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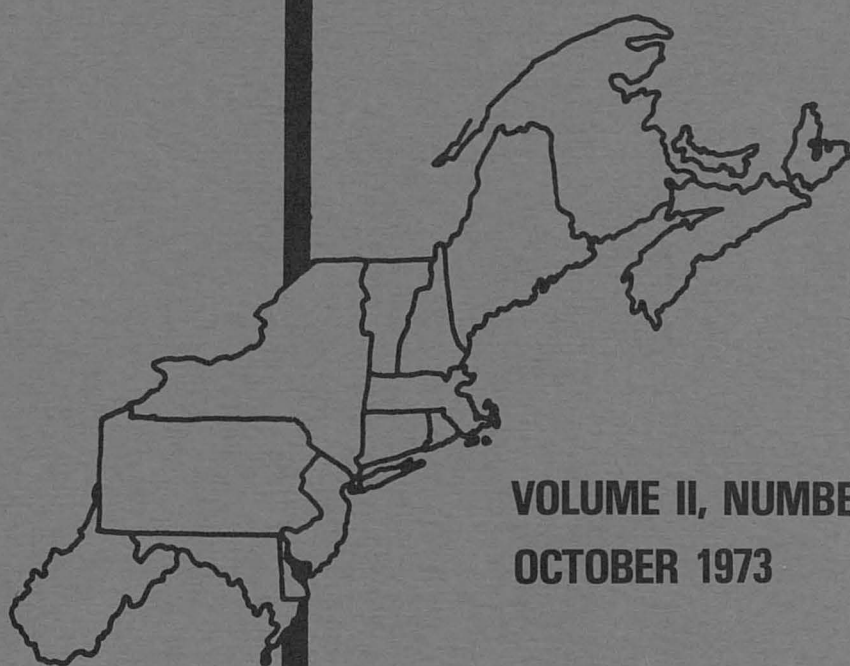
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INSTITUTIONAL RESTRUCTURING IN RESPONSE TO A CHANGING MISSION

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps we should begin this session by clarifying the title and then take a closer review of the situation which developed at West Virginia University. First, when we discuss institutional restructuring it is assumed that we are restricting our field of inquiry to the College of Agriculture, including Cooperative Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station. Second, when we speak of changing missions it is assumed that we are referring to the missions of the College of Agriculture, including Cooperative Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station. Considerable change in structure and in mission has occurred throughout our University but those which are not directly related to agriculture are omitted.

Within this context we have attempted three major structural changes over the past ten years; one in Cooperative Extension and two in the College of Agriculture. Two of the three were effected; one in Cooperative Extension and one in the College. The first attempt in the College was aborted before any changes were made.

Structural Changes---Extension

In 1961 President John F. Kennedy nominated Elvis J. Stahr, then president of West Virginia University, to be Secretary of the Army. Dr. Stahr accepted the invitation and approximately one year after his departure Dr. Paul A. Miller was appointed president of the University. Dr. Miller was a native son of the mountain state and earlier in his career had been employed in the Cooperative Extension Service.

Shortly after Dr. Miller's appointment he and Dr. E. J. Nesius initiated a major structural change in the Cooperative Extension Service by creating the West Virginia Center for Appalachian Studies and Development. At the risk of oversimplification I will simply note that all off-campus programs oriented toward public service were brought together under one administrative structure. This University wide unit was assigned responsibility for coordinating those programs and activities which directly bind the University with citizens of the State.

The Appalachian Center began official operations May 1, 1963, and included the following preexisting units of the University; Cooperative Extension Service, University Extension and Labor Education Service, Mining and Industrial Extension Service, Parkersburg Branch of West Virginia University, Office of International Programs, Kanawha Valley Graduate Center, Office of Research and Development and Continuing Legal Education. Under the new structure the state was organizationally divided into six Area Development Centers, each with an Area Director. County Extension Agricultural Agents, County Extension Home Demonstration Agents and County Extension 4-H Agents were entitled University Extension Agents at a later date.

Structural Changes---College of Agriculture

When Dr. Nesius became Vice President of the Appalachian Center in 1963, the Deanship in the College of Agriculture became vacant and in May, 1964, Dr. R. S. Dunbar, Jr., was appointed Dean. Shortly thereafter, a planning committee was organized to consider the organizational structure of the College. After many meetings, much discussion and review the planning committee submitted a proposal for restructuring in the College. In addition to internal changes, the plan called for the combining of Agriculture, Forestry, State Geological Survey, Water Research Institute, Office of Research and Development, Geology, School of Mines, Hydrology, Climatology, Ecology and Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service into one college entitled, "The College of Agriculture, Forestry and Resource Management." Within the proposed new college there would be three Divisions: The Division of Resource Management, The Division of Forestry, and the Division of Agriculture. Each Division would have a Director to coordinate programs and there would be departments under each of the Divisions. The proposed structural arrangement was modified ever so slightly by Dean Dunbar and transmitted to the President for his consideration. After several months of review President Miller met with the College Faculty and at the end of that meeting he vetoed the proposed structure.

Throughout the University considerable interest had been generated concerning the proposed new college and this interest was fever pitch among those individuals who would have become faculty members in the new college. I met a certain professor of geology during this period of time and he became incoherent when I asked his judgment about the proposed new college.

At the special meeting which was called to hear President Miller's response to the document, he was questioned about the possibility of merging economics and agricultural economics. He responded rather meekly, and without much rational thought, that in his view of the future, the College would continue to need agricultural economists. Therefore, he would not seriously entertain a proposal to merge the two departments.

After this abortive attempt, a period of approximately two years passed before serious thought was given to another planning effort. In 1968 the College Executive Committee began a series of discussions to assess the desirability of structural reorganization. Throughout 1968 the Executive Committee reviewed reports on reorganization from other institutions, solicited advice and counsel from interested faculty members, held hearings, etc. Finally, a report was prepared and presented to the entire college faculty. After much discussion, the report was returned to the Executive Committee for modifications. Subsequently, another special meeting of the faculty was called to evaluate the amended document. Again, considerable heat was generated among faculty members but after a minor amendment or two, the proposal was adopted; 86 percent for, 14 percent against. Within a few weeks the report, with Dean Dunbar's letter of transmittal, were forwarded to President Harlow for his consideration.

After noting that individual faculty members in a College, nor Executive Committees representing the entire faculty, could not determine tenure and appointment of administrators, the President approved the proposed reorganization with one exception. Departments would no longer exist as administrative units but faculty members in a professional subject matter area could organize in groups called Committees. Chairmen of such Committees would not be administrators nor have administrative duties. They could, however, bear witness to faculty sentiment in each particular subject matter area; in addition, they could provide advice and counsel to Division Directors, especially on matters relating to instruction.

Basically the new College structure was formed by amalgamating different professional specialties into Divisions. Historically, Departments were formed around specific subject matter areas and in three of the four Divisions a modified form of subject matter groupings prevailed. The Plant Sciences Division contained faculty members from the former Departments of Horticulture, Agronomy, Plant Pathology and Microbiology. The Division was organized around plants because that appeared to be a common trait that was found in each of the old departments. The Animal and Veterinary Sciences Division was made up of faculty members who were formerly in the Department of Animal Industries and Veterinary Science. Animals served as the cohesive element among these professional specialties. The Forestry Division was not changed as a result of the restructuring since it had already been a Division. The Division of Resource Management was formed by combining the former Departments of Agricultural Economics, Agricultural Education and Agricultural Engineering. In addition, faculty members in Landscape Architecture were transferred to the Division from the former Department of Horticulture.

In its barest form these are the major structural changes that have occurred, or aborted, in Cooperative Extension, the College of Agriculture and the Agricultural Experiment Station over the past 10 years. A few minor changes have been made in the Division structure of the Appalachian

Center but these groupings and regroupings have been relatively insignificant when compared to the original creation of the Appalachian Center.

Why The Structural Changes Were Made

At this point we should stand back and reflect upon factors which influenced these major structural changes. Describing what happened is much easier and considerably more factual than the isolation of real factors influencing change. This is especially true when one is not a direct participant in the change or privy to formal and informal communications among those who were instrumental in designing and guiding the processes of change.

I suppose that each of us would like to believe that something more noble than personal ambition or vindictiveness guided those who effected the changes. Yet we are reminded periodically that the finer instincts of man are occasionally sidetracked. Years ago Professor Huitt noted that structural changes are not neutral; political power, economic power or prestige are redistributed. Furthermore, it is not easy to distinguish between personal ambition and concern for the welfare of faculty or the tenure of an old and ailing department.

The structural change in Agricultural Extension was imposed from the top down and from all available evidence Dr. Paul A. Miller was the responsible change agent. He was influenced by perceptions of problems confronting the state and Extension's seeming inability to respond to non-agricultural concerns. Here was a state whose agricultural base at that time was characterized by a rapid decline in the number of farms, great reduction in the amount of land in farms, lands reverting from pasture and crops to forest at a rate of just over one percent per year, a relatively poor land resource base for mechanized agriculture and a stable or declining economic base (income and employment) generated from agriculture. At the same time the State was suffering from a multitude of social problems which were largely non-agricultural in nature. Our per capita income was among the lowest of all states, by almost any measure we ranked at the bottom in the field of education, employment opportunities in the State were relatively poor, outmigration was taking a heavy toll among our young and more talented human resources, public services in rural communities were lagging, the interstate road system was far behind schedule, the executive branch of state government was replete with corruption and the University's assistance in the economic and social development of the State was meager, sporadic, and uncoordinated. From this perspective it appeared that the jurisdiction of Cooperative Extension should be broadened and resources reallocated to problems of greater relevance to the State. In Dr. Miller's words:

"The Cooperative Extension Service will be gradually shaped to serve as the field arm of the entire University for social and economic development. West Virginia University must always remain true to its heritage of educational service to agriculture and rural life. At the same time, its program must significantly touch the lives of people of all walks of life, and recognize that the challenges of West Virginia are neither uniquely rural nor urban. The State will prosper as a whole, each sector related to and dependent on the others, or it will not prosper at all."

It was anticipated that the combining of administrative functions under a central administering unit would permit the University to amalgamate and redirect its off-campus resources toward the resolution of the more relevant and significant problems confronting the people of West Virginia. The Appalachian Center would in reality be the coordinator of this redirection of resources. To this end extension personnel were encouraged to further their education, new positions were established and extension agents were directed to change their programs to serve a wider range of rural and urban community needs.

Shortly after Dr. Miller appointed Dr. R. S. Dunbar, Jr., as Dean, College of Agriculture and Forestry, the Dean appointed a faculty committee to consider organizational changes in the College. President Miller had relayed to Dean Dunbar his concern that the College was not addressing itself to the real problems of West Virginia. Further, he urged the Dean to move as rapidly as possible to reorganize the College and to redirect the programs of research and teaching in the College. The same socio-economic data that impelled the President to change the Cooperative Extension Service was stimulating his thoughts with respect to the missions and organization of the College of Agriculture and Forestry.

Dean Dunbar was also anxious to reorganize and redirect the programs in the College of Agriculture. He noted that in spite of a drastic decline in farms, in land devoted to farm enterprises and in the social-economic-political clout of West Virginia agriculture, teaching and research programs continued to center upon production agriculture. In addition, he observed that there were too many faculty positions in Agriculture relative to the financial support being received for teaching and research. Finally, he was convinced that the College Faculty should assume greater responsibility for teaching and research programs in the natural resources area. When the Dean appeared before the committee that he had appointed to study the College structure, he issued the following challenge:

"Develop plans for a new College which (1) has relevance to West Virginia and Appalachia, (2) concerns itself with attainment of distinction in selected fields of endeavor, (3) recognizes the lack of knowledge in the field of resource management and, therefore, undertakes a program of research and teaching in resource development and utilization, and (4) develop a plan which would insure that the College could vigorously but judiciously participate in the overseas commitments of this nation."

As noted a few minutes ago, the planning committee developed a proposal for a new structure and certain modifications in the teaching, research and extension programs. Dr. Miller's rejection of the proposal did not lead to a cessation of planning in the College. The same underlying factors which had stimulated Dr. Miller, Dean Dunbar and the planning committee were still present. Furthermore, Dean Dunbar was firmly convinced that the teaching and research faculty was too large in relation to present and anticipated budgets, that there were too many departments, too many administrators and that the teaching and research programs were not being redirected to focus upon the most relevant programs confronting the people of West Virginia. Therefore, the Dean asked the College Executive Committee to examine the college structure and, if needed, develop a proposed new structure.

As mentioned a few minutes ago, the Executive Committee proposed a new structure, the college faculty approved it, the Dean affirmed it and the University president ratified it with an effective date of July 1, 1969. Approximately five years had elapsed since a new dean with new perspectives had proposed to a faculty committee that a new organizational structure was needed and that the teaching and research programs should be reoriented in the direction of problem areas with greater relevancy for West Virginia.

In retrospect what can or should be said with respect to structural change? Based on our experience organizational change is possible if:

1. The leadership is determined that new structures are necessary,
2. If the proposed changes have substance as well as form,
3. If the leadership is not too far in front of those being led,
4. If the faculty is "educated" to the need for change,
5. If the various levels of leadership have respect for and support each other.

Concluding Remarks

In closing, we should take a few minutes to enumerate some of the benefits that have resulted from the restructuring in the College of Agriculture and Forestry. At the same time I will indicate a few of the problems which have been encountered.

BENEFITS

1. Economies of operations in Divisions Versus Departments:
 - (a) Fewer requisitions for supplies and equipment.
 - (b) Fewer committees for admitting students, course and curriculum development.
 - (c) Centralized filing system.
 - (d) Greater flexibility in management of research budgets.
 - (e) Ability to shift secretaries, clerks and technicians when necessary.
 - (f) Increased use of teaching and research equipment.
2. Fewer administrators in Divisions Versus Departments---prior to the restructuring there were 9 Department Chairmen---now there are 4 Division Directors.
3. Program planning more integrative and better coordinated.
4. Greater understanding and respect for professional disciplines.

UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS

1. It is very difficult to create a stable and enduring union of two or more highly specialized professional groups. Professional jealousies and antagonisms together with what Veblen called "trained incapacity" creates anxieties, mistrust and, if carried too far, stalemated program planning.
2. Role of Committee Chairmen---not enough responsibility and authority.
3. The original plan creating Divisions had positive suggestions for the teaching and research programs of the College but the plan which was approved by the College Faculty was rather weak on programs of study and research.

Finally, Dr. Huitt was correct when he noted that structural changes were not neutral. Power, prestige and status may be redistributed but of greater certainty is the increased work load that accrues in a Director's office versus a department chairman's office.

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