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THE PURPOSE OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION

Remarks by

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Delivered at the

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as Chancellor of the
University of California, Riverside
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President Saxon, Chancellor Rivera, Distinguished Colleagues ^{at}

It is a very special pleasure to be with you today. The University of California is one of the world's most outstanding institutions. And this campus ~~here~~ at Riverside ^{has} already established a strong and enviable tradition in the liberal arts and in specialized research.

More importantly, I am pleased to share in this occasion when Tomás Rivera assumes officially the leadership of this distinguished campus.

~~Chancellor Rivera~~ ^{He} brings to the assignment a unique combination of

- experience,
- strength,
- and social vision,

and I am convinced that ⁱⁿ the days ahead ^{he} will provide leadership ^{that} which is both imaginative and humane.

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Chancellor Rivera, at this time of special celebration
I ^{would} like to pause for just a moment and talk about a
~~most~~ familiar subject, ^{the} purpose of a college education,
focusing especially on the so-called conflict between the
world of education and the world of work.

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During the past six months or so, I have visited colleges
and universities from coast to coast, And I have discovered
on campus after campus a remarkable similarity in the academic
preferences of students.

At large public institutions and at church-related colleges,
I ^{have} ~~ve~~ been told that

to about two out of every three college students
are now majoring in job related fields--
business, journalism, computer science, and the like--

and about one-third are in the more traditional
field ^s of ^{the} arts and science.

This pattern is doubly significant ^{because} since on many of these
campuses the distribution of the faculty is just reversed--

one-third of the faculty are in career ⁼ related fields
and two-thirds are in science and the arts.

~~I am convinced~~ this mismatch between the distribution of our resources and the educational preferences of students will-- in the 1980's--be a very serious problem. And I suspect that the health of many institutions will be shaped more by the relationship between vocational and liberal education than by enrollment ^{changes} overall.

4 The truth is that education has always been a unique blend of inspiration and vocation.

Q Gordon Leff^{er} in his excellent history of the 13th century universities reports that the institutions of Oxford and Paris were essentially places of training for vocation.

6 There was, he said, not the remotest trace of the notion of the university as a "finishing school." And he said that in the correspondence of that day the main theme was that the students need money.

Several years ago, while on sabbatical in Cambridge, England, I read that marvelous novel by C. P. Snow The Master. As you recall, the book describes in vividly familiar terms the politics involved in selecting a master to head a Cambridge college.

In the epilogue ^{there} is ~~included~~ a brief history of Cambridge University, and Snow tells how clerics in the 12th century settled along the Cam River in central England. He describes how young men come to live with the religious leaders, how they slept on straw, how they suffered poverty, and how they had very little food. And in the end the author posed rhetorically the basic question.

Why did they endure the pain and the indignity of it all?

In response C. P. Snow declared quite simply,

they want jobs--

jobs in the government,

jobs in the law,

jobs in the ministry.

The students came to Cambridge because they wanted jobs!

~~I suggest that~~ the purposes of a college education have always been deeply rooted in vocation. ~~And~~ yet, in recent years, ^{at} the fact has somehow been distorted or concealed.

Time and time again we have suggested to our students that they must choose between vocational and liberal education.

And frequently we have determined through the curriculum we offer what is legitimate and illegitimate for our students. *no 9* →

- no 9 0 It's all right, ^{is} some say, to be a doctor, but it's less alright to be a nurse.
- 10 It's all right to be an engineer, but a computer programmer is off limits.
- 11 Teaching college is just great, but teaching elementary school is something else again.
- 12 To dig the ruins of the past is a respectable objective, but to work with ruined lives in an urban jungle-- a much more demanding task--is not so worthy.
- 13 To read what has been written in the past is fine, but to aspire to write about the present-- as a journalist perhaps--is not quite legitimate at many arts and science colleges.

9 I am ~~am~~ convinced that, in the days ahead, arbitrary distinctions such as these must increasingly be challenged.

14 We must candidly acknowledge that life for all of us is a unique blend of work and inspiration

This point need not be restated. The discussion has moved somewhat beyond it at this point so it reads like a digression. It will be missed.

fact that new vocations emerge--vocations which are just as we've honored in the past. *→*

duce into the curriculum ^{that} which reflect these new

students for productive work has always

location.

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II

~~But~~ this brings me to a second major theme.

During the ~~decade of the~~ 1980's

o competition for students will become exceedingly intense.

o And in this "consumer driven climate" many campuses may become "supermarkets for credentials,"

o A place where students will, after four years or so, check out at commencement time with no questions asked.

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(9) In this rush to offer up new programs, we must remember that the university, in addition to serving the needs of individual students, has some very special purpose^s of its own.

The University--in addition to preparing students for productive work must also put vocation in perspective and introduce each student to our heritage,

o in language,

o in literature, and

o in science and the arts. →

My concern about the "breadth" of a college education was deepened several years ago when I received the student newspaper from a "distinguished" West Coast institution.

The faculty, according to the banner headline, had just decided to reintroduce a required course in Western Civilization as I recall, and the students clearly were upset.

In a front page editorial ~~the students~~ said that:

"This new report proposes to remove from students the 'right' to choose for themselves. This is not to deny that courses in Western Civilization are 'valuable' but to 'require' students to take a course carries a strong illiberal connotation. It imposes a 'uniform standard' on 'non-uniform' people."

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Frankly, I was startled by that statement.

It struck me as a staggering comment on our time that this student, after 15 years of formal education,

rejected the idea of "relationships" and failed to understand that a search for our common heritage is in no way to be confused with something he called "uniformity."

9 Many years ago Josiah Royce observed that
 we have become
 more knowing
 more clever
 and more skeptical
 but seemingly
 we do not become
 more profound
 or more reverent.

And this observation still applies today.

Most students come to college with ~~some~~ fundamental questions about the relationship among the disciplines. And yet ~~it~~ rarely in the curriculum are these transcendent issues ~~not~~ ^{are rarely met} head on.

so as the undergraduate college increasingly is captured by the professional schools,
 40 and as ~~the~~ arts and science majors become increasingly more professional than liberal.

The ^{larger} longer more fundamental issues of our time are confronted

o not in the curriculum,
 o or the classroom,
 o but in the Rathskeller and in the college dorm.

9 It was Tolstoy who, as a young man, troubled himself with such questions as

Inclust

- o "Why live at all?"
- o "What is the cause of my existence and of everyone else's?"
- o "What should be the plan of my life?"
- o "What is death; how can I transcend it?"

Well, these may be heavy questions for the college campus.

And ^{But} yet we still must ask: How can students develop the art of wise decisionmaking ^{just} which, as Walter Lippmann said, "cuts across all specialities."

9 The point is clear enough.

In addition to the technical competence in

- business,
- and law,
- and medicine,
- and horticulture,
- and computer science,
- and journalism,
- and environmental science --
- and the list goes on and on --

workers also must gain perspective and understanding of their own heritage.

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And if these educational values are not a part of liberal education, I'm ^{am} convinced our students_m—regardless of vocation_m—will live out their lives in quiet desperation.

III

9 There is a second characteristic of the liberal tradition ^{that} which is closely related to vocation.

To be effective workers, students must also understand that people are important.

o This statement--people are important-- is so simple it borders on the sentimental.

o Yet in our busy world of increased emphasis on technology, of pressures, and problems on every side,

o one of our most difficult tasks still remains that of dealing humanely with each other.

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9 Preoccupied by our academic specialties, we "classify" ourselves as economists and psychologists and deans and mathematicians and administrators and chancellors and students and "the office staff."

And in the process we conceal far more than we reveal.

In underscoring the humanistic side of education, I do not suggest that

o we add seminars on interpersonal relationships on campus,

o nor do I suggest that the classroom become not academic but therapeutic. →

^{Instead,}
 Rather I suggest that faculty and administrators ^{should}
 be honest and open in their relationship with students,
 and that excellence in teaching ^{should} be rewarded.

This repetition seems unnecessary in written version

most essential virtues of a liberal
 and not through the curriculum we
 relationships on campus.

~~000~~

children were playing endlessly
 cles. The volume was so loud; ^{that} the

Finally, in desperation, I asked to
 read the lyrics on the jacket, and I discovered it was the
 story of Eleanor Rigby.

who waited at the window
 wearing the mask
 she keeps in a jar by the door.

I agreed that the ballad was a comment for our time.

~~000~~

Several weeks ago, I met with the executives of one of the
 nation's largest corporations. During that entire session,
 I was struck by the fact that these officials ^{did not spend} spent most of
 the time talking

not about profits or technology or inflation.

They spent the morning talking about people, and
 how to improve relationships among their personnel.

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The point is this: ~~To~~ be vocationally well prepared, students must understand that institutions are comprised of people and that the social impact of an organization is as crucial as its economic gains.

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¶ One final point:

- ⊙ It is not enough merely to see the world wholly and sensitively.
- ⊙ It is not enough simply to respect our fellow man.

If students are vocationally well prepared they also must have intellectual and moral anchor points consistently to guide our lives.

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Whenever a discussion turns to values, a strange embarrassment seems to overtake us all. We have come to accept the view that "values" are off limits.

- ⊙ Somehow we have deluded ourselves into believing that we can be responsible people without ever taking sides, without expressing firm convictions about fundamental issues.

Nothing could be more contrary to the liberal arts tradition-- or the meaning of an education which is by definition "value laden". And standards of excellence are essential.

4 In his penetrating book Faith and Learning, Alexander Miller commented on this curious timidity when he wrote:

o "A decent tentativeness is a wholesome expression of scholarly humility. We seem to have a sort of dogmatic tentativeness which suggests that in matters of moral judgment, at least it is intellectually indecent to make up your minds."

~~o-o-o~~

4 But I believe we are beginning to understand that education divorced from values is an illusion.

o We now realize, as George Steiner has reminded us, that a man who is "intellectually advanced" can at the same time be morally bankrupt.

o We now know that such a man can listen to Bach and Schubert at sundown, he can read Goethe in the evening, and the next day go to his daily work at the concentration camp to gas his fellowmen.

o What grows up inside literate civilization, Steiner asks, that seems to prepare it for the release of barbarism?

9 These may sound like old fashioned--even sentimental goals.

And yet I believe that at this time of great confusion,
~~these~~ ^{they} are precisely the virtues which must vigorously
reaffirmed.

Dr. Lewis Thomas, ^{author} of that marvelous book Lives of a Cell--
said recently that these are not the best of times for the
human mind.

Indist

All sorts of things seem to be turning out wrong,
and the century seems to be slipping through
our fingers here at the end, with almost all
promises unfilled.

I cannot begin to guess (he said)
at all the causes of our cultural sadness,
not even the most important ones,
but I can think of one thing that is wrong
with us and eats away at us:
we do not know enough about ourselves.

We are ignorant about how we work,
about where we fit in,
and most of all about the enormous,
imponderable system of life in which
we are embedded as working parts. . .

While Dr. Thomas may overstate the case a bit, I am
convinced his conclusions cannot be ignored.

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9 The simple truth is that with all of our progress and inventions, we are not fully satisfied.

We somehow want more wholeness in our lives, and this will be accomplished as we understand the enormous imponderable system of life in which we are embedded as working parts.

In the end we must develop vocational programs which also emphasize

- the breadth of knowledge
- the centrality of the individual
- and the ethical framework within which
- each profession must carry on its work.

And this, it seems to me, is the central purpose of a liberal education.

9 Chancellor Rivera, I congratulate you for the opportunity to lead, and I congratulate the university for selecting you to lead.