisely those with whom we have been least successful.

- In 1979, 80 percent of white 19 year olds in the U.S. were high school graduates.
- However, that same year, only 64 percent of black and 60 percent of Hispanic 19 year olds held high school diplomas.

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The conclusion is clear. The urban university has a special obligation to serve the new Americans and this means building a bridge between the university and the city's public schools. A century ago educators understood better than we do today that you cannot have excellence in higher education without having excellence in the schools.

In the 1950s when Sputnik shocked the nation, gifted high school and college teachers came together to work out sequential courses of study in mathematics, English, biology and physics. I believe we face today our own equivalent of Sputnik.

Schooling in America is in serious trouble. ~~We run the grave risk of a cultural and ethnic confrontation in this nation.~~ And higher education has a responsibility to help solve the crisis it has, through neglect and inadvertence, helped create.

specifically The urban university - has a responsibility to work closely with the public schools.

There are no panaceas, to be sure. Still, rebuilding quality in education is an urgent matter, since the real problem confronts not schools, but students whose lives will be shaped by the programs we provide. "In every child who is born. . .," James Agee once wrote, "the potentiality of the human race is born again." Educating a new generation of Americans to their full potential is ~~higher learning's~~ *the urban university's* most compelling obligation.

II.

Second, the urban university has a special obligation to focus its research and service on the economic and social problems of the city.

Throughout the years, American universities have--through research--established a dramatic record of service to the nation.

- ° Since 1945, Americans have won more than half the Nobel Prizes awarded for science;
- ° they dominate the world's scientific and technical literature, producing, it is estimated, about 40 percent of the influential scholarly articles each year;
- ° citations of Americans articles are about 30 percent higher than average.
- ° Whereas American scientists once had to complete their training in other countries, now the reverse is true:
- ° between 1960 and 1974 foreign students received 19 percent of the science and engineering doctorates awarded by American universities.

In reciting progress from research, we can now add that smallpox and polio have been eradicated and that the average yields of wheat and corn doubled between 1950 and 1975.

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- Recent developments of microconductors have revolutionized communication, and advances in psychopharmacy vastly improve treatment of schizophrenia and depression and--in biochemistry--we are on the threshold of a revolution.

In our lifetime, we have witnessed the birth of the atomic age, with all its promise and hazards.

- We have sent men into outer space and watched them walk on the moon through the wonder of television, which also was unknown 50 years ago.
- We flew from New York to San Francisco in 12, then 8, then 5 hours.
- Travelers now leave Paris in the morning and reach New York in time for lunch.
- Electronic brains that filled whole buildings 30 years ago can now be carried in our pockets.

As Henry Adams gloomily recognized 80 years ago, the changes brought about by research and subsequent innovations are almost overwhelming.

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~~I'm convinced~~
 While basic research will go on in the laboratories and the libraries of any distinguished campus, it seems quite clear ~~I'm convinced that~~ that in the 1980s the great urban universities ^{should be a} ~~have a~~ part of this tradition - focusing special obligation to choose priorities carefully and focus especially on those ^{the research & service} ~~specialties that are linked to the~~ agenda of the cities.

To put it simply, we need a network of ^{nationally distinguished institutions} ~~higher learning~~ institutions that have national stature but also take great pride in their regional affiliations and in their service obligations close to home.

This is--I am convinced in the best tradition of the land grant college.

It seems quite clear that in this day of tight resources and great problems the urban university should choose carefully its research targets and concentrate primarily on those specialties that are linked to the urban setting.

Much of America's vitality has come from its regional identities. And this sense of regional pride ^{has helped} ~~has helped~~ ^{preserve, reinforced identity as well as} ~~the notion that~~ Coloradoans have that their state university is the "Columbia of the West,"

- o or that Emory University in Georgia ^{see itself} ~~has in thinking~~ of itself as a geographically displaced Ivy League institution,

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- ~~has helped preserve institutional identity and has helped strengthen diversity as well.~~

After World War II, many fine universities ^{that} ~~which~~ were performing valuable social and political functions in their regions decided to "go national." They decided to solicit students from afar and take on a global agenda in all academic fields.

Such reaching out was by no means harmful. It brought richness to the region and standards of excellence were extended.

- And yet--in the process--some universities began to forget that they were intractably part of a local culture.
- They ignored the fact that they were in a community as well as being a community.

At such institutions there was much talk about the "community of scholars" that helped set that community apart from the community of rubbish collectors, mail, milk, and newspaper deliverers, which surrounded and served the universities.

- There was a temptation to reach out to Camelot but forget about the problems down the street.
 - It was exciting to ^{launch} ~~found~~ study programs abroad ^{while} ~~but~~ forget¹⁴ about Morningside Heights or East Palo Alto.
- I use the references only symbolically, of course.

Some argued, of course, that "local problems" invariably are ^{"too} political--~~or would become so in their solution--~~and that universities should be ~~above~~ ^{stand} or apart from politics. Yet surely the decision to look outward and not down at the problems at one's feet is itself a political decision.

I am suggesting that -

Without losing its world vision and its cosmopolitan spirit or its links to the scholarly tradition, ~~I am suggesting that in the 1980s and beyond the land grant college will continue to take great pride in its local roots, and the city-based institution will continue to be challenged by its urban setting.~~

~~The~~ *Today's* urban university will ~~become~~ ^{itself} involved in health care, in crime prevention, in urban renewal, in tax reform ^{child development & in public education} and ~~in all of the other issues that must be solved if urban America is to serve the people.~~ These are today's equivalent of "the pig-pen" and the "tool house" of which Lincoln Steffens wrote 70 years ago.

And let me say that

This is precisely the spirit that has marked the ^{growth} development of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. ^{during its remarkable 25 year history.}

- UWM has one of the outstanding Schools of Architecture in the nation.
- UWM is a leader in the education of the deaf.
- UWM has one of the largest Schools of Nursing in the United States.

The Urban University will also promote theater & dance and theater and the visual arts which have always made the great cities of the world places of civility and culture

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- ° UWM serves as a regional center for child abuse.

Today's urban university will also enrich the community in music and dance and in the visual arts and bring grace and vivility to our cities.

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~~In the final analysis, research is a creative response to anything we fail to understand and yearn to know. And science is the application of that knowledge in humane ways.~~

The point is this.

The survival of our great cities is absolutely crucial and *our great urban vitality - through research & service - can be the* ~~engaging the university in this unfinished agenda is~~ *driving engine of a renaissance to make urban life* ~~essential if higher learning is to be truly "in the nation's~~ *more humane and humane* ~~service."~~

This is the second exciting & urgent mandate of the future.

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III.

Finally, I propose that the urban university has a special obligation to ~~serve the~~ ^{educate} ~~continuing education of~~ adults.

Traditionally, we have sliced up life into chunks like a great salami. First came ⁴⁻⁵ the years of happy play. Then ~~students would go to school for 12 years or so and at commencement time, they would leave campus never to return.~~ ^{at formal education} Next, ~~would be~~ 40 years of full-time work, followed by the little nubbin at the end [^] called dignified decline.

Today, this pattern has begun to shift. Life expectancy has increased from 47 years in 1900 to 74 years ^(for males) in 1980. ^{ad 77 years for women} By the year 2000, it is estimated that nearly 30 percent of Americans will be over the age of 50.

Older people now retire earlier, live longer, and for many, scholarship is becoming a lifelong pursuit.

- In the five years between 1973 and 78, the number of college students in the 35-and-over age group increased from 787,000 to 1.3 million.
- As more and more adults return to campus, ^{- especially women -} continuing education has become a booming business.
- ^{And it is not a sign of} ~~Consider, for example,~~ that here at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the average student is 26 years of age.

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But this picture has a darker side.

While older students are going back to school, the sad fact is that, on many campuses, lifelong learning remains a program without purpose.

- ° Adult education courses grow like topsy, but goals are not well defined.
- ° Mail order degrees, and a smorgasbord of electives are offered with little concern for quality or coherence.
- ° A major university's continuing education catalog that arrived in the mail recently contained a list of some 55 courses offered during the current term ranging from "The Dermatologist Discusses Skin Care" and "Stock Market and Tax Shelters" to "The Art of Meditation" and "Assertiveness Training."

It is my conviction that the urban university has a special obligation to give new meaning to adult education. We need programs especially designed to meet the needs of older people in the arts, in business, in social sciences, and I believe we must ^{in the days ahead} give more attention to public policy--to the civic education of adults.

let me explain briefly what I have in mind.

- When Thomas Jefferson was asked if mass opinion could be trusted, he responded, "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves."

The Jeffersonian vision of a democracy sustained by enlightened citizens seemed within our grasp

- when values were more widely shared,
- when society was more cohesive, and
- when public policy issues were more simple to grasp.

Today, however, issues facing the electorate have become enormously complex and government seems increasingly remote.

- In frustration, many Americans now seek simple solutions to complex problems.
- They turn to repressive censorship,
- align themselves with narrowly focused special-interest groups,
- retreat into nostalgia for a world that never was,
- succumb to the blandishments of glib electronic soothsayers,
- or, worst of all, simply withdraw completely, convinced that nothing can be done.

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It is no longer possible, many argue, to resolve complex issues through the democratic process.

- o How, they ask, can citizens debate policy choices of consequence when they do not even know the language?

As a nation, we are becoming civically illiterate.

- o And unless we find better ways to educate ourselves as citizens, we run the risk of drifting unwittingly into a new kind of Dark Age, a time when small cadres of specialists will control knowledge and thus control the decisionmaking process.
- o These high priests of technology will understand, or claim to understand, the complicated issues, telling us what we should believe and how we should act.
- o In this new age of intellectual darkness, citizens would make critical decisions, not on the basis of what they know, but on the basis of blind faith in one or another set of ~~professed~~ experts.

For those who care about government "by the people," this upsurge of apathy and decline in public understanding cannot go unchallenged. In a world where human survival is at stake, ignorance is not an acceptable alternative. The replacement of democratic government by a technology or the control of policy by special-interest groups, are not tolerable.

I am suggesting that if Americans are to be more adequately informed, education for citizenship must become a lifelong process. And the urban university is in a very position to serve the continuing education of adults because they happen to be where the people are.

In addition to the wide range of special programs for enrichment and for job improvement perhaps we also need a new adult education degree, in civic education, to give this new priority the stature and credibility it deserves.

In such a program the "laboratory" or "case-study" model might be followed.

The "case-study" seminar might focus first on an historical event, the decision of President Andrew Jackson to remove the Native American population from Georgia and other southern states, for example.

- o How was this decision made?
- o What political, constitutional, social, and cultural forces shaped it?
- o What alternatives were available? Seminar members might then turn to contemporary issues of community concern: low-income housing, electoral redistricting, a plan to build a new hospital, or a proposal to construct a condominium on a choice lakefront site.

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Today we are discovering that painful choices must be made between health and defense budgets, between tax cuts and welfare programs, between more energy consumption and clean air.

- ° And we are beginning to understand that the consequences of today's actions will be long lasting and profound.

As the stakes increase, civic education becomes urgent and even more consequential than before.

- ° The time has come for higher education to acknowledge the inevitable relationship between the trained mind and effective government, between an uninformed citizenry and the success of the democratic experiment.

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