THE CONTROL OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

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Introduction

I am very honored to be with you today. I must confess, however, that given the topic you have asked me to discuss, I am also frightened. The theme of this conference--the control of graduate education--has such range and depth, such complexity and importance, that I fear that I am unequal to the task.

- In the last twenty years or so, I've been on the side of university administration, the federal government, and now philanthropy or foundation work.

- I've been "located" among those external influences that to so many graduate faculty and students seem to control graduate education in the worst sense--to hold down and inhibit, rather than lift up.

- I finally decided, despite my anxiety, to meet with you at South Padre Island to at least reflect on an issue of great consequence to us all.

I

Last December, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, sponsored, in cooperation with Princeton University and the Institute of Advanced Study, a Colloquium on Graduate Education. This meeting featured an essay entitled Scholarship and Its Survival prepared by Jaroslav Pelikan, Sterling Professor of History at Yale.

The conversation was wide ranging but throughout the Colloquium participants expressed the same concern that has brought you here today: Professor Gerald Holton captured the concerns of many when he spoke about the threat to young scholars. Holton put it this way:

- The chief dangers to integrity seem to me to be found is the largely external factors that determine life and death in academe, every day and hour, not for a few but for large numbers, and at the most vunerable point in their identity and career formation.

- Since 1968, the fellowship support provided by the Federal government has shrunk from 50,000 per year to 6,000 in all fields, and all too little private money is filling to gap.

- The number of postdoctoral positions has also greatly decreased; the National Academy of Sciences report of the problem in 1981 carried the revealing title "Postdoctoral Appointments and Disappointments."

During this same time the investment in research tools for science has gone down dramatically--even while the cost of doing the next experiment has gone up.

The last measurement (for fiscal year 1981) shows that Federal obligations for all academic research, whether science and engineering or not, have declined at an annual rate of seven percent, and in real dollars 15 percent.

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Another concern was expressed by Jary Pelikan who worried that centers of private enterprise are competing successfully with the universities for the research dollar.

- "It does not mitigate," he said, "but only complicates, the potential crisis to point out that much of this private enterprise is in the hands of academics.

- Many of you know far more than I about the problems of conflict of interest generated by this situation, and about the steps that the universities must take to protect the integrity of their research and teaching from the potentially corrosive effects of such conflict.

- (However) the problem that gives me nightmares is a somewhat different one: the consequences for the intellectual life of the university as a whole if the most important research--and the most innovative researchers--were to desert the campus."

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To add one more anxiety, I turn to the concern some participants experienced that the federal government, or the FBI or the CIA, or perhaps business and industry itself, are intentionally or inadvertently threatening the independence of the university--manipulating both researchers and their research. Coming from Princeton, perhaps I will be permitted at this point to evoke a Princeton presence:

- It appears that Einstein was once visited by an FBI agent, asking about one of his young collaborators, the mathematician Ernst Strauss (sic), who had requested a security clearance. The FBI man asked, "Is this man absolutely loyal to the United States?" Einstein is reported to have thrown up his hands and said, "Of course not; he is much too intelligent to be absolutely loyal to any one country."

And earlier, Einstein himself had been isolated from the World War II effort because, as Vannevar Bush explained at the time in a letter to the then-director of (the Insititute for Advanced Study), Frank Aydelotte, the authorities in Washington did not feel Einstein was sufficiently trustworthy.

II

It is at this point--the point of governmental intervention--that brings me to an earlier study of The Carnegie Foundation entitled The Control of the Campus.

- We begin that governance report by observing that there is no such thing as autonomy in higher education--colleges and universities are connected institutions.

- It's futile, we said, for educators to take money from the state and then assume that they will not be held accountable for its use.

- The issue, obviously, is not whether colleges and universities should be accountable. Rather, the issue is to separate essential accountability from the non-essential.

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In the Carnegie Report we conclude that, by and large, federal and state governments have honored the integrity of the university.

Putting it another way: Government has not been as bad as some of our colleagues with a conspiratorial orientation would have us believe.

- In a survey conducted in 50 states we found that most trustees at state supported institutions still have final authority in key decisions--ranging from setting degree requirements to student-faculty ratios.

- And, considering the fact that the federal government has transferred billions of dollars to higher education, we conclude that it is really quite remarkable that there has been so little interference.

III

But here I must introduce a word of caution.

We do not suggest in our report that the relationship between government and campus has been friction-free.

- Indeed, as early as 1910, a specialist in the U.S. Bureau of Education, Kenneth Babcock, prepared a list in which he audaciously ranked all colleges and universities in 4 categories from "good" to "bad."

- As you can imagine, the uproar was so intense that President William Howard Taft, one nation's most rotund president, had to step in to squelch the publication. And his successor, Woodrow Wilson, refused to overrule the order.

Still, such clashes were exceptions to a relationship between government and the campus which--before World War II--might be characterized as one of benign neglect.

We concluded that in matters of research the federal government has been generally respectful of the university's right to independence. But--again--we're troubled by recent moves to overregulate the process.

- We cite in our report: The clash between universities and NIH over how to regulate research on recombinant DNA.

- We cite the controversial HEW regulations on protecting the rights of human subjects: Calling for "prior review" of research designs applied to non-federally funded research projects, too.

- We cite the current debate over the publication of "cryptography" research, which the government says threatens the security of the nation.

In 1982 Admiral Bobby Inman, deputy director of CIA, warned that unless universities allow the government to review research results, a "tidal wave" of public outrage would force the government to impose "stringent restrictions" on the campus.

Clearly, these issues of freedom in the conduct of research strike at the very foundation on which the university is built. And we predict that such debates will grow more, not less, intense.

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In measuring outside influence, we also looked at federally funded student aid. Here again, we concluded that government loans to students have been remarkably successful--providing billions of dollars of support with little outside interference.

- We do note, however, that because of student aid, almost every college--both public and private--has now become a federally dependent institution.

- As early as 1978, about 50% of all tuition revenues at public comprehensive colleges came from Washington. And about 25% of all tuition at private liberal arts colleges came from federally funded programs.

In the long run, the federal conncection in financial aid with its potential for manipulating students, may be the most important governance issue to be faced. And may I say that I personally am deeply troubled that the federal government has used draft registration as a test for eligibility for student aid. It is, in my view, an enormously troubling precedent that higher education should have more vigorously resisted.

V

In summarizing the issue of "outside interference" we conclude that, in the main, government and the courts have been "generally respectful" of the essential functions of the university. However, we also see grave dangers in the decade just ahead--as budgets tighten. And we are most concerned about the "cumulative impact" of government intervention. Taken by itself, single action by the bureacracy may not be unbearably intrusive. But the combined impact can really suffocate an institution.

- In one year the University of California reported filing 229 separate reports with 32 separate federal agencies.

- In Pennsylvania, the state controls all purchases over $1000, all civil service appointments, all consultation fees, all institutional memberships in national associations, and the list goes on.

- In New York, a staff person in the Division of the Budget approves all out-of-state travel for the State University of New York.

- In Oregon & Nevada, the state legislature and its staff decides of student/faculty ratios.

- In Arkansas, a state agency approves all purchases over $1000.

This "green-eye shade" approach to campus management is far more than a minor irritation. Trying the run a university by remote control

- ignores principles of good management
- reflects a climate of mistrust
- and assumes, incorrectly, that if centralized control is increased, efficiency will increase as well.

Further, the cumulative impact of such knit-picking intrusion is to divert the university from its essential mission of teaching and research.

The irony is that these so-called "efficiency" standards are being imposed by inefficient organizations.

- In 1977 the default rate on student loans was 18 percent. But I also discovered that students were not even being reminded that they owed the money. The miracle to me was that 82 percent were paying back their loans.

- And when Senator Daniel P. Moynihan asked HEW how many complaints OCR had received--and settled. The department had to admit it did not know.

The further irony is that government is imposing new restrictions on higher education at the very time when the corporate world is talking more and more about flexibility, local independence, and incentives--as the means by which efficiency and productivity are achieved.

VI

It's easy to tell how stupid government has become. And we all have our favorite stories that we love to pass along at cocktail time.

- But in our governance report we also say that the academy itself is at least partly responsible for the current crisis.

- We conclude that academic governance will improve not when government cleans up its act but only as the academy rebuilds confidence in its own governance machinery and its ability to monitor its own behavior, finding better ways to regulate itself.

During our study we were deeply disturbed to find that today--on many campuses--governance machinery does not seem to be working very well.

- At one state university we were told that the faculty senate has not had a quorum in 7 years. At an Ivy League institution the faculty senate could not get enough candidates to fill the nomination slots before election.

- And on other campuses the senate repeatedly canceled meetings even though the institution was going through severe retrechment.

Today, Governance all too often means letting the president and trustees and deans make the tough decisions and also take the heat. Faculty seem to have drawn back, willing to react and complain, but not to initiate and lead.

- Given these conditions, some members of our national panel thought it was unrealistic--and perhaps naive--to call upon higher education to regulate itself.

- But we concluded that the only way the academy can resist outside interference is to strengthen its own governance.

We concluded that if the integrity of higher education is to be preserved, the academy must have full authority over

- the selection of faculty
- the conduct of courses and research
- the processes of instruction
- the establishment of academic standards
- the assessment of performance

These functions constitute--we believe--the essential core of academic life. And it is here that the "integrity" of the campus must be uncompromising defended.

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At the end of our report, there is a kind of epilogue entitled "A Renewal of Leadership." Here we say that the structural "administrative" reforms can only go so far toward renewing academic governance. What is needed--we suggest--is a rebirth of leadership as well.

- We say that it is enormously distressing that today academic leaders feel almost overwhelmed by demands of the bureacracy that call for accountability, but provide few guidelines and give campus leaders little room to make decisions.

- And we conclude that higher education will be saved--not by the rigidity of more procedures--but by renewing our confidence in people.

VII

This brings me to a special theme I wish to emphasize before I close.

- Earlier I made reference to our Graduate Colloquium. I want to turn to a comment made by a Gerald Holton, and I do so because he put the emphasis where I want to put it--on the student.

- All too many students see themselves as merely library aids, or extra hands in the lab, Holton said. All too many do not feel valued by their supposed mentors for their own originality, let alone as budding independent researchers, and hence as members of a grand freemasonry that stretches across the continents and the ages, universal and rooted in historic tradition.

Yet it is precisely that sense of (connection) which, it seems to me, counts most--namely a sense of membership in a profession where even the novice has a valid place.

Holton went on to say that the value of that self-perception at an early stage is easy to document historically.

- Among the cases I have studied and used are those of Enrico Fermi, who hand-crafted what was essentially a pick-up team of beginning science students into a superb research group, the members of which went on to excellence in their own right.

- Another case is that of Robert Oppenheimer, whose memory also lingers in (Princeton); a brief apprenticeship under Max Born helped turn this deeply troubled man, working in a field entirely unsuitable to his talents, toward the discovery of his brilliance and strength.

- But those (persons) of the more ordinary sort, too, benefit from the explicit assumption that even while they are still undergoing training they are beginning to grow their own wings.

Perhaps it is easier in the sciences to arrange for occasions that allow the idiosyncratic, individual spark to assert itself--to honor and thereby develop the "imaginative and critical temper" of even the novice. But my impression is that it is not sufficiently tried in any field. To select for quality, and even more to attract quality, the message we should put in large letters above the portals of the faculty of arts and sciences should be that we prize even youthful first signs of dedication to the advancement of the state of learning--far, far more than the dutiful ingestion and skillful regurgitation of doctrine.

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Eric Ashby--another perceptive academic--gave us a memorable formulation of the point some 15 years ago when he talked about the attitude of the university teacher who succeeds best with students:

- "I shall now try to define this attitude . . . in a single phrase: to teach in such a way that the pupil learns the principle of dissent. All fruitful innovation in intellectual matters depends on the mastery of this discipline.

- First the pupil must become familiar with orthodoxy; he must absorb and understand what is already know about his subject. But this is only the first step in a full university education, though it is as far as many students ever get.

- The pupil then has to learn how to question orthodoxy, but to do so in a special kind of way . . .

- "It has to be a constructive dissent which fulfills one overriding condition: it must shift the state of opinion about the subject in such a way that other experts in the subject are prepared to concur."

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This notion of scholarship moving to higher levels of revelation is in itself not new or novel.

- When Abelard himself was still a student, he learned the fledgling medieval science of dialectics, with its central belief that spiritual truths are gained through the logic of clearheaded argumentation.

- By Galileo's time the value of affirming the newly discovered was taking equal place with that of confirming establish belief, and so Galileo spoke of the Book of Nature being parallel to that of the Gospels.

- Newton saw the connection at the end of the Opticks: He wrote "And if Natural Philosophy in all its Parts, by pursuing this Method, shall at length be perfected, the Bounds of Moral Philosophy will also be enlarged."

- And Einstein, under the persistent influence of Spinoza, spoke of the connection between knowledge and transcendence in a way that embarrassed his fellow scientists, saying "Whoever has undergone the intense experience of successful advances made in this domain is moved by profound reverence for the rationality, made manifest in existence," through such understanding one attains an "attitude of mind toward the grandeur of reason incarnate in existence," which Einstein termed "religious in the highest sense of the word."

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The matter of integrity in graduate education means protecting it from incursions from without. It also means rebuilding from within.

- We need leaders who will respect the scope and quality of research and scholarship so much that they honor not only the world-class professor but also the fledging student.

- We need leaders who will have their feet on the ground, and be good managers, and yet be able to breathe life into otherwise lifeless forms?

- And we need leaders for graduate education, indeed for all of higher education, who have a sense of the grandeur of the enterprise to the point tht their attitude, as Einstein said, can be called "religious in the highest sense of the word?"

The challenge is immense, but, if we would succeed in quality control of the highest order, we will have served our students well and the future of scholarship will be secure.

STATE LAWMAKERS TURN TO SALES TAX TO FUND SCHOOL REFORMS

Mississippi did it, Arkansas did it, and Tennessee this week is expected to do it: raise state sales taxes to pay for school reforms.

South Carolina Gov. Dick Riley continues to wage an uphill battle in his legislature for a one-cent sales tax hike to fund $200 million in school improvements. Utah and New Mexico legislators recently turned down similar requests from their governors.

In Georgia, Lt. Gov. Zell Miller wants to split revenue from a one-cent sales tax hike between schools and property tax relief, a plan Missouri voters agreed to late in 1982. A Texas citizens' group is pushing a sales tax hike for property tax relief and school aid, and Virginia education groups are backing two senate measures that would give half the revenue from a sales tax increase to schools.

Reforming The Schools

"I can't tell you why the sales tax is the thing. But it is the thing," said John Augenblick, a Denver-based school finance consultant. "That seems to be the popular way for paying for the kinds of [school] improvements we're talking about this year."

The kinds of school improvements state lawmakers are debating are costly. They include longer school days and years, upgraded curriculum requirements, across-the-board salary increases and merit pay for teachers. The first state in several years to tackle serious school reform was Mississippi, where lawmakers late in 1982 enacted $110 million in improvements funded partly through a sales tax increase.

As governors and legislators face footing the bill for school improvements, they turn naturally to sales tax hikes for several reasons, according to tax experts.

First, sales tax increases are perceived by taxpayers as the least repugnant kind of tax hike. According to a recent survey by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 57 percent of taxpayers questioned said sales tax increases would be the best way for their states to raise taxes "substantially."

Part of the popularity of sales taxes is due to a "fiscal illusion," said Steven D. Gold, director of the Intergovernmental Finance Project for the National Conference

(more)

MISSISSIPPI GOVERNOR CALLS FOR EDUCATION TRUST FUND

The taxes Mississippi raised in 1982 to fund comprehensive school reforms should be put in a special trust fund, Gov. Bill Allain has proposed.

Revenue from the half-cent sales tax hike and 1 percent income tax increase approved in the 1982 Education Reform Act now goes into the state's general fund. The tax increases over the next two years are expected to generate $110 million, which Allain says should be earmarked for school reforms and set aside in a special fund.

"The governor has said all along people don't mind paying that tax if they know it's going for education," said Jo Ann Klein, Allain's press secretary. But because the tax revenue goes into the general fund, "there's no guarantee" it will be spent on school reform. The tax increases, which expire in 1986, were approved in a special legislative session late in 1982.

STATE LAWMAKERS TURN TO SALES TAX TO FUND SCHOOL REFORMS (Cont.)

of State Legislatures. When people pay only a few pennies' sales tax per purchase, they don't know how much they're being taxed over a year, according to Gold.

While some view sales taxes as unfairly burdening the poor, others sense an equity in sales taxes since the "rich can't duck them any easier than the poor" can, according to Bill Wilkin, a school finance consultant in Reston, Va. But, Wilkin said, "It's very hard to talk in the abstract about any tax. You have to get down to specifics" to judge a tax's fairness and responsiveness to the economy.

New Mexico Gov. Toney Anaya this year proposed a one-cent sales tax hike to help fund $177 million in school improvements, because of the tax's "simplicity," said Anaya's press secretary, Bill Gold. Anaya, whose request this week was turned down by the state legislature, sought a "penny for education" because "it was the easiest way to get it across and the simplest to put in place."

The Utah legislature last month rejected a bid by Gov. Scott Matheson to raise the state sales tax 1 cent to help fund $150 million in school reforms. Instead, the lawmakers settled on a $72 million education increase and agreed to make permanent a temporary half-cent sales tax increase that was to expire this October.

Success In The South So far, southern states have been most successful in raising the sales tax for school reform.

Eleven months after Mississippi took the plunge, Arkansas raised its sales tax 1 cent to pay for more than $150 million in school improvements. And Tennessee legislators this week are to vote on a 1-cent sales tax increase to pay for education improvements expected to cost more than $1 billion over the next three years.

Mark Musick, state services officer for the Southern Regional Education Board, said southern states traditionally have "overutilized" sales taxes for revenue, just as northeastern states have favored real estate taxes. Also, said Musick, school reforms are big expenses for southern states with $2 billion and $3 billion annual budgets, so small or selective tax increases don't adequately fund improvements.

Sales tax increases might provide a "short-run solution" to immediate needs, said Augenblick, but they don't address long-term questions about the state role in education funding. He is particularly wary of earmarking tax increases for education, instead of channeling revenue into a general fund that helps support schools.

Needs Vary "In education, the needs are going to vary from time to time" with enrollment, salary and inflation trends, Augenblick said. "The needs of education are independent of a particular tax that's dedicated to it."

If needs decrease, people will wonder where all the money of a dedicated tax is being spent, he said. And if needs increase, legislators in states dedicating taxes for schools might think, "It's been taken care of. Don't come back to us for more."

"In general, most fiscal experts who aren't tied to any particular cause frown on earmarking because it reduces budget flexibility," said Steven Gold. "On the other hand, the spear carriers for causes love earmarking. Politically, earmarking is attractive because you can use the pleasure from government spending [on a specific item] to offset the pain of paying the tax."

"I think what's best for education, though not necessarily best for a state, is a [funding] formula with growth built in," Gold said. "It's better to have a multi-year scenario" than to lurch between unknown budget amounts from year to year. —MJB