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TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE UNITED STATES

Remarks by  
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## INTRODUCTION

First, I wish to thank you for inviting me to Chile to participate in this important seminar on higher education. It's a special joy to be with you today.

While higher education systems may vary greatly from one country to another, all academics share a common intellect quest, one that transcends the cultural and structural differences of their institutions.

Therefore, at the opening of this seminar, I wish to focus on several problems confronting American higher education today, with the hope that our experience may be of value to colleagues here in Chile.

## BACKWARD GLANCE

First, let me take a backward glance.

Since World War II, higher education in the United States can be sliced up, rather arbitrarily, into four "distinct" periods like a great salami.

There was the explosive decade of the 1950s, a time when we moved almost overnight from elite to mass higher education, to use Martin Trow's helpful formulation. During this decade, we started colleges in the U.S. at the rate of one a week, and the biggest problems administration then confronted were how to recruit enough faculty for the classrooms, and how to handle the avalanche of students.

Then came the 1960s--the decade when all the dream castles came crashing down. We had riots on the campus and the agenda of higher education quickly shifted from expansion to survival.

The 1970s was a decade of educational depression. We faced fiscal cutbacks, and because of declining birth rates, there were dire predictions that enrollment would go down--and that many colleges would close.

This brings me to the 1980s--a time when American higher education is neither euphoric nor depressed. Today enrollments

for most colleges have been holding steady. Fiscal support has ranged from marginal to good. And in some states, such as California, there has been a new "burst of energy" in higher education. The University of California, for example, is now talking of building three new institutions.

At the same time, there are some fundamental tensions just below the surface. I shall focus my remarks primarily on undergraduate education, since post-graduate studies will be discussed at a session later on.

## I. EXCELLENCE

The first problem we confront in the United States is how to protect the quality of the system. Can we have excellence in American higher education, while also serving all the students who apply?

After World War II about 30 percent of all high school graduates in the United States went on to college. Today that number has grown to 57 percent and it keeps creeping up.

Several years ago we surveyed 1000 parents who had kids in high school. We found that 95 percent of them hoped their child would go on to college sometime. College has, in fact, become the "civil religion" in the United States and there is no way to turn this aspiration off.

In response to this demand, we have built a tiered system of 3000 colleges and universities--institutions that range from the 60 or so world ranked universities--to the 1200 two-year community and technical institutions.

To assure access to this system, we established, at the federal level, a program of grants and loans so poor students would have money to pay for the tuition.

And to assure quality, we have a system of accreditation in which colleges and universities "police" themselves. If a college is not accredited, the degree a student gets from that institution is considered worthless.

Viewed from one perspective, these growth trends should make us feel very good. After all, all the lines keep going up. And we Americans like to believe that "bigger surely must mean better!"

But there is a darker side to all of this. The "school system" in the United States is in deep crisis. While 75 percent of all young people complete secondary education, only about 20 percent of those who do graduate from high school are academically well-prepared for college--or even for the workplace.

Several years ago we surveyed over 5,000 faculty in the U.S. and found that the vast majority do not feel their students are academically well-prepared for college. We also found that most college professors felt they spent too much time teaching undergraduates what they should have learned in school.

Thus, the good news is that we have built one of the largest education systems in the world--one that provides a place for almost everyone--and public confidence remains high. The bad news is that U.S. higher education is built on a weak foundation. We have a growing gap between public policy in support of mass higher education and what the system actually can

deliver in terms of quality for all. Unless our schools academically improve, the whole system--except for the most prestigious institutions--surely will decline.

## CAREERISM

This brings me to problem number two which has to do not with students, but with goals.

How can we in the United States strike a balance between the career interests of the students and the importance of the liberal arts?

Today most U.S. colleges and universities speak lovingly of liberal education. The most prestigious departments are still science, history, literature, and the like. Colleges and universities still claim that their goals are to help students become well informed, think critically, appreciate the arts, and develop high moral values.

Further, faculty are enthusiastic about liberal education too. Ninety percent of the faculty we surveyed said that critical thinking and knowledge in the arts and sciences are two of the most essential goals of education. They also said that preparing students for careers was at the bottom. But again, this is only half the story.

While faculty and administrators support "liberal education," the students are committed to careers. Several years ago at the Carnegie Foundation we asked 1,000 high school students why they wanted to go to college. Ninety-five percent said to get a

better job. Today one out of every four degrees awarded in the United States is in business. Over the past twenty years, majors in the arts and sciences have been going down, and the disciplines are becoming more fragmented.

Thus, the second problem American higher education now confronts has to do with the growing gap between students and faculty regarding goals. In the days ahead, will the curriculum be linked increasingly to economic considerations? And, if so, how will the civic and moral purposes of education be preserved? Above all, how can we better blend the liberal and the practical arts and help students put their careers in historical, social, and ethical perspective? These are the key questions American academics now confront.

## III. FACULTY

This brings me to problem number three which relates to the role of the professorate and to tensions between teaching and research.

American higher education is caught in the crossfire of two great traditions. On the one hand, there is the tradition of the colonial college with its emphasis on the student and on teaching.

On the other hand, there is the European university tradition with its emphasis not on the student, but on the professorate--not on teaching, but research.

While our elite colleges and universities give faculty time to do research, the vast majority of U.S. institutions expect faculty to publish while also carrying a big teaching load. This leaves most professors frustrated.

The truth is that--according to our data--the majority of professors would rather teach than do research. And yet they also say that--in their department--publication matters most. What we urgently need in the United States today is a redefinition of the role of the professorate, one that reflects more accurately the great diversity in the institutions that we have.

At the Carnegie Foundation we are now talking about defining scholarship more broadly. We're talking, for example, about the scholarship of discovering new knowledge, the scholarship of integrating knowledge, the scholarship of applying knowledge, and the scholarship of transmitting knowledge, which includes teaching future scholars in the classroom.

Regardless of the formulation, it's becoming clear that the role of the professorate in U.S. universities must be redefined if we are to sustain with vitality our diverse system of higher education.

## IV. GOVERNANCE

Now I'd like to focus on problem number four, which has to do with the governance of higher education.

About half of all colleges and universities in the United States are tax supported and must answer fiscally to the state. The rest are private. But even these so-called independent institutions receive a lot of government support in the form of research grants or student aid--or both.

The good news is that historically U.S. universities have had little outside interference, although the pressure is always there. Just this year, for example, the Governor of New York threatened to take over the "budget decisions" at the State University of New York at a time when the state was in deep financial crisis.

Still, the biggest governance problems we've had throughout the years have been more internal than external. In the 1960s, for example, both students and faculty fought hard to get more control. But today this push for participation has been replaced by a loss of confidence in the administration and by a passivity about concerns that is even more disturbing. Students have never been seriously involved in the management of our institutions and today the faculty don't seem to care. Their loyalty is to their profession, not to the institution.

When we surveyed 5,000 faculty several years ago we discovered that most American professors do NOT feel loyalty to their institution, most do NOT participate in campus-wide decision-making, and most do NOT respect the administrators who run their institutions. In fact, they think they're autocratic.

I know a "few" university presidents who are--in fact--capricious and autocratic. But most are rather decent fellows who are trying to direct a system that has become increasingly complex and since the decision-making process is so confused, the conclusion of most faculty is that it's autocratic.

Again, there is, in the United States today, an urgent need to rebuild faculty confidence in the governance of higher education. And if we continue with the great confusion and great skepticism we have today, I'm afraid that more outside interference will occur and that--in time--the very integrity of the university will be lost.

## V. LIFELONG LEARNING

This brings me to one final problem, and it relates to lifelong education.

America is an aging nation. And one of the most dramatic trends in the U.S. today is the move toward the education of adults. Most U.S. colleges and universities are scrambling to serve these older students with weekend and evening classes, with credit by correspondence or by teaching courses at military bases and at the work site too. Still others are starting their own college for adults.

When I was Chancellor of the State University of New York, I started Empire State College, a non-campus institution in which students can do independent study with a mentor. And this adult college has been a spectacular success.

But, again, there is a dark cloud on the horizon. For the first time, U.S. higher education is facing outside competition. Proprietary schools are offering programs in everything from Computers to Cosmetology. But the biggest competition is coming from industry and business. Every year U.S. corporations spend at least 60 billion dollars on education and training. And some are even starting their own colleges and offering accredited degrees.

Many of the new corporate colleges are using technology to teach the students. For example, National Technology University--based in Colorado--beams lectures by satellite, which incidentally are taught by MIT professors--to locations all across the country where thousands of students are completing a Masters of Arts degree.

Thus, with an aging population we face several very fundamental questions: Can the traditional college or university offer lifelong learning to adults while still preserving an integrity of its own? Or will the corporate competition force many of our institutions to become places where information is exchanged and where credentials are awarded but where, once again, quality is lost?

## CONCLUSION

Here then is my conclusion.

Viewed from one perspective, the American system of higher education is working pretty well. But we have problems which I suggested are universal.

First, can we have mass higher education and excellence as well?

Second, can we serve the career interests of students and also preserve the liberal arts?

Third, can we strike a balance between teaching and research?

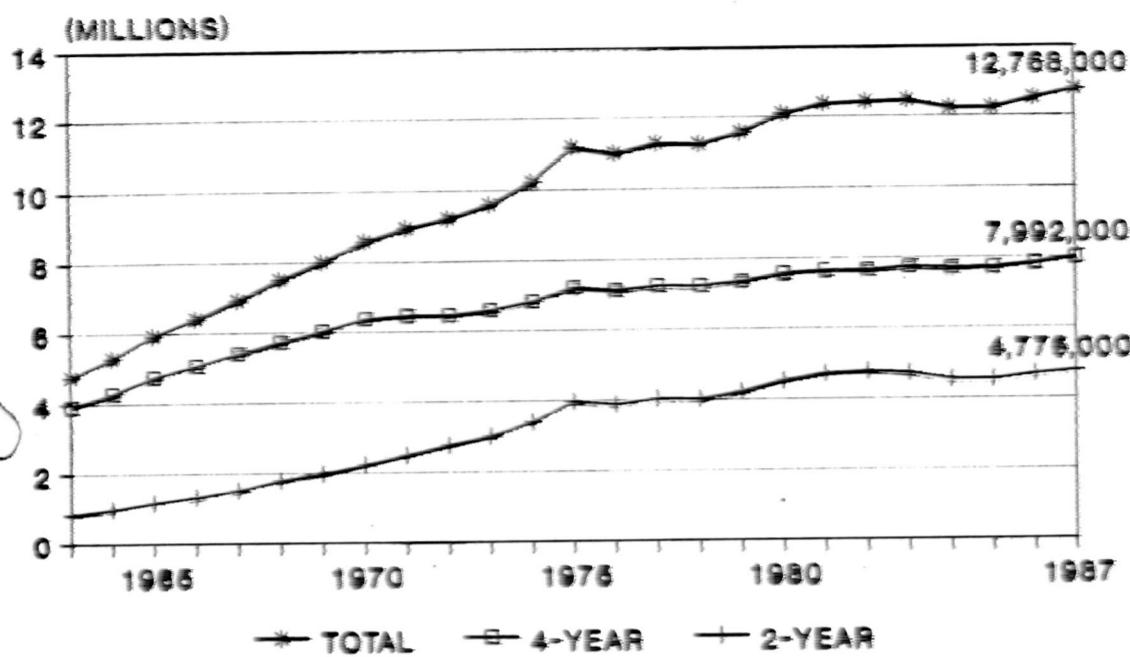
Fourth, can we develop in the country a historical system of self governance?

And finally, can we keep lifelong learning within the university and avoid a system of fraudulent degrees?

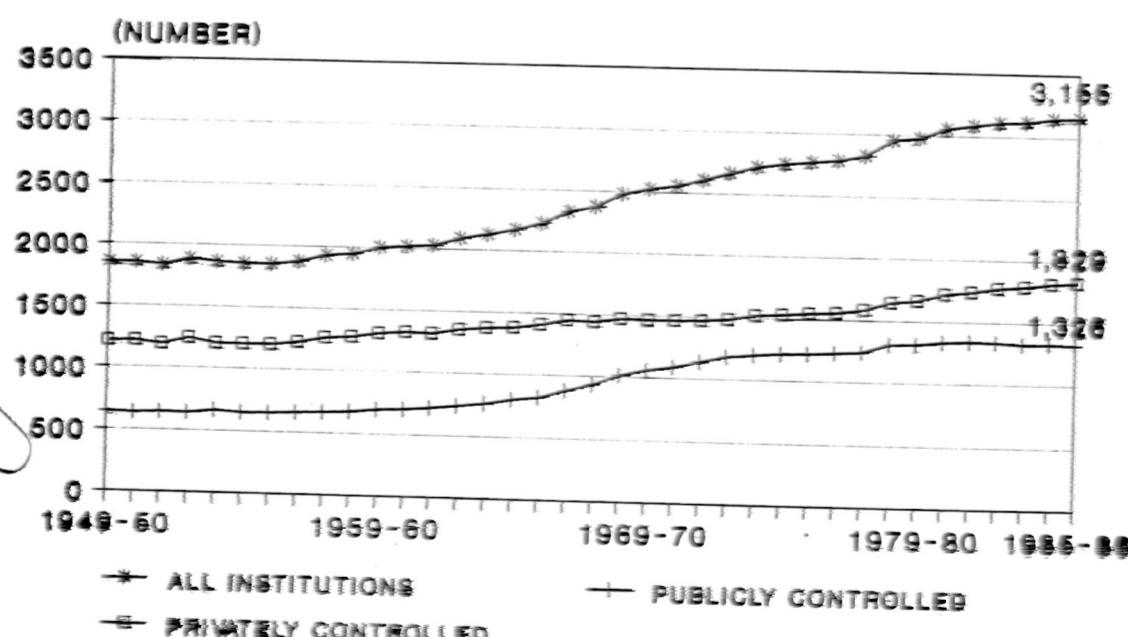
These are problems higher education leaders in the country must confront as we face the year 2000 and beyond.

Again, to our Chilean hosts I thank you very much for inviting us to this summit on higher education and I look forward eagerly to our conversations during the remainder of the week.

**GROWTH IN ENROLLMENT**  
TOTAL ENROLLMENT IN 4-YEAR AND 2-YEAR  
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION



**GROWTH IN NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS**  
NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION BY CONTROL



(3)

TABLE3, 07/05/89, ELB/dmc, SP

NUMBERS OF AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION BY TYPE AND CONTROL: 1987

<u>Type of Institution</u>	1987 <u>Total</u>	1987 <u>Public</u>	1987 <u>Private</u>
Total	3,389	1,548	1,841
Research Universities	103	71	32
Doctorate-Granting Universities	110	63	47
Comprehensive Universities and Colleges	596	331	265
Liberal Arts Colleges	571	32	539
Two-Year Institutions	1,367	985	382
Specialized Institutions	642	66	576

(4)

TABLE4, 07/05/89, ELB/dmc, SP

FACULTY ATTITUDES TOWARD ACADEMIC PREPARATION  
AND STUDENT QUALITY  
(Percent Agreeing)

	<u>1976</u>	<u>1984</u>
The academic ability of undergraduates in my department is fair or poor.	48	59
This institution spends too much time and money teaching students what they should have learned in high school.	NA	68
Teaching would be a lot easier here if students were better prepared.	NA	84
Academic standards for undergraduate admissions should be higher.	46	63

TABLES, 07/05/89, ELB/dmc, SP

FACULTY VIEWS ON THE PREPARATION OF UNDERGRADUATES

COLLEGE STUDENTS ARE UNDERPREPARED  
IN BASIC SKILLS

AGREE	75%
NEUTRAL	10%
DISAGREE	15%

## FACULTY VIEWS ON THE PREPARATION OF UNDERGRADUATES

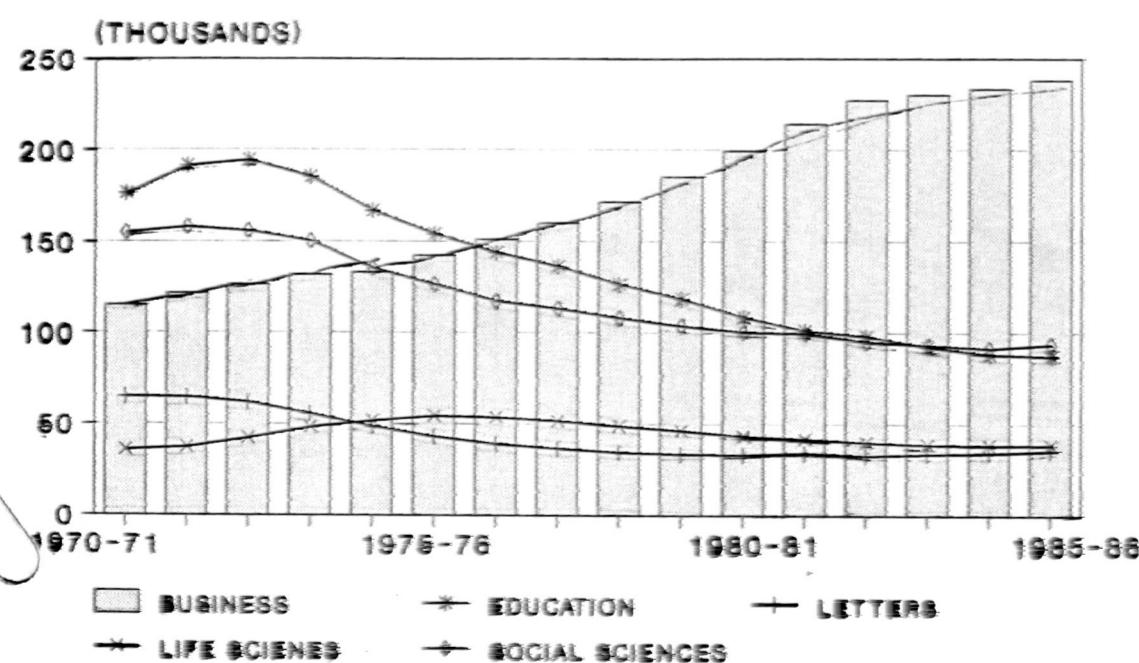
COLLEGE STUDENTS ARE UNDERPREPARED  
IN BASIC SKILLS

AGREE                    75 %  
NEUTRAL                10 %  
DISAGREE               15 %

5

Source: 1989 National Survey of Faculty

## BACHELOR'S DEGREES CONFERRED IN SELECTED DISCIPLINES



6

Source: U.S. Department of Education

## **FACULTY VIEWS ON PRIMARY GOALS OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION**

	<u>IMPORTANT</u>	<u>UNIMPORTANT</u>
ENHANCE CREATIVE THINKING	97.3 %	2.7 %
PROVIDE BASIC UNDERSTANDING IN MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE	96.6	3.4
PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORY— AND SOCIAL STUDIES	94.6	5.4
PROVIDE APPRECIATION OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS	91.5	8.6
SHAPE STUDENTS' VALUES	87.0	13.0
PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE OF ONE SUBJECT IN DEPTH	79.0	21.0
PREPARE STUDENTS FOR A CAREER	76.6	23.4

Source: 1989 National Survey of Faculty

TABLE8, 07/05/89, ELB/dmc, SP

FACULTY ATTITUDES TOWARD TEACHING AND RESEARCH  
(Percent Agreeing)

	All Institutions		1984: By Type of Institution			
	1976	1984	Research	Doctorate	Comprehensive	Liberal Arts
My interests lie toward teaching as opposed to research.	70	63	39	63	75	85
Teaching effectiveness not publications should be the primary criterion for promotion.	70	58	34	53	72	83
In my department, it is very difficult to achieve tenure without publishing.	54	69	92	85	54	35

(9)

TABLE9, 07/05/89, ELB/dmc, SP

FACULTY RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION RECORD  
(Percent Agreeing)

	<u>Research</u>	<u>Doctorate</u>	<u>Compre- hensive</u>	<u>Liberal Arts</u>	<u>2-Year</u>
I have never published or edited a book or monograph.	48	51	59	67	73
I have never published in a professional journal.	11	18	29	38	65
I am not now engaged in scholarly research.	12	20	37	49	75

TABLE10, 07/05/89, ELB/dmc, SP

FACULTY ATTITUDES TOWARD THE COLLEGE AS COMMUNITY  
(Percent Agreeing)

	<u>All Institutions</u>	<u>Research</u>	<u>Doctorate</u>	<u>Comprehensive</u>	<u>Liberal Arts</u>
My department is autocratic.	30	38	31	29	19
This institution is autocratic.	67	66	68	72	49
the administration here is fair or poor.	62	62	68	72	55

TABLE11, 07/05/89, ELB/dmc, SP

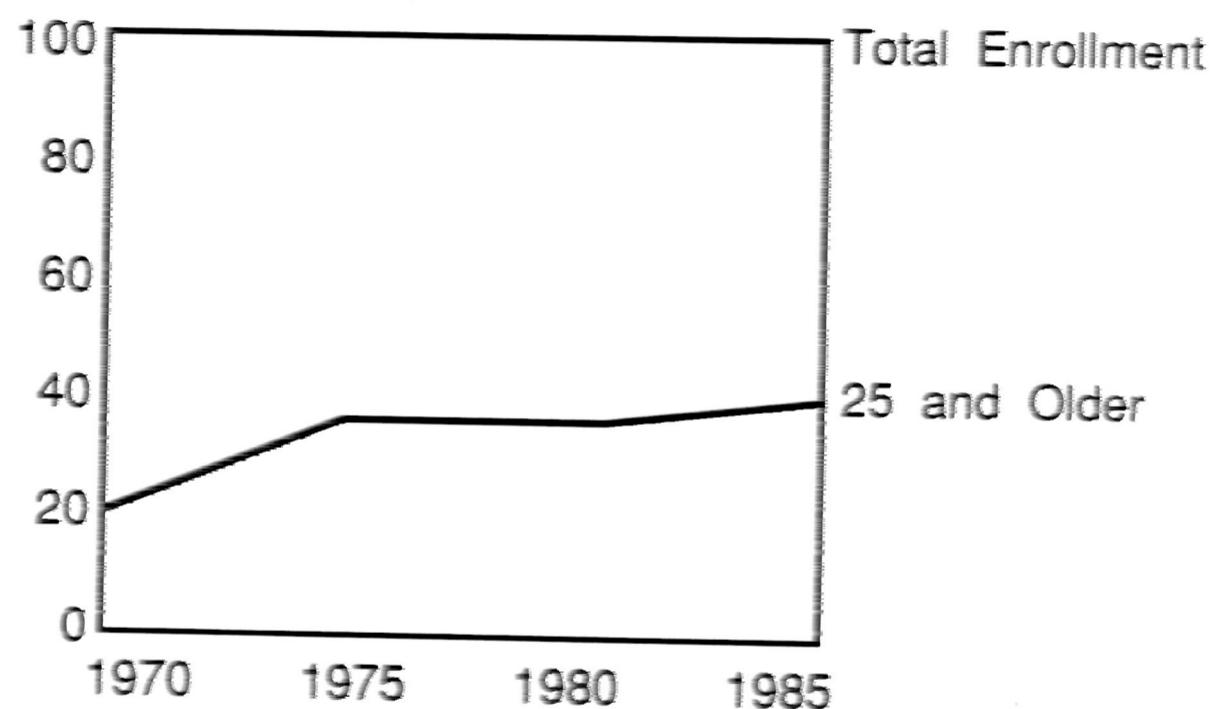
FACULTY ATTITUDES TOWARD THE COLLEGE AS COMMUNITY  
(Percent Agreeing)

	<u>All Institutions</u>	<u>Research</u>	<u>Doctorate</u>	<u>Comprehensive</u>	<u>Liberal Arts</u>
My college is very important to me.	26	21	22	28	44
My department is very important to me.	40	38	37	43	40
My academic discipline is very important to me.	76	79	71	78	70

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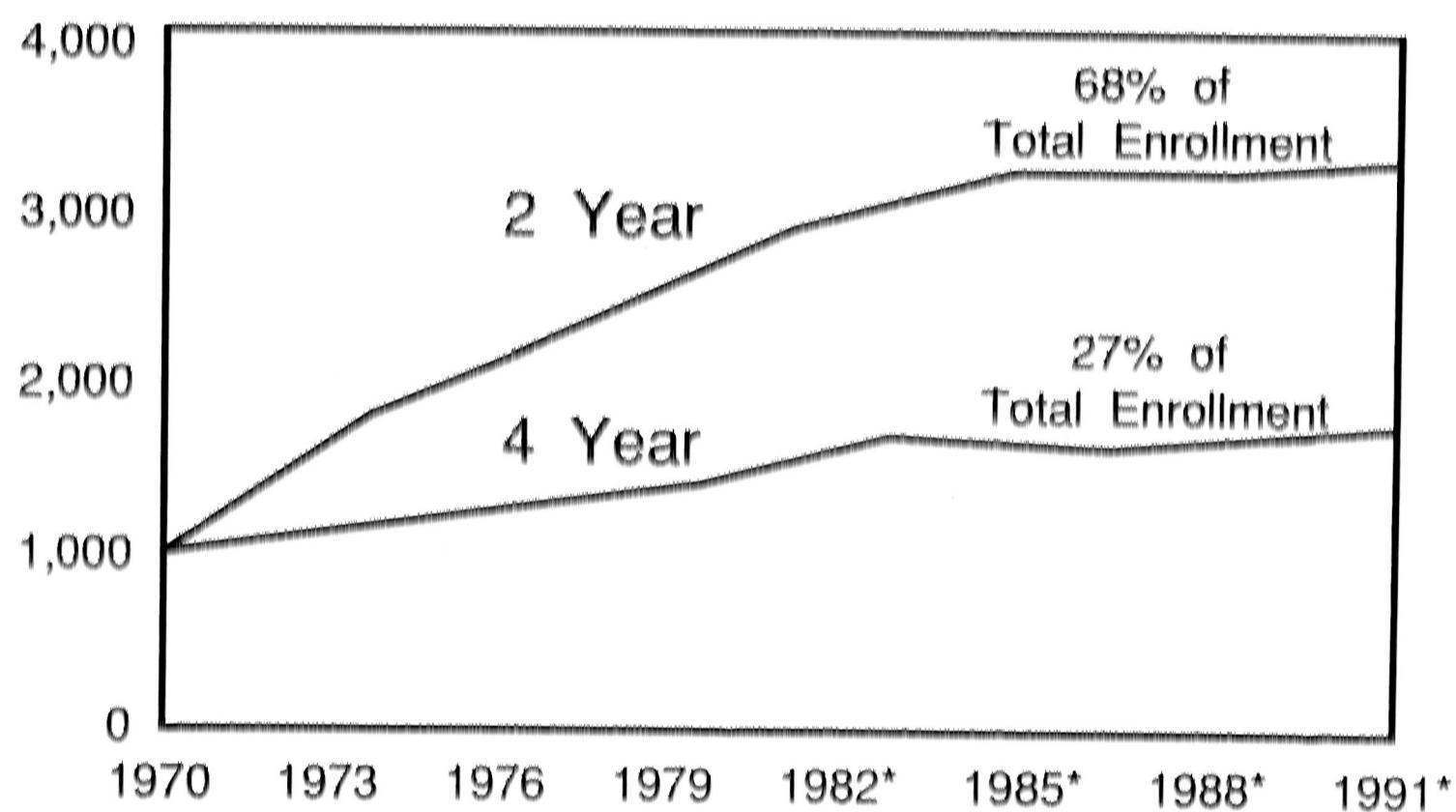
### **Enrollment in Institutions of Higher Education of Students 25 Years Old and Over**

Percent



**PART-TIME STUDENTS AT  
2- AND 4- YEAR COLLEGES  
1970 - 1991**

Part-Time Enrollment  
(In Thousands)



\*Estimated

TABLE14, 07/05/89, ELB/dmc, SP

CORPORATE COLLEGES

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DEGREES AWARDED</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DEGREES AWARDED</u>
American Institute of Banking at Boston	A.A.S.	MGH Institute of Health Procedures	M.S.
Arthur D. Little Management Education Institution	M.S.	McDonald's Management Institute (Hamburger University)	A.A.S.
Boston Architectural Center School of Architecture	B.S.	National Technological University	M.S.
DeVry Institute of Technology	B.A. A.A.S.	Northrop University	B.S. M.S.
G.M.I. Engineering and Management Institute	B.S.	Rand Graduate Institute	Ph.D
Industrial Management Institute	A.A.S.	The College of Insurance	M.B.A. B.B.A.
Institute of Management Competency	M.S.	Wang Institute of Graduate Studies	M.S.
Institute of Textile Technology	M.S. Ph.D	Watterson College	A.A.S.